

Syntactic CLI in a longitudinal study on L3 Norwegian among L1 Polish – L2 English speakers

In this presentation we report on the interim syntactic results of an ongoing longitudinal study of crosslinguistic influence among L1 Polish speakers of L2 English and L3 Norwegian acquired in an instructed setting. We focus on 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 source 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) is currently underway (24-26 weeks) and the third one is planned after 35-36 weeks of exposure. We test the applicable conditions (e.g. reflexive possessives only present in Polish and Norwegian, articles only in English and Norwegian) in all three languages in separate blocks administered over two days. An acceptability judgment task has been designed with 4 conditions (and 8 sub-conditions), two of which show 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 includes 10 experiment items per condition with additional distractor sentences (50 total), the L1 / L2 AJT each includes 6 items per condition plus distractors (30 total). Each experiment item is introduced by a context sentence and two lists were created so that each participant would only see one sub-condition for each experiment item. Responses are collected using a 5-point Likert scale. The participants complete 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) has been tested to help us isolate the role of L2 English for the experimental group of L3ers.

We set out to examine whether and to what extent the Polish=Norwegian and English=Norwegian conditions will be (non-)facilitative in the acquisition of L3 Norwegian. The partial results at midpoint of the second data collection stage suggest non-facilitation from L1 and L2 for pronominal binding (low accuracy in both the main group and the L2 control group), L1 facilitation for adverb placement, and L2 non-facilitation for both definite and indefinite articles (especially for the definite article very low accuracy in ratings as opposed to high accuracy ratings in the L2 control group). In the statistical analysis of the complete dataset, we fit a generalized linear mixed effects logistic regression model with Accuracy predicted by an interaction of CONDITION (4 properties) and TIME (3 testing points). We expect to trace the CLI trajectory in the selected syntactic properties over the first year of L3 learning.

References:

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- 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 context 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.