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LEARNING AN ADDITIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE: HOW AFFORDABLE IS IT?

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Abstract

The present study looks into perceptions of students of Swedish as a foreign language (L3) when it comes to previous language(s) (L2(s) English and/or German) influencing their study of Swedish, as well as Swedish influencing their knowledge of previous languages. The 50 participants were presented with a questionnaire in which they had to answer whether they perceived influence between particular combinations of the three languages and, if they did, in which areas and to what degree. In the qualitative part of the questionnaire, they were asked to explain their answers and provide examples for their claims. The results showed great influence of English and German on the process of acquiring Swedish. The influence was mostly positive, especially when it comes to grammar and vocabulary. When it comes to the influence of Swedish on English and German, there seemed to be no, or very little, influence on English, while there was slight influence on German, which was positive in some areas (grammar, vocabulary, receptive skills) and negative in others (pronunciation and productive skills). In general, the results indicate that participants were aware of their languages influencing each other and that they were able to use their previously acquired languages to facilitate the process of acquiring an additional language. Furthermore, they seemed to be able to maintain their previous languages even with the addition of a new language, with English being less affected than German.

Key words: cross-linguistic influence, multilingualism, third language acquisition

1. Theoretical background

1.1. Multilingualism

In Croatia, children start learning English in the first grade of elementary school. This means that when they enter highschool (or even earlier, in higher grades of elementary school) and start learning another foreign language, they have at least three languages in their repertoire. However, while the future generations in Croatia and in most parts of the world are growing up multilingual, there is still contention when it comes to the term "multilingualism" itself. It is not yet clear how it should be defined, researched and used. Most people hold the notion that a multilingual speaker is several monolinguals in one person and that for the person to be considered multilingual, they should not be distinguishable from native speakers of the respective languages and they should not mix their languages (Jessner, 2006). This notion has influenced researchers as well as teachers, but in recent years, other approaches to multilingualism and multilingual learners have developed.

In some of these approaches learners are the focal point. Focusing on the language learners as individuals, Ó Laoire and Aronin (2004, as cited in Jessner, 2006) introduced a model of multilinguality. For them, multilinguality and multilingualism are two close, but different notions. Multilinguality is a part of a speaker's identity, and involves all their resources, idiosyncrasies and assumptions, whereas multilingualism refers only to the process and result of third language acquisition, thus involving only the speaker, linguistics and language.

Still, sociolinguistic and cultural factors influence multilinguality, since the speaker's identity forms in a specific sociolinguistic and cultural environment. Similarly, Herdina and Jessner (2002, as cited in Jessner, 2006) consider the intertwining of the psycholinguistic aspects of learning two or more languages and the societal environment. In their dynamic model of multilingualism, the most important element is the learner's perceived communicative need which is shaped by the societal framework within which the learners learn and communicate.

This holistic view of multilingualism is in line with the dynamic system theory (DTS) where multilingualism is a complex system in which the development of one system influences the development of others in ways which are not additive (Jessner, 2006). This is not just an overlap between two subsystems but a complete metamorphosis of the system which happens when an additional language is introduced (Jessner, 2006). Having undergone this process, the learner who has been in contact with two language systems possesses skills and abilities a

monolingual learner learning a second language does not, one of the most evident being metalinguistic awareness (Hufeisen & Gibson, 2003, as cited in Jessner, 2006).

1.2. Multilingualism vs. bilingualism

The relationship between multilingualism and bilingualism is also a complex one. While some claim that multilingualism encompasses bilingualism, as multilingualism refers to learning two or more languages, others have decided to use multilingualism exclusively for the process of acquisition of more than two languages, thus differentiating it from bilingualism (Jessner, 2006). Still, studies within bilingualism have been of great importance for subsequent research within third language acquisition (TLA).

Lay people mostly consider bilingualism as beneficial not only for linguistic competence but also for cognitive and social development, and researchers have mostly confirmed these beliefs (Jessner, 2006). Nevertheless, there are some studies which found negative influence of bilingualism on the learning of an additional language or have simply found no difference between monolinguals and multilinguals. Still, most studies do find a positive effect of bilingualism on TLA, especially in terms of general proficiency (Cenoz, 2003, as cited in Jessner, 2006). This is mostly due to developments in learning strategies, metalinguistic awareness and communicative ability and it is especially evident if the languages in question are typologically similar.

Several studies have shown that bilinguals have cognitive superiority over monolinguals when it comes to acquiring a third language (Jessner, 1997, as cited in Safont Jorda, 2005), usually due to more developed creative thinking and metalinguistic awareness. Creative thinking involves producing a variety of ideas, flexibility in showing ideas and originality in denoting uncommon thoughts (Tarrant, 1966, as cited in Safont Jorda, 2005), while metalinguistic awareness, as defined by Malakoff (1992, as cited in Safont Jorda, 2005), is the ability to think about the language, the awareness of linguistic features and the ability to reflect on them. According to Bialystok (1988, as cited in Safont Jorda, 2005), higher levels of bilingualism correlate with higher ability of thinking about the language.

1.3. Learning a third language

As seen from the definitions and approaches mentioned above, multilingualism involves two or more languages. But is learning a third language (or fourth, or tenth) a process which can be equated with learning a second language? There are researchers who believe that the

processes of learning and acquisition of a third language are not necessarily different from the process of second language acquisition (SLA) (Jessner, 2006) Nevertheless, there are researchers who believe that TLA is in many ways different and even more complex than SLA (Jessner, 2006)

TLA is often considered to be a form of second language acquisition and a variation on bilingualism (Safont Jorda, 2005), while SLA is used to refer to any language other than the first. Recently, however, researchers have noted that there is a need to distinguish TLA from SLA, as TLA is a process which has its own special characteristics.

According to Herdina and Jessner (2002), the characteristics of language acquisition are non-linearity, language maintenance, individual variation and interdependence and particularly characteristic of third language acquisition according to them is a qualitative change in the minds of third language learners. When considering language learning as a dynamic system, it is expected that there will be periods of growth and periods of stagnation or retardation (which in the context of language learning means language loss and attrition). This would mean that the process is not linear and does not simply go from no proficiency to higher levels of proficiency, but that it can also go back and forth.

