

The role of TIME and CONDITION in syntactic CLI: a report on a longitudinal study

In this presentation we discuss the syntactic results from an ongoing longitudinal study of cross-linguistic influence among L1 Polish speakers of L2 English and L3 Norwegian acquired in an instructed setting. The long-term goal of the project is to examine the interaction between selected syntactic phenomena (see examples below) and the development of language proficiency over the span of 8 months. By investigating the influence of variables such as TIME and CONDITION on the process of acquisition, we also contribute to the discussion on the nature of cross-linguistic influence and patterns of change over time in the light of currently proposed models, such as the Typological Primacy Model (e.g. Rothman et al. 2019), or the Linguistic Proximity Model (e.g. Westergaard et al. 2017; Westergaard 2021).

The L3 Norwegian learners (n=24, mean age 20) first participated in the study after 8-9 weeks of first exposure (T1), the second data collection (T2) took place after 24-26 weeks and the third one after 35-36 weeks of exposure. We tested the applicable conditions (e.g. articles only in English and Norwegian) in all three languages in separate blocks administered over two days. An acceptability judgment task was designed with 4 conditions (and 8 sub-conditions), two of which showed similarity between Polish and Norwegian (pronominal binding and the position of adverbs of frequency) and two between English and Norwegian (definite and indefinite articles). The L3 AJT included 10 experiment items per condition with additional distractor sentences (50 total), the L1 / L2 AJT each included 6 items per condition plus distractors (30 total). Each experimental item was introduced by a background sentence; two lists were created so that each participant would only see one sub-condition for each experimental item. Responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale. The participants completed the Language History Questionnaire (Li et al. 2006) and proficiency tests in L2 and L3 to assess their proficiency at each testing point. Additionally, an L2 control group (with L1 English, L2 Norwegian) was tested to help us isolate the role of L2 English for the experimental group of L3ers.

Our main aim has been to assess how TIME and CONDITION affect the syntactic CLI. The data were analyzed using ordinal logistic regression modeling. The preliminary results do not show clear L1 facilitation for constructions present in all three languages (pronominal binding, pre-/post-verbal adverbs); however, some L2 facilitation was found for definite and indefinite articles. Additionally, our data confirmed greater learnability for definite than indefinite articles.

References:

- Li, Ping, Sara Sepanski and Xiaowei Zhao. 2006. Language history questionnaires: A web-based interface for bilingual research. *Behavior Research Methods* 38(2): 202–210.
- Rothman Jason, Jorge González Alonso, Eloi Puig-Mayenco. 2019. *Third Language Acquisition and Linguistic Transfer*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Westergaard, Marit. 2021. Microvariation in multilingual situations: The importance of property-by-property acquisition. *Second Language Research* 37(3). 379-407.

Westergaard Marit, Natalia Mitrofanova, Roksolana Mykhaylyk, Yulia Rodina. 2017. Crosslinguistic influence in the acquisition of a third language: The Linguistic Proximity Model. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 21(6): 666–82.

Examples of conditions (simplified, no background sentences):

- 1a Jan_{1/?2} znalazł swoje₁ /jego₂ klucze. (Polish) (*pronominal binding*)
 Jan found self his keys
- 1b John₁ found his_{1/2} keys. (English)
- 1c Jan_{1/*2} fant nøklene sine₁ / hans₂. (Norwegian)
 Jan found keys self his
- 2a Janek rzadko czyta (%rzadko¹) e-booki. (Polish) (*adverb placement*)
 Janek seldom reads seldom e-books
- 2b John seldom reads (*seldom) e-books. (English)
- 2c Øystein (*sjelden) leser sjelden e-bøker. (Norwegian)
 Øystein seldom reads seldom e-books
- 3a Hunden / *hund er veldig liten. (Norwegian) (*def. article*)
 The dog dog is very small
- 3b The dog / dog is very small.
- 4a Hun hørte på en / Ø interessant podcast i bilen. (*indef. article*)
 she listened to an / Ø interesting podcast in the car
- 4b She was listening to an / ~~an~~ interesting podcast in the car.

¹ Marked but acceptable.