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## **CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

### *Abstract*

Learning two or more foreign languages as compulsory or optional subjects in schools has led to a growing interest in the cross-linguistic research of multilingual learners. The aim of the paper is to investigate this cross-linguistic phenomenon in the school context by focusing on multilingual learners of English as a third language. In the first part of the paper, important aspects of cross-linguistic influence and third language acquisition will be discussed. We shall also take a look at earlier studies of cross-linguistic influence on third language acquisition with a focus on various factors they investigate. In the second part of the paper, we shall present the study, that is the results of 16 secondary school students during two writing tasks in the English language and describe the frequency, type and direction of cross-linguistic influence in the English language acquisition.

**Key words:** third language acquisition, cross-linguistic influence, the English language

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, it is hard to talk about monolinguals because most of the people, especially the young ones, influenced by new technologies and mass media, have knowledge of at least one foreign language, and in most cases it is English.

When is the best time to start learning a language and which one, is still a question that needs to be answered. According to the Commission of the European Communities (2008: 11), efforts are still needed to increase the number of languages taught, particularly in relation to the choice of second foreign language, bearing in mind local conditions (border regions, presence of communities speak-

ing different languages, etc). This means that it is better to learn neighbouring languages first, together with a mother tongue, and introduce other global languages later in schools.

During foreign language learning students consciously or subconsciously rely on their first language (or mother tongue). They create their own learning system, called interlanguage (the term proposed by Selinker in 1972), which is different both from the target language and the first language. Children's exposure to new data depends on how they will change that system and approach the target language. Considering the role of students' interlanguage we must not forget the first language that influences this students' system. But, what happens when students are exposed to the acquisition of an additional foreign language, and what is the role of a previously acquired foreign language on the acquisition of a third language, are both widespread topics in the multilingual research at the moment. Due to the students' exposure to the acquisition of their first, second and third languages in schools, it is normal to assume that the presence of cross-linguistic influence, especially on a lexical level is unavoidable. Firstly, we shall discuss the field of third language acquisition and its popular psycholinguistic aspect in the research – the cross-linguistic influence. Then, we shall describe the study carried out in a secondary vocational school, focusing on the cross-linguistic influence of the first language (Croatian) and the first foreign language (or second language, German) on the acquisition of the second foreign language (third language, English).

## 2. THIRD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The third language acquisition research used to belong to the area of second language acquisition (SLA), where the second language referred to the acquisition of any language other than the first (Leung 2007). In literature third language acquisition (TLA) is still connected with two separate fields: SLA and bilingualism (Cenoz, Hufeisen and Jessner 2001). The interest in TLA has both sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic foundations. From a sociolinguistic point of view, the spread of English in the world, the increasing mobility of the world population and the recognition of minority languages have resulted in social and educational situations in which learning more than two languages is not unusual. From a psycholinguistic perspective, TLA research presents specific characteristics derived from the fact that third language learners are experienced learners and also because bilingual and multilingual individuals have a different type of competence as compared to that of monolinguals (Cenoz, Hufeisen and Jessner 2001: 1).

We now see TLA as a separate phenomenon in the multilingual research, presenting a more diverse and complex process than SLA, because it is no longer the study relating to the interaction of two different languages, but to three and even more languages (multilingualism) (Cenoz 2004).

Even though there are many common features of the two fields, especially in the school context, the difference between SLA and TLA lies in the fact that third language learners already possess some knowledge and experience in foreign language learning. Therefore, language learning strategies, language competence, even metalinguistic awareness, the factors that considerably affect any foreign language acquisition, in TLA are considered to be the factors that make foreign language learning more successful. Cenoz, Hufeisen and Jessner (2001) also make a difference between the two terms: TLA and trilingualism. The first term denotes the acquisition of the third language in schools, and the latter denotes the use of three languages, as a means of communication in formal or informal settings. There are also various aspects involved in TLA research, like sociolinguistic, educational, cognitive and psycholinguistic.

In this paper we will focus on a psycholinguistic aspect in TLA research, and that is the study of cross-linguistic influence.