Since attrition is seen as expected and natural in this process, a lot of emphasis has to be put on language maintenance. Learners need to maintain their level of proficiency, and the more languages they know, the more effort has to be put in (Safont Jorda, 2005). Learners' individual traits also have to be taken into consideration. Furthermore, since this system is a dynamic system, there is always interplay and interdependence between its subsystems. For Herdina and Jessner (2002), all the languages known by a multilingual speaker comprise a whole rather than being separate entities. Thus, an additional language affects the whole linguistic system of the learner. It creates new links and performs a qualitative rather than a quantitative change.

Cenoz (2000, as cited in Safont Jorda, 2005) mentions three main areas in which TLA and SLA differ: the order in which the languages are learned, the sociolinguistic factors and the psycholinguistic processes involved (Safont Jorda, 2005). There are four basic acquisition orders as described by Cenoz (2000, as cited in Jessner, 2006): the three languages can be acquired simultaneously, the three languages can be learn consecutively, two languages can be learnt simultaneously after the acquisition of L1, or two languages can be learnt

simultaneously before learning the L3. Furthermore, these learning processes can be interrupted and restarted, and naturally, they are not limited to only three languages.

The context of learning (formal, naturalistic or combination) can also exert influence on the learning process, as well as linguistic characteristics. If the languages are typologically similar, there is more cross-linguistic influence, which can benefit and facilitate the acquisition of the target language or cause code-switching (Safont Jorda, 2005). The status of the language in the society can not be overlooked either, as some languages are more dominant in a certain society or culture than others (Safont Jorda, 2005).

Moreover, individual factors affecting the learning process can not be overlooked. They range from language aptitude, language anxiety, attitude, motivation to language learning strategies and self-confidence (Gardner et al, 1997, as cited in Jessner, 2006). Naturally, one of the most important factors is proficiency, which is usually assumed to follow the order of acquisition, which would mean that the speakers are most proficient in their L1, less proficient in their L2 and the least proficient in L3. However, this does not actually have to be the case (Hufeisen, 1997, as cited in Jessner, 2006). The dominance of some languages over others can result in increased proficiency levels of some languages or the opposite, loss and attrition in others.

Overall, while learning a third language does resemble second language acquisition, this third or additional language creates a unique process of language acquisition as well as a special psycholinguistic process. In trying to understand this process, research has mainly focused on early multilingualism, the role of proficiency levels in L1 and L2(s), and cross-linguistic influence (Safont Jorda, 2005).

1.4. Cross-linguistic influence

In general, it seems that language loss and attrition occur more often in multilingual speakers than in bilinguals or monolinguals, which is usually linked with forgetting as well as with some forms of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) (Jessner, 2006). Cross-linguistic influence refers mostly to code-switching, interference and transfer between languages as well as effects of language attrition on either of the languages (Kellerman and Sharwood Smith, 1986, as cited in Jessner, 2006).

In early contrastive analysis studies, researchers focused mostly on the negative effects of L1 on learning the L2, but transfer is now viewed as a more complex and not exclusively negative term (Jessner, 2006). The question of transfer is especially important within TLA

research as more languages come into play. Questions of what language items are transferred, in which situations and from which language are of great interest to TLA researchers. The factors which can influence transfer are the level of proficiency, typological similarity, cultural similarity, recency of use, and the status of L2 (Williams and Hammarberg, 1998, as cited in Jessner, 2006).

Cummins (1991a, as cited in Jessner, 2006) has proposed that a bilingual speaker's knowledge is not comprised of separate proficiencies but that there is in fact a common underlying proficiency which makes it possible for transfer to occur. Furthermore, he proposed a threshold hypothesis which states that the learner has to reach a first critical threshold in language proficiency in both languages in order to avoid negative consequences of bilingualism and a second threshold to profit from positive cognitive or linguistic benefits of bilingualism (1991b, as cited in Jessner, 2006). Usually, speakers with lower target language proficiency transfer more elements than those with a higher level of proficiency. Also, in some cases it has been found that if the level of proficiency is sufficient, L2 is a preferred choice for transfer into the target language (Hammarberg, 2001, as cited in Jessner, 2006)

One of the most important factors is typological similarity between languages. Odlin (1989, as cited in Jessner, 2006) states that transfer is more likely to occur between languages that are similar, while also taking into account that it is not as important whether languages are objectively typologically similar but instead whether the learner subjectively perceives them as similar. These subjective perceptions create another notion, psychotypology.

1.5. Multilingual Studies

There are several reasons why researchers choose a multilingual approach in their studies. In today's globalized world, people simply need to study foreign languages due to education, work and mobility, which means that more language learners are becoming multilingual. Also, there are many bilingual communities who study English as an international language. The theoretical motives for researching multilingualism stem from the notion that humans are multilingual by nature and that multilingualism is the normal state of linguistic competence. Today, bilingualism and multilingualism are at least as common as monolingualism. Lastly, empirically, it is more logical to adopt a multilingual perspective rather than a bilingual one in order to study complex processes of acquisition, competence and interaction, as it gives a more complete picture.

In most research on multilingualism, there are established differences in terminology. Usually, L1 refers to the first language or mother tongue, L2 refers to the second language and L3 to a third language. Furthermore, L3 usually incorporates any language from the third onwards, as it is claimed that the acquisition of a third language is qualitatively different from the acquisition of a second, but acquiring an additional language does not make such a qualitative difference (Hufeisen 1997, as cited in Hammarberg, 2009). However, Hammarberg (2009) proposes a different terminology, where L1 is any language acquired in infancy, L2 is any language encountered and acquired after infancy, while L3 is a non-native language which is currently being used or acquired where the person already has knowledge of at least one L2. Also, for him, a multilingual is then someone with knowledge of three or more languages.

