

## **Cross-linguistic interaction in trilinguals performing translation tasks. A research project.**

Maria Tymczyńska (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań)

Translators and interpreters working for the European Union are required to possess thorough knowledge of more than two languages. Thus, they are expected to be able to translate or interpret not only from and into their language B, but also from their language C into their language A (mother tongue). Until recently, however, there has been little interest in undertaking studies specifically concerned with cross-linguistic interaction in multilinguals performing translation tasks. Needless to say, such studies can provide insight into the mechanisms governing the organisation of the multilingual lexicon and the related processes of lexical selection and control.

This project undertakes to study cross-linguistic interaction in translation tasks performed by Polish second year translation course students with the following language combinations:

Polish – A, English – B, German – C,

Polish – A, German – B, English – C.

Their performance will be compared to that of normal trilinguals and professional translators with similar language combinations and proficiency levels: (near-) proficiency for language B and (upper-) intermediate for language C.

The aim of the project will be to verify the following assumptions concerning the organisation of the mental lexicon and the strength of interlingual lexical links in the selected groups of trilinguals:

for all three subject groups it is generally expected that while the organisation of languages A and B will be of a compound form (the two linguistic codes stored in a single meaning unit), the relation between languages B and C will often be of a subordinate nature (access to the conceptual store in the weakest language often granted indirectly via language B) (Weinreich 1953, Herwig 2001: 117, 129-130, Hall and Ecke 2003). Thus, it is proposed that there will be stronger interlingual connections between languages B and C than A and C.

It follows that C to B translation will be more prone to formal and semantic interference and facilitation than C to A translation. Moreover, translation from language A to C will be especially susceptible to interference or facilitation from language B in both form and meaning.

For the language combinations in question, the above claims find support in the following effects present in TLA research: *perceived language distance* and *psychotypology* (Kellerman 1979, Larsen-Freeman and Long 1994: 103-104), and *last language effect* (Williams and Hammarberg 1998, Murphy 2003) and *recency* (Williams and Hammarberg 1998: 322). They are also bolstered by the existent views on the organisation of the bilingual and multilingual mental lexicon and processing (De Bot 2004, Cenoz et al. 2003, Singleton 1999).

The above hypotheses concerning the organisation of the mental lexicon in trilinguals and the strength of interlingual lexical links shall be tested in two main experiments: a translation recognition task (from C to B and from C to A) in which subjects will be asked to decide whether the second of the two words is a correct translation of the first, and a task in which subjects will be asked to translate (verbalise and write down) a chosen language A word given in an otherwise language C sentence. Response times and error rates will be measured to ascertain the nature and extent of cross-linguistic interaction.

### **References**

- Cenoz, Jasone – Britta Hufeisen and Ulrike Jessner (eds.). 2003. *The multilingual lexicon*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Cenoz, Jasone – Britta Hufeisen and Ulrike Jessner (eds.). 2001. *Cross-linguistic influence in third language acquisition*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- De Bot, Kees. 2004. “The multilingual lexicon: Modelling selection and control”, *International Journal of Multilingualism* 1.1: 17-32.
- Hall, Christopher J. – Ecke, Peter. 2003. “Parasitism as a default mechanism in L3 vocabulary acquisition”, in: Jasone Cenoz – Britta Hufeisen and Ulrike Jessner (eds.), 71-85.
- Herwig, Anna. 2001. “Plurilingual lexical organisation: Evidence from lexical processing in L1-L2-L3-L4 translation”, in: Jasone Cenoz – Britta Hufeisen and Ulrike Jessner (eds.), 115-137.
- Kellerman, Eric. 1979. “Transfer and non-transfer: where are we now”, *Studies in Second Language acquisition* 2: 37-57.
- Larsen-Freeman, Diane – Michael H. Long. 1994. *An introduction to second language learning research*. London: Longman.
- Murphy, Shirin. 2003. “Second Language Transfer during Third Language Acquisition”, *Working Papers in TESOL and Applied Linguistics* 3, 2. (<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/academic/tesol/Webjournal/Murphy.pdf>) (date of access: 10 Jan. 2006).
- Singleton, David. 1999. *Exploring the second language mental lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weinreich, Uriel. 1953. *Languages in contact*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Williams, Sarah – Björn Hammarberg. 1998. “Language switches in L3 production: Implications for a polyglot speaking model”, *Applied Linguistics* 19.3: 295-333.