### 3. CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE

First identifications of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) as an important phenomenon began at the end of the 1950s, in the works of Weinreich and Lado. Weinreich (1953) used the term *interference* for instances of language deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language. His definition focuses on what was later termed *negative transfer* (Di 2005: 8). Later, the hypothesis of contrastive analysis, the idea of which was to compare certain structures in the first and second language and to determine similarities or differences between the two languages, was developed (in Croatia we have evidence of Contrastive analysis project that was started by Prof. Rudolf Filipović in the 1970s).

Although there were many different terms in the past referring to the phenomenon of CLI as *language transfer*, *linguistic interference*, *language mixing*, *influence and role of the mother tongue*, the term CLI was first mentioned in the 1980s by Kellerman and Sharwood Smith and later Ringbom (1987) to include such phenomena as *transfer*, *interference*, *avoidance*, *borrowing and L2 related aspects of language loss* (Kellerman and Sharwood Smith 1986, cited in Cenoz, Hufeisen and Jessner 2001: 1). There are rather controversial opinions while dis-

Discussing the term and the real nature of transfer, but the most popular working definition of language transfer is given by Odlin (1989) who defines transfer as the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired (Odlin 1989: 27). According to him, when individuals know two languages, that knowledge may affect their acquisition of a third language, whereas, most likely, the knowledge of three or more languages can lead to three or more different kinds of source language influence, although pinning down the exact influences in multilingual situations is often hard (Odlin 1989: 27). Therefore, language transfer is often regarded as a complex phenomenon in the field of second language learning.

Earlier, the research in CLI put only two languages under investigation, but nowadays, with rapid learning of more than just one foreign language, there is an increase in the CLI research of bilinguals and multilinguals, which is the main topic tackled by many researchers (such as Grosjean 2010; Tremblay 2006; Navés et al. 2005) who want to expand their studies examining interrelations among different lexicons. What is often found in the literature on CLI studies are the differences between two forms of language transfer in the foreign language acquisition: positive and negative. Positive transfer will refer to the previous language knowledge that helps the acquisition of a new target language (especially among languages which are typologically closer), while negative transfer refers to the incorrect use of the target language that is mainly the result of the influence of some other previously learned or acquired languages (and it is more referred to typologically distant languages).

CLI research is usually based on the studies of negative language transfer of native or non native languages during the acquisition of the new language that has been acquired. The research is still preliminary in the multilingual context, especially in formal education. Nevertheless, it is becoming more and more popular, and the main areas of research focus on the effects of different factors that might influence the interaction between the languages.

The most common factors that affect the type, frequency and direction of CLI are typological distance, language proficiency, age, exposure to the language, psychotypology (perception about similarities between languages), language mode, L2 status, recency, metalinguistic awareness. There are many factors recognized in TLA regarding the CLI context, but still it is not completely clear to what extent each factor is important in the acquisition process (Tremblay 2006).

Language transfer can be found and observed at sublevels of phonology, discourse and lexis. Our study is aimed at discussing language transfer at the lexical level. It is believed that it is at the level of lexis that the transfer is most

frequent or at least most apparent (Letica & Mardešić 2007: 309). It can especially be seen in terms of cognates. Cognates refer to lexical units that are in form similar in both etymologically related languages and have the same meaning. Sometimes they are not just connected with negative transfer but with positive too, because students might use them when they want to enrich their linguistic repertoire during communication.

According to Pal (2000) there are four types of cognates: true, deceptive, false and accidental. *True cognates* are words which are etymologically related and whose semantic properties completely or almost completely overlap; *deceptive cognates* are words which are etymologically related and whose semantic properties partially overlap (they are either no longer translation equivalents, or are equivalents only in certain contexts, but they still share some features of meaning); *false cognates* are words which are etymologically related and whose semantic features no longer overlap; *accidental cognates* are words which have no obvious etymological relationship and do not share any features of meaning, but which nevertheless bear much formal resemblance (Pal 2000: 39-40). In this study we come across two types of cognates: *true cognates*: *hause* – *house*, *musik* – *music* and *deceptive cognates*: *see* – *sea*, *denn* – *then*.