With more languages in one's repertoire, the speaking process becomes more complicated. Still, it seems that individual languages can be more or less activated when it comes to speaking. For Green (1986, as cited in Hammarberg, 2009), there is a selected language (one currently intended for use), an active language (one which is simultaneously present in the speaker's mind and can exert influence) and a dormant language (known to the speaker but not activated). While a multilingual's competence is understood as a single cognitive system with languages as subsets, and while, according to de Bot (2004, as cited in Hammarberg, 2009), multilinguals can access all their languages in parallel, there can still be hierarchical relations between a multilingual's languages.

1.5.1. The Hammarberg study

The present study has largely been motivated by a study by Björn Hammarberg and Sarah Williams (Hammarberg, 2009). Hammarberg's study is an extensive case study of an L3 learner of Swedish and it is based on conversations between the learner Sarah Williams (SW) and the researcher and native speaker Björn Hammarberg (BH). SW was a native speaker of English (L1), with knowledge of German, French and Italian (L2s) of which German was at a near-native level of proficiency.

In his study, Hammarberg found that one language can be favoured when it comes to influencing production in L3, and that languages can assume different roles. In this case, one language was selected as a supplier language (supplying structures for production in L3) and another as an instrumental language (used for practical purposes, such as asking for explanations).

Based on findings by Stedje (1977) and Ringbom (1987), Hammarberg summarized some of the factors which can influence the roles languages can assume during L3 production. The first one is the degree of similarity between the languages, which means that an L2 exerts more influence on L3 if it is typologically closer. Also, if L2 is more similar to L3 than L1, the role of L2 is even stronger.

The second factor is the level of competence in L2 (proficiency). The higher the proficiency and the recency of an L2, the greater influence it can exert. The context of L2 acquisition is also of importance. If L2 has been learned in a natural context, the influence can be greater. Also, it seems that there is more influence in speech than written production, as control is limited while speech is being produced.

Lastly, the level of linguistic description that is affected by CLI is also important to take into consideration, since it can occur at the level of lexis as well as when it comes to grammatical structures.

In Hammarberg's case study, L1 (English) and L2 (German) are both similar to target L3 (Swedish). Furthermore, both are used very frequently and with a native or near-native level of competence. His findings describe German as a supplier language and English as an instrumental language, which means that German was used as the source language for most of the crosslinguistic influence, while English was used for practical purposes (for example, asking for explanations) (Hammarberg, 2009). Thus, he claims that the defining factor for the role of the languages involved in this case is L2 status. Since the process of L3 acquisition is more similar to the process of L2 acquisition than to L1 acquisition, a second language is perceived as more useful. Still, in order for this factor to be defining, other factors (proficiency, similarity) need to be at a similar level.

The participant of this study also started relying less on the supplier language (German) as she became more proficient in L3 (Swedish), which means that proficiency in the target language could also be a factor which determines the frequency and source language of cross-linguistic influence.

1.5.2. Bardel and Lindqvist's study

In a partly introspective study, Bardel and Lindqvist (2007) examined how different factors (proficiency, psychotypology, recency of use, and L2 status) influence language transfer while learning an additional language. Specifically, they analysed oral production of a

multilingual Swedish learner of Italian as L3. In this case, the learner (one of the authors) was a very experienced language learner who also had extensive knowledge about language acquisition as well as about languages in general. The learner's background languages were Swedish as L1 and English, French and Spanish as L2s. When it comes to proficiency, Swedish, English and French were at a high level, while Spanish was at a much lower level. Swedish, English and French were also used recently, while Spanish was not. From a typological point of view, French and Spanish are closer to Italian than English and Swedish, which was also acknowledged by the learner, who also stated that she perceived Spanish to be closer to Italian than French in some aspects (namely phonology).

The learner participated in an Italian course and was recorded four times (before the course started, two weeks after the course started, immediately after the course ended and six months after the course). Bardel and Lindqvist found different language activation patterns for code-switches and for word construction attempts. Spanish was used as the main source language for code-switches, especially at the initial stages of learning Italian, which led to the conclusion that both target language proficiency and background language proficiency are important. In this case, both Italian and Spanish were at a low level of proficiency which led to numerous instances of mixing and confusing these two languages. Also, since the learner found Spanish to be more similar to Italian than French at the phonological level, the influence of psychotypology could not be disregarded. English and Swedish were not used for code-switches (except in one recording where the learner relied on the interlocutor's knowledge of Swedish), which seems to support the claim that typologically closer languages will be more activated.

When it comes to word construction attempts, proficiency seemed to play a decisive role, since the most activated language was French which had a higher level of proficiency, even though Spanish was perceived as more similar to Italian. Still, the fact that neither Swedish nor English were activated again showed the importance of not just proficiency, but also psychotypology.

1.6. Crosslinguistic comparison of English, German and Swedish

Since the combination of languages analysed in this study is the same as in Hammarberg's study (namely Swedish, English and German), his crosslinguistic analysis of similarities and differences will be summarized here.

1.6.1. Lexicon

Swedish and German have many similarities in content words, mostly due to common Germanic origins and German loan words which entered Swedish through history. There are also cognates which Swedish shares with English, but they are limited because of the large proportion of Latinate words in English. Nowadays, English loan words are entering Swedish in a great extent but it is still not sufficient to replace the earlier German influence. All three share internationalisms, but Swedish and German use more compound nouns and derivation. All in all, the vocabulary of content words in Swedish is more similar to German than to English. However, for function words, there are no great similarities between German and Swedish, while formulaic phrases and idioms are similar to English and German to the same degree.

1.6.2. Morpho-syntax

Swedish sentence structure is similar to both English and Swedish and is not difficult to comprehend for speakers of these languages. Still, Swedish has a different word order than German in some cases, mostly when it comes to non-finite verbs, direct and indirect objects, predicatives, adverbials and the finite verb of subclauses. In these cases, Swedish is more similar to English, except the rule of verb in second place which Swedish and German share. The German inflectional system is far more complex than both English and Swedish, while English uses progressives and do-support while German and Swedish don't. Generally, it can be stated that Swedish is more similar to English in terms of grammar.

1.6.3. Phonology/phonetics

When it comes to phonology, Swedish is the one that is different from the other two, with its unusual tonal accent which interacts with stress accent or the combination of opposite vowel and consonant quantity which impacts sentence rhythm. It also has a complex vowel system, complex set of fricatives and an assimilatory process of consonant retroflexion. However, there is one area of similarity with German and that is stress placement in words, which English doesn't share. At the level of phonetics, it is not clear whether British RP or North German is closer to Stockholm Swedish.

2. The Study

2.1. Aim

The aim of this study was to gain insight into how Croatian students of Swedish (L3) perceived the usefulness of their previous linguistic knowledge or more precisely their L2(s) English, German or both on their acquisition of L3, as well as the possible influence of L3 on the previously learned languages (namely English and German).

2.2. Sample

The participants were 50 students of Swedish at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. All the participants were Croatian and had Croatian as their mother tongue, or first language (L1). Out of the 50 students, seven (14%) were first-year students, 16 (32%) were second-year students, 12 (24%) were third-year students, eight (16%) were fourth-year students and seven (14%) were fifth-year students. Their ages ranged from 19 to 24 years old and 11 (22%) were male while 39 (78%) were female.

Since the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in most cases requires students to enroll into double-major programmes, all of the students had another major besides Swedish. Language combinations are usually a popular choice for students and such was the case here as well. Out of 50 students, 31 (62%) had another language as their major, out of which some had English (13 students or 26%) or German (five students or 10%) as their second major.

In general, the students had a multilingual background, be it through their second major or through their independent language study. Besides Swedish, English and German, languages that appeared were Russian, Japanese, Spanish, Italian, French, Slovakian, Polish, Hebrew, Norwegian, Dutch, Hungarian, Portuguese, Turkish. Furthermore, 45 students (90%) had studied Latin as well. This overview of the participants' language experience just goes to show how even such a small sample offers an array of languages, both those which seem to be more popular (French, Spanish, Italian), as well as those less commonly studied in Croatia. These students have been language learners all their lives, and now, as university students majoring in a foreign language, can make more linguistically grounded and informed observations and draw conclusions while looking at their own learning process.

Still, as this study was focused on the interplay of the three languages in question (Swedish, English and German), the students' knowledge of these particular languages was the most important. All 50 students studied English (which is mostly obligatory in the Croatian

educational system), while 43 (86 %) studied both English and German. Out of these 43 students, 37 had English as their first foreign language, followed by German, while six had German as their first foreign language, followed by English.

When it comes to length of study and proficiency, the participants' experience varied. The great majority of students had studied English for a very long period. Most of the answers were set between eight and 20 years of study, with only one student having studied English for three years, as well as one student having studied it for five years. All the students evaluated their knowledge of English as very good (22 students) or excellent (26 students), which means that they perceived themselves to be very proficient when it comes to English. For German, most answers fell between four and 10 years of study, which means that they studied German for a shorter period than English in most cases, with some (seven students) not having studied it at all. Consequently, their self-evaluations showed greater variety than in the case of English. Eight students described their German knowledge as unsatisfactory, 12 as satisfactory, 11 as good, seven as very good and only four as excellent. All in all, the students in general seemed to be more proficient in English than German.

Also, when it comes to evaluating the participants' knowledge of Swedish, the picture seems a bit more complicated. Since the participants were students of all five years, it was expected that their self-evaluations would show greater knowledge and proficiency corresponding to their length of study. However, it may have happened that the students evaluated themselves according to their current level and in comparison to other classmates on the same year (and their overall grades). In general, it seems that most students were not confident when it came to their knowledge of Swedish. Eleven found their knowledge satisfactory, 20 found it good, 18 very good and only one student evaluated their knowledge as excellent.

2.3. Procedure

The present study was mainly a quantitative study conducted in the form of a questionnaire. However, the 50 participants were also asked to add some short comments, examples or observations which then constituted the qualitative part of the study. The questionnaire was administered towards the end of the academic year and to students of Swedish of all levels (from first-year students to fifth-year students). After giving basic demographic data, the students were asked to state their current year of Swedish studies, their overall grade and their own evaluation of their knowledge. Furthermore, they were asked to list all foreign languages they had ever learned, along with the length of study, context of study and self-evaluation of

their knowledge of that language. This concluded the first part of the questionnaire which provided the necessary linguistic background of the participants.

The second part of the questionnaire dealing with the various ways the three languages (Swedish, English and German) influenced each other opened with a similarity judgement question. The students were asked to choose which language (English or German) they perceived to be more similar to Swedish, as well as to explain their choice. Then, they were presented with more detailed questions about different language combinations. Firstly, they were asked if they perceived that their knowledge of English influenced their learning of Swedish, and if they did, to explain it briefly. After this first general question, the students had to choose between five options dealing with influence in particular areas of language (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, receptive skills and productive skills). The options were: -2 (negative influence), -1 (somewhat negative influence), 0 (no influence), +1 (somewhat positive influence) and +2 (positive influence). Finally, they were asked to add their comments and observations on that language combination, as well as to provide examples if possible.

The rest of the questionnaire followed the same pattern, but for following combinations: influence of L2 German on L3 Swedish, influence of Swedish on English and influence of Swedish on German. For all combinations, the students first had to make a general judgement (did the knowledge of a particular language influence the learning or knowledge of the other language), followed by a more detailed breakdown considering pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, receptive skills and productive skills, and finally ending with the students' comments, observations and examples.

It may also be important to note that the questionnaire was administered in Croatian, to ensure that all participants understood the questions being asked (especially first-year students), as well as to avoid any possible influence of the instruction language on the participants' answers. However, within this study, neither the influence of L1 on subsequent languages, nor the influence of subsequent languages on L1 was researched.

2.4. Results and Discussion

As mentioned before, both English and German share certain similarities to Swedish, given the fact that they belong to the same language group. Deciding which one is in fact more similar to Swedish is not straightforward and is based mostly on the learners' perceptions. Still, the

perceived typological similarity between two languages can make the more similar language the preferred choice when it comes to language transfer. The majority of participants in this study chose German as the language more similar to Swedish (30 students or 60%), while 14 (28%) perceived English to be more similar. Some participants (six), however, left this question unanswered or explained that it was not possible for them to determine which language had greater similarity to Swedish.