#### 4. CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE STUDIES IN THIRD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

It is generally known and even proven by some studies that there will be a positive effect of bilingualism on the acquisition of a third language. Ringbom (1987: 112) considers bilinguals to be more successful learners of a foreign language than monolinguals. As a result of this he emphasises a wider perspective on language and a greater awareness of language variation and the possibilities of expressing the same idea by different linguistic means (Pal 2000: 25). Cenoz (2004) examined the differences in oral production in English as a third language (L3) among the subjects with different first languages (Basque, Basque and Spanish or Spanish) and wanted to see what affected the cross-linguistic influence: the difference between the first languages, psychotypology or age. According to her results, there were no significant differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency and content when the three groups were compared considering their first language (L1). As was expected, there were considerable differences regarding the age of participants because the children who had received the same amount of instruction at different ages presented different results. The greatest transfer was seen from Spanish and Basque and Spanish. The study again confirmed that

psychotypology is an important factor in third language acquisition and that age has a significant role in lexical cross-linguistic influence.

Tremblay (2006) investigated the effects of the learners' first and second language (English and French) on the acquisition and the production of words in a third language (German) with respect to learners' proficiency and exposure to their second language (L2). Although the influence of French as an L2 was mostly evident in students with high proficiency and exposure to the language, the main source of transfer was, nevertheless, learners' L1 (English) for all three groups. As emphasized by the author, this can be explained by several factors: firstly, all three groups had low proficiency in French, secondly, during the interview English was used for all communication between the interviewer and the participants and, finally, the factor of psychotypology was important (perceived similarity between English and German in this case).

In her study Griessler (2001) wanted to show positive effects of third language learning on second language proficiency in three different Austrian schools: LISA, a bilingual school (with English as a language of instruction), a regular high school and a French branch of high school (where students start learning French in Grade 7). The students in LISA bilingual school outperformed those in the other two schools. Apart from positive effects of bilingualism, the effect of the third language (learning French as an L3) also played a positive role in English L2 proficiency. Nevertheless, language skills, communicative strategies, language learning techniques and even metalinguistic awareness can be transferred not only from L1 and L2 to L3, but in the opposite direction as well.

Letica and Mardešić (2007) identified cross-linguistic influence in oral production of Croatian L1 speakers of English as L2 and Italian as L3. Their aim was to investigate the influence in terms of the students' exposure to L2 or L3, proficiency in L2 and L3 and both formal and perceived typological distance between the three languages. In the picture description task, L1 was the main source of influence on both L2 and L3, and in the oral translation task data showed more occurrences of non-native (L2) transfer than L1 transfer in L3 production. Participants that were more exposed to L2 showed both L2 and L1 transfer in L3, and those exposed more to L3 showed no L2 transfer and negligible L1 transfer in L3. The authors conclude that although the cross-linguistic similarity is thought to be a significant factor in L2 and L3 transfer, in their study the frequency and direction of transfer were affected by some other factors, like the degree of linguistic constraint and communicative pressure implicit in the context of production, recency and proficiency in L2 and L3 (Letica and Mardešić 2007: 317).

The above studies on cross-linguistic influence including age, psychotypology, exposure to languages and language proficiency as crucial factors in multiple

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language acquisition open the way for new aspects of cross-linguistic studies on all educational levels.

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 5.1. AIM AND PARTICIPANTS

The aim of this study was to investigate the frequency, type and direction of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) in terms of students' years of learning the languages, their exposure to languages and their proficiency. We wanted to see what influence previously learned or acquired languages would have on third language acquisition during two writing tasks: translation task and dictation, and see whether there was a difference in the frequency of CLI in two different tasks. Our starting hypothesis was that the greatest influence would be visible in less proficient and average students, and we thought that the frequency of transfer would depend on the exposure to L2 and L3 outside school regardless of formal instruction of both languages.

Since a translation task is regarded as a more complex writing task for the students than dictation, our next hypothesis was that this was the area in which we would find the most significant influence.

Participants were 16 secondary school students of administrative school (grades 2 and 3) with three different languages – first language (L1): Croatian, first foreign or second language (L2): German and second foreign or third language (L3): English. According to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), students' proficiency in L2 was on the level A2/B1, and proficiency in L3 was on the level A1 for all the students.

Out of 16 students who participated in the study, 7 were in the second and 9 in the third grade, 3 males and 13 females, with the average age of 16 and 18. Except L2 German and L3 English, students also stated they had learned Latin for two years, but it was not taken into consideration during the analysis.

They learned German as L2 between 6 and 8 years, and English between 2 and 3 years, except for two students, one who learned English for 4 years, and one for 8 years. It must be that English was offered as an optional subject in some primary schools, so the years of learning English as L3 by one student exceeded the years of learning German as L2.

## 5.2. INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURE

Students did a background questionnaire in Croatian, where they were asked to write their demographic data (name, surname, age), data on learning foreign languages (order of learning the languages, length of learning, exposure to the languages inside and outside school, grades in the languages, which was an indicator of the students' language proficiency) and other data (which of the languages they like best, in which they rate themselves better in writing, between which languages they find similarities).

In order to elicit data for the CLI measurement we used two writing tasks: translation and dictation. Students did a short translation of 100 words from Croatian into English. The text was adapted to their level of knowledge, which means that there were no unknown words to students. They could come across these words during their regular English classes. Sentences were rather simple, but the text consisted of words that were thought to cause CLI.

The task of translating the text was limited to 30 minutes, because students did translation in school where a regular school hour lasts for 45 minutes.

In a week's time, the students took a dictation of the same text in English. There were three readings of the text: first, the whole text was read, then sentence by sentence and again the whole text, so that the students could check their spelling one more time. In both tasks the lexical transfer was exclusively observed.

## 6. RESULTS

### 6.1. EXPOSURE TO LANGUAGES

Considering the exposure to German in school, everybody was exposed to it 3 hours a week, and outside school the exposure varied, from 30 minutes to 7 hours a week, while students were exposed to English twice a week in school, and from 1 hour to 94 hours a week outside school. Students were engaged in German outside school, doing the following activities: doing homework (N=13), studying for tests (N=12), watching films (N=4), browsing the Internet (N=2), talking with friends and family (N=2), reading magazines or books (N=0), writing letters and emails (N=0). One student wrote he had private lessons in German two hours a week.

The students were exposed to the English language as follows: watching films (N=15), doing homework (N=13), studying for tests (N=12), browsing the



Internet (N=8), writing letters and emails (N=4), talking with friends and family (N=4), reading magazines or books (N=1).

Two students also stated they listened to music in English, and one had private lessons in English every two weeks.

We can notice a considerable difference between the students' exposure to English and German, which can be justified by the fact that students are more exposed to the English media, which is more available to them, than the German one.

## 6.2. STUDENTS' PROFICIENCY IN GERMAN AND ENGLISH

According to the students' abilities in four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) we divided them into three groups: less proficient (with sufficient knowledge in the language), average (with good knowledge) and proficient (with very good and excellent knowledge). On the basis of students' self evaluation in the language skills and their final grade from the previous class, most students in both grades were average students (9), 4 of them were proficient and 3 less proficient in German. There were 8 average students, 6 less proficient and 2 proficient students in English.

We also need to add that self evaluation might not be an objective method in determining students' level of proficiency, but we used it because it was less time consuming for students who were examined during their regular English classes.

## 6.3. FREQUENCY AND DIRECTION OF TRANSFER IN TRANSLATION TASK

### 6.3.3. Grade 2

The analysis of the results showed that transfer was mostly directed from L2, and Grade 2 students showed negligible L1 transfer. Out of seven students who did the translation, we came across 4 unfinished translations (3 less proficient and 1 average student). As a reason for this, the students mentioned that they did not know or could not remember some words. Some stated it would have been better if they had done translation orally, and they were not sure how some words were written. As we also found transfer in these translations we took them into consideration. Table 1 shows direction and number of occurrences of transfer among the Grade 2 students.