The students who chose German based their decision on similarities in word order, pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, as well as grammar (for example irregular verb patterns and verb tenses). Still, the most often reported similarity according to this study, was at the level of lexis. Most participants stated that the words themselves were similar (sometimes the same) or that Swedish words and phrases could sometimes be understood with the help of German. In particular, one student mentioned compound nouns which are characteristic of both Swedish and German, but not so much of English. They also found similarities in morphology (similar prefixes, suffixes and root morphemes).

On the other hand, the students who chose English as more similar usually mentioned grammar rather than lexical similarities, besides the increasing number of English loan words entering Swedish. However, they sometimes chose English simply because they believed their knowledge of German was not sufficient, leaving them with only one option. Similarly, a certain number decided to leave the question unanswered, mostly since they didn't feel confident in German or since they found that both languages were considerably similar to Swedish.

According to previous research which states that perceived similarity is one of the most important factors, it seems that German would be the preferred language for transfer of elements into Swedish. More specifically, the students would transfer vocabulary from German and grammar from English.

2.4.1. Influence of L2 English on L3 Swedish

The students were first asked to answer a general question of whether they perceived their knowledge of English influenced their learning of Swedish. Out of 50 participants, 40 (80%) perceived some influence, nine (18%) did not, while one student left the question unanswered. While this immediately showed that most of the students were aware of a certain influence, it was not clear whether this influence was positive or negative or in which areas of language it

occurred. Therefore, additional questions were asked in relation to five areas (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, receptive skills and productive skills), with detailed results presented in Table 1.

When asked about the influence of English on Swedish pronunciation, 38 students (76%) answered that they did not perceive any influence in that area, six (12%) perceived negative influence (two perceived negative and four somewhat negative influence) and six (12%) perceived positive influence (one perceived positive and five somewhat positive influence). This would mean that in this case, there was not much influence of English on Swedish pronunciation, except in individual cases.

When asked about the influence of English on learning Swedish grammar, the majority (40 students or 80%) perceived positive influence, with 28 perceiving somewhat positive influence and 12 perceiving positive influence. Nine students (18%) perceived no influence, while only one student answered that there was somewhat negative influence. This would mean that most students found their knowledge of English grammar helpful in learning and acquiring Swedish grammar.

The answers were very similar when it comes to vocabulary. Forty students (80%) perceived positive influence of knowledge of English on their learning of Swedish vocabulary, with seven (14%) perceiving positive influence and 33 (66%) perceiving somewhat positive influence. Eight students (16%) perceived no influence, while two students (4%) perceived somewhat negative influence. In conclusion, students found their knowledge of English useful not only while learning grammar, but also while learning vocabulary.

When asked about the influence of English on Swedish receptive skills (reading and listening), 25 students (50%) answered that they perceived no influence. 24 (48%) perceived positive influence; five (10%) perceiving positive influence and 19 (38%) perceiving somewhat positive influence. Only one student perceived somewhat negative influence. This shows that they believed English did help them in understanding Swedish speech and writing, even though it was not as beneficial as in learning grammar and vocabulary.

Similarly to receptive skills, when asked about the influence of English on Swedish productive skills (speaking and writing), 21 students (42%) perceived no influence, 26 (52%) perceived positive influence (two perceiving positive influence and 24 perceiving somewhat positive influence), while three students (6%) perceived somewhat negative influence. This

would mean that in the area of productive skills students found their knowledge of English helpful, but not as much as when it comes to grammar and vocabulary.

	Negative influence	Somewhat negative influence	No influence	Somewhat positive influence	Positive influence
Pronunciation	2 4%	4 8%	38 76%	5 10%	1 2%
Grammar	0 0%	1 2%	9 18%	28 56%	12 24%
Vocabulary	0 0%	2 4%	8 16%	33 66%	7 14%
Receptive skills	0 0%	1 2%	25 50%	19 38%	5 10%
Productive skills	0 0%	3 6%	21 42%	24 48%	2 4%

Table 1. *Influence of L2 English on L3 Swedish*

Since it is very difficult to speculate why the students answered the way they did, they were also asked to explain their choices and give some examples if possible. Most gave very insightful and informed explanations, which shows their linguistic background and the area of study. Most of them mentioned similarities in grammar and vocabulary that helped them in learning Swedish, which would explain the answers behind the hugely positive influence of English. For example, they used their knowledge of definite and indefinite articles in English to come to terms with them in Swedish (S1) or they used rules for irregular verb patterns in English to more easily memorize the ones in Swedish (S3). Some mentioned tenses which are similar (for example Present Perfect in English is similar to the Swedish construction, as well as future tenses), while others mentioned the construction of passives (English "by" and Swedish "av" when talking about the agent in the passive sentence). English syntax in general was often said to be of help. Similarities in vocabulary and especially the increasing number of loan words have not gone unnoticed, and the students were aware that it helped them to learn and memorize Swedish words, and even understand them when encountering them for the first time. Even in class, they were sometimes encouraged to relate some grammatical units to English and were given examples from English, especially for constructions not present in Croatian (S20). They were also able to construct Swedish words out of English ones by using Swedish counterparts of certain morphemes (S32). Still, sometimes the English counterpart did confuse them or even trick them (prepositions and false friends). Some mentioned using English through music and film (using subtitles and translations which may be unavailable in Croatian). Even when it comes to translation, they claimed it was easier to translate to English and learn through it rather than to translate to Croatian.

All in all, they showed a great amount of reliance on English, but were also aware of the danger of relying on it too much. English was perceived to be helpful when learning grammar and vocabulary, for forming different constructions, as well as when it comes to comprehension itself. Those who answered that there was no influence of English also mentioned that they had been learning English for a much longer time or that they did not see any useful similarities that they could benefit from. Some even explicitly said that they relied on German more (due to greater knowledge or the fact that German was their second major). A very interesting answer came from a student who said that they relied on English but thought that knowledge of German would also help them if they had studied it before.

2.4.2. Influence of L2 German on L3 Swedish

As mentioned previously, not all participants have studied both English and German. Seven students have studied only English, so they were not able to provide answers in this part of the questionnaire. Thus, the following results will be based on the group of 43 students who have studied both English and German. The students were first asked a general question of whether they perceived their knowledge of German influenced their learning of Swedish. Out of 43 students, 35 (81,4%) answered that German did influence their learning of Swedish, six (14%) answered that it did not while two students (4,7 %) did not answer the question. In the following section, they were asked further questions about influence across five language areas (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, receptive skills and productive skills). These results are presented in detail in Table 2.

When asked about the influence of German on Swedish pronunciation, 17 students (39,5%) answered that they did not perceive any influence, 16 (37,3 %) noticed positive influence (with two noticing positive influence and 14 noticing somewhat positive influence) and eight students (18,6%) noticed negative influence (with one noticing negative influence and seven noticing somewhat negative influence). Two students haven't answered any of the detailed questions. Compared to English, there seemed to be more influence of German on Swedish pronunciation, be it positive or negative. The reason could be certain similarities they perceived between the two languages which are not present in English (for example, both Swedish and German use the umlaut, while English doesn't)

When asked about the influence of German on learning of Swedish grammar, 17 students (39,5%) answered that they did not perceive any influence, 22 (51,2%) noticed positive influence (with 10 noticing positive influence and 12 noticing somewhat positive influence),

and two (4,7%) noticed somewhat negative influence. This would mean that more than half of the students found their previous knowledge of English useful while learning about Swedish grammar.

When it comes to the influence of German on learning of Swedish vocabulary, an overwhelming 36 students (83,7%) answered that they perceived positive influence of German, with 15 students (34,9%) noticing positive influence and 21 students (48,8%) noticing somewhat positive influence. Three students (7%) answered that they did not perceive any influence, while two students (4,7%) perceived somewhat negative influence. This reveals that a considerable number of students found their previous knowledge of German useful when it comes to learning Swedish vocabulary.

When asked about the influence of German on Swedish receptive skills (reading and listening), 20 students (46,5%) answered that they did not perceive any influence, while 21 (48,9%) perceived positive influence (with seven noticing positive influence and 14 noticing somewhat positive influence). There were no students who perceived negative influence. This shows that, while there were benefits even when it comes to understanding Swedish speech and writing, they were not as great as when it comes to grammar and vocabulary.

Similarly, when asked about the influence of German on Swedish productive skills (speaking and writing), 18 students (41,9%) answered that they did not perceive any influence, while 18 students (41,9%) answered that they perceived positive influence (with three perceiving positive influence and 15 perceiving somewhat positive influence). Here, however, there were some students who perceived somewhat negative influence (five students or 11,6%). This could be due to German words 'appearing' while trying to produce Swedish.

	Negative influence	Somewhat negative influence	No influence	Somewhat positive influence	Positive influence
Pronunciation	1 2,3%	7 16,3%	17 39,5%	14 32,6%	2 4,7%
Grammar	0 0%	2 4,7%	17 39,5%	12 28%	10 23,3%
Vocabulary	0 0%	2 4,7%	3 7%	21 48,8%	15 34,9%
Receptive skills	0 0%	0 0%	20 46,5%	14 32,6%	7 16,3%
Productive skills	0 0%	5 11,6%	18 41,9%	15 34,9%	3 7%

Table 2. *Influence of L2 German on L3 Swedish*

Lastly, the students were asked to explain their choices and give examples if possible. Similarly to English, they focused mostly on grammar and vocabulary. Some mentioned

German word order which helped them with the word order in Swedish (S2), while others mentioned tenses and parts of speech (S22). Still, most focused on vocabulary as the main area of influence, both positive and negative. They claimed German helped them in understanding Swedish and learning new words, or in situations where they could construct a Swedish word through adjusting German morphemes. However, they also mentioned that German did have negative influence on their pronunciation of Swedish (for example, pronunciation of [s]), as well as in speech, especially when they had only started studying Swedish. The idea of compound nouns in Swedish was also easier to understand after acquiring that notion in German.

All in all, the students' answers show that they were aware of a certain influence of German in all areas of studying Swedish and especially when it comes to vocabulary and grammar. What is most important is that they found German useful even if they were not very proficient at it or had not studied it for a long time. Still, it has to be taken into account that German seemed to produce more negative influence than English, at least in some areas.

2.4.3. Influence of L3 Swedish on L2 English

So far, the study has showed mostly encouraging results, with previous knowledge largely benefitting the process of learning an additional language. Still, it remains to be seen how this additional language may influence the previously learned languages, if at all.

When asked if they perceived that Swedish influenced their knowledge of English, 43 students (86%) answered that it did not, while seven (14%) did perceive some influence. When it comes to pronunciation, 47 students (94%) perceived no influence, while two (4%) perceived somewhat negative influence. When asked about grammar, 40 students (80%) perceived no influence, while nine (18%) perceived somewhat positive influence. Similarly, when it comes to vocabulary, 37 students (74%) perceived no influence, nine students (18%) perceived somewhat positive influence, and three students (6%) perceived somewhat negative influence. The results for receptive and productive skills are also similar. When asked about the influence of Swedish on reading and listening in English, 46 students (92%) perceived no influence, two (4%) perceived somewhat positive influence and one (2%) perceived somewhat negative influence. The results for speaking and writing revealed 44 students (88%) who perceived no influence, two students (4%) who perceived somewhat positive influence and three students (6%) who perceived somewhat negative influence. All the results are also presented in Table 3.

	Negative influence	Somewhat negative influence	No influence	Somewhat positive influence	Positive influence
Pronunciation	0 0%	2 4%	47 94%	0 0%	0 0%
Grammar	0 0%	0 0%	40 80%	9 18%	0 0%
Vocabulary	0 0%	3 6%	37 74%	9 18%	0 0%
Receptive skills	0 0%	2 4%	46 92%	2 4%	0 0%
Productive skills	0 0%	3 6%	44 88%	2 4%	0 0%

Table 3. *Influence of L3 Swedish on L2 English*

In conclusion, according to our participants, it seems that learning Swedish had not influenced the knowledge of English in the majority of cases. Even if it did, the influence was mostly positive and not to a great degree. This could be due to the fact that most of the students who participated in this study had a high level of proficiency when it comes to English and they felt it was too stable for Swedish to exert considerable influence. Some even explicitly mentioned that they simply had been studying English for too long or that they knew it too well for Swedish to influence it. Similarly, some stated that their level of Swedish was still not high enough for it to influence any previously learned language.

2.4.4. Influence of L3 Swedish on L2 German

Out of 43 students who had studied German previously, 24 (55,8%) answered that they did perceive that the learning of Swedish influenced their knowledge of German, while 19 (44,2%) answered that they did not perceive any influence.

When it comes to German pronunciation, 21 students (48,8%) claimed that they perceived no influence of Swedish. Five students (11,6%) perceived somewhat positive influence, while 14 (32,6%) perceived negative influence, with six perceiving negative influence and eight perceiving somewhat negative influence. Three students did not answer any of the detailed questions.

When asked about grammar, 26 students (60,5%) answered that they perceived no influence. Four students (9,4%) perceived negative influence (two perceived negative influence and two perceived somewhat negative influence), while ten (23,3%) students perceived positive influence, with two perceiving positive and eight perceiving somewhat positive influence.

For vocabulary, 15 students (34,9%) perceived no influence of Swedish on their German. Eight students (18,6%) perceived negative influence (three perceived negative influence and

five perceived somewhat negative influence), while 18 students (41,9%) perceived positive influence, with four perceiving positive influence and 14 perceiving somewhat positive influence.

When it comes to receptive skills (reading and listening), 28 students (65,1%) answered that they perceived no influence of Swedish. 5 students (11,6%) perceived negative influence (one perceived negative and four perceived somewhat negative influence), while seven students (16,3%) perceived positive influence, with one perceiving positive influence and six perceiving somewhat positive influence.

Same as with receptive skills, for productive skills (speaking and writing), 28 students (65,1%) claimed that they did not perceive any influence. Four students (9,3%) perceived somewhat positive influence, while eight (18,7%) perceived negative influence, with six perceiving negative influence and two perceiving somewhat negative influence.

	Negative influence	Somewhat negative influence	No influence	Somewhat positive influence	Positive influence
Pronunciation	6 13,9%	8 18,6%	21 48,8%	5 11,6%	0 0%
Grammar	2 4,7%	2 4,7%	26 60,5%	8 18,6%	2 4,7%
Vocabulary	3 7%	5 11,6%	15 34,9%	14 32,6%	4 9,3%
Receptive skills	1 2,3%	4 9,3%	28 65,1%	6 13,9%	1 2,3%
Productive skills	6 13,9%	2 4,7%	28 65,1%	4 9,3%	0 0%

Table 4. *Influence of L3 Swedish on L2 German*

In general, according to our participants, it seemed that Swedish influenced German knowledge more than it influenced English. Of special importance is the fact that, even though it was not to a great degree, there seemed to be more negative influence than positive in some areas, namely pronunciation and productive skills. When asked to explain their answers, most mentioned pronunciation, for example the difficulty with pronunciation of the vowel [u] and different consonant clusters (for example [rs]) (S1, S14, S20). Also, some mentioned that when they tried to produce German, they started involuntarily using Swedish words (S7), or in generally mixed these two languages both in speech and writing (S11, S28, S33). Furthermore, some claimed that they had started forgetting German due to the prominence of Swedish (S19). However, some students did notice positive influence, with one student (S15) answering that they had learned more German through Swedish than when they had studied it in school. Another student also claimed that they could understand German

more easily with the help of Swedish (S22). Those students who claimed that there was no influence of Swedish on German had similar reasons as with English. They believed they knew German too well, or that they had insufficient knowledge of Swedish for it to influence German.

All in all, it seems that the main factor which determined the influence of Swedish on English and German was proficiency. Since almost all of the students were highly proficient in English, they felt that it was too stable for Swedish to influence it, especially if their level of Swedish was significantly lower. On the other hand, most students were not very proficient in German, which in turn allowed for more influence from Swedish.

2.5. Conclusion

The most evident limitation of the present study was the small number of participants. Still, by combining quantitative results with qualitative data, it was possible to draw some conclusions from the participants' answers. Overall, it seems that their second languages (English and/or German) influenced their learning of a third language (Swedish) to a great degree, with 80% of participants answering that they perceived influence of English on their Swedish and 81,4% perceiving influence of German in studying Swedish. What is even more encouraging is that this influence, even though some negative influence is present, seemed to be mostly positive. When it comes to English, most positive influence was seen in grammar (80%) and vocabulary (80%), followed by productive skills (52%) and receptive skills (48%). For pronunciation, the amount of positive and negative influence was the same in this case (12% for each). When it comes to German, the greatest amount of positive influence was found in vocabulary (89,7%), while other areas had similar results (51,2% for grammar, 48,9% for receptive skills, 41,9% for productive skills and 37,3% for pronunciation). Similarly to English, the most negative influence was found in the area of pronunciation (18,6%).

Besides researching influence of a second language on a third language, the present study also posed questions about the third language (Swedish) influencing the previously learned languages. This segment, as opposed to the previous, showed bigger differences for the two languages in question. In general, Swedish did not seem to affect the knowledge of English much, as 86% of participants answered that they did not perceive any influence. Still, what might be worthy of mention is the positive influence in the areas of grammar and vocabulary, with 18% of participants noticing positive influence for each. In other areas, there were rather

small amounts of influence, be it negative or positive. When it comes to German, the situation is more complicated. For 55,8% of participants, Swedish did influence their German knowledge, while for the remaining 44,2% it did not. Furthermore, there were similar amounts of answers for both positive and negative influence. There was more positive influence in areas of grammar (23,3% as opposed to 9,4%), vocabulary (41,9% as opposed to 18,6%) and receptive skills (16,3% as opposed to 11,6%), but there was more negative influence in areas of pronunciation (32,6% as opposed to 11,6%) and productive skills (18,7% as opposed to 9,3%).

All in all, the students who participated in this study seemed to be aware of the influence their languages exerted on each other. Moreover, they claimed to be able to analyse and use their previously learned languages to facilitate the process of learning an additional language, especially when it comes to utilising similarities in vocabulary and grammar. Both English and German were used to a great degree, and while students who lacked knowledge of German relied on English, those who had studied both languages seemed to be able to use both. Of course, the fact that these three languages are typologically close (and that the participants as well perceived them as close), helped immensely in this case, as well as the fact that both English and German are widely studied and are fairly dominant choices for language study in Croatia.

On the other hand, an additional language requires more effort to maintain all the languages in one's repertoire. While the participants in this study had no issues in maintaining their English knowledge, where the influence of Swedish was mostly nonexistent (or not perceived) or mildly positive, some did seem to struggle in maintaining their German, especially when it comes to pronunciation and productive skills. This is mostly due to the fact that they were overall more proficient in English than in German.

In conclusion, the results of this study seem to encourage learning an additional language, as well as using all the previous languages one might draw from. While introducing an additional language to an already complex system is a complicated and difficult process itself, our previous languages and knowledge can make that process easier and more efficient. Furthermore, the new language does not necessarily diminish one's knowledge of previous languages, but can even strengthen it in some areas.

As the participants of this study comprised students of Swedish at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, the results could be useful to future generations of students of

Swedish or to their professors. Naturally, more detailed and extensive research would be needed to further analyse the specific areas and ways in which this influence can be used in the study and teaching of Swedish. While some students were aware of the influence their languages had on each other, some were not, and the first step could be raising that awareness and guiding them to find similarities and instances they can use to facilitate their learning process. Of course, this would open discussions on not only multilingual learners, but multilingual teachers as well.

Sažetak

Ovo istraživanje u kojem je sudjelovalo 50 studenata švedskog jezika pri Filozofskom fakultetu u Zagrebu za cilj je imalo istražiti da li već usvojeni jezici (engleski i/ili njemački) utječu na proces učenja švedskog, kao i da li učenje švedskog utječe na znanje prije usvojenih jezika. Putem upitnika, sudionici su za pojedine kombinacije triju jezika odgovorili primjećuju li utjecaj jezika jedan na drugog, te ako primjećuju, u kojim segmentima jezika i u kojoj mjeri se taj utjecaj odvija. U kvalitativnom dijelu upitnika, mogli su dati objašnjenja, komentare i primjere. Rezultati istraživanja pokazali su priličan utjecaj engleskog i njemačkog jezika na učenje švedskog. Ovaj utjecaj je u velikoj mjeri bio pozitivan, posebno kod učenja gramatike i vokabulara. Što se tiče utjecaja švedskog jezika na znanje engleskog i njemačkog, nije pronađen znatan utjecaj na engleski jezik, dok postoji utjecaj na njemački, ali ne u velikoj mjeri. Ovaj utjecaj je u nekim područjima bio pozitivan (gramatika, vokabular, čitanje i slušanje), dok je u drugima bio negativan (izgovor, govorenje i pisanje). Općenito, rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da su sudionici svjesni činjenice da jezici kojima se koriste utječu jedan na drugog te da su sposobni iskoristiti prije usvojene jezike kako bi olakšali proces usvajanja novog jezika. Uz to, čini se da i uz dodatak još jednog jezika uspijevaju održati stupanj znanja prije usvojenih jezika, s tim da u ovom slučaju švedski jezik utječe na engleski mnogo manje nego na njemački.

Ključne riječi: međujezični utjecaj, usvajanje trećeg jezika, višejezičnost

3. References

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4. _____ language

length of study: _____ knowledge ev.: 1 2 3 4 5

context of study: a) formal (school, foreign language school...)

b) naturalistic (country where it is spoken, native speakers...)

Have you studied Latin? YES NO

Which language is, according to your opinion, more similar to Swedish?

a) English b) German

Explain your answer.

Do you think that your knowledge of English influences your learning of Swedish?

YES NO

Explain your answer. _____

Can you evaluate the influence of English on the process of learning Swedish?

Choose an answer according to the following:

-2 = negative influence

-1 = somewhat negative influence

0 = no influence

+1 = somewhat positive influence

+2 = positive influence

Influence of English on pronunciation of Swedish	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of English on learning Swedish grammar	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of English on learning Swedish vocabulary	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of English on understanding of Swedish (listening and reading)	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of English on production of Swedish (speaking and writing)	-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Do you think your knowledge of German influences your learning of Swedish? (If you have never studied German, you can skip this part of the questionnaire)

YES NO

Explain _____

Can you evaluate the influence of German on the process of learning Swedish?

Influence of German on pronunciation of Swedish	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of German on learning Swedish grammar	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of German on learning Swedish vocabulary	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of German on understanding of Swedish (listening and reading)	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of German on production of Swedish (speaking and writing)	-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Please give examples of English and/or German influence on your learning of Swedish.

Do you think your study and knowledge of Swedish influences your knowledge of English and/or German?

YES NO

Explain. _____

Can you evaluate the influence of Swedish on your knowledge of English?

Influence of Swedish on pronunciation of English	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of Swedish on knowledge of English grammar	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of Swedish on knowledge of English vocabulary	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of Swedish on understanding of English (listening and reading)	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of Swedsih on production of English (speaking and writing)	-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Can you evaluate the influence of Swedish on your knowledge of German?

Influence of Swedish on pronunciation of German	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of Swedish on knowledge of German grammar	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of Swedish on knowledge of German vocabulary	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of Swedish on understanding of German (listening and reading)	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Influence of Swedsih on production of German (speaking and writing)	-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Please give examples of Swedish influence on your knowledge of English and/or German.