Direction of transfer	L1 →L3	L2 → L3
No. of occurrences of transfer	2	22

Table 1: Number of occurrences of transfer in translation task

Considering the type of transfer, that from L1 was transfer of meaning. Two students used the verb *to have* as in Croatian rather than *to be* in the sentence *I have 16* instead of *I am 16*.

Transfer from L2 refers to transfer of form, like in the examples: *kino* instead of *cinema* (word *kino* is still a matter of question – L1 or L2 transfer because in Croatian we have the same lexical form of the word), *see - sea*, *hause - house*, *junger - younger*, *ingeneur; ingineur or inginer - engineer*. Few had errors in the following words: *ist - is*, *studiert - studies*, *kome - comes*, *musik - music*, *feriens - holidays*.

Table 2 shows the frequency of transfer regarding students' proficiency. There was negligible frequency of transfer in less proficient students due to unfinished translation. However, the frequency of transfer was considerable among students although it was showed they were exposed more to English than German outside school. It can also be due to the fact that most students perceived English and German more similar than English and Croatian. Those students who were average students in English also said to be proficient students in German language.

Direction of transfer	L1 →L3	L2 → L3
Less proficient	–	5
Average	2	13
Proficient	–	4

Table 2: Number of occurrences of transfer in the translation task with respect to language proficiency

## 6.3.4. Grade 3

There was no noticeable difference in the frequency of transfer between Grade 3 and Grade 2. In Grade 3 we found similar results and most of the transfer could be seen from L2. 4 less proficient and 2 average students did not finish their translations. It was again because of the lack of vocabulary, as students could not remember some words, but they said that it would be easier for them to say the words than to write them.

Direction of transfer	L1 →L3	L2 → L3
No. of occurrences of transfer	6	27

Table 3: Number of occurrences of transfer in translation task

Type of transfer from L1 was the same as in the previous grade. Other types referred to errors (in terms of spelling) like *shester* instead of *sister*, *denn - then*, *sommer - summer*, *inginer - engineer*, *studiert - studies*, *junger - younger*, *onkel - uncle*, *see - sea*.

According to Table 4 we do not see a difference in the transfer between less proficient and average students. Negligible transfer can be seen in one proficient student – the participant who was exposed more to English than German although German was his L2.

Direction of transfer	L1 →L3	L2 → L3
Less proficient	3	13
Average	3	13
Proficient	–	1

Table 4: Number of occurrences of transfer in the translation task with respect to language proficiency

Except for one average and one proficient student who were proficient students in German, others were less proficient or average. All the students were more exposed to English than German, and the years of learning English were also different. Therefore, it was assumed there would be less transfer in this grade, which was not the case here. In relation to language typology, 4 students found German and English to be similar, whereas 4 found Croatian and German to be similar, so the hypothesis detailing the students' perception about the similarity between the languages cannot be fully confirmed here.

#### 6.4. FREQUENCY AND DIRECTION OF TRANSFER IN DICTATION

##### 6.4.1. Grade 2

The initial position of the researcher was that there would be less transfer in dictation because it is less cognitively demanding than translation, and if there was any transfer it would normally come from L2.

Here is the presentation of the frequency of transfer in dictation.

Direction of transfer	L1 →L3	L2 → L3
No. of occurrences of transfer	–	35

Table 5: Number of occurrences of transfer in dictation

We notice only the transfer from L2, but the frequency is again justified because students who did not finish translation wrote the whole text in this task.

Students made the same errors using German words instead of English *see* - *sea*, *junger* - *younger*, *musik* – *music*, whereas one student even wrote capital letters in some nouns, for example - *Music*, *Grandfather*, *Parents*.

The next table shows the frequency of transfer with respect to students' proficiency.

Direction of transfer	L1 →L3	L2 → L3
Less proficient	–	17
Average	–	13
Proficient	–	4

Table 6: Number of occurrences of transfer in dictation with respect to language proficiency

#### 6.4.2. Grade 3

Since some students in Grade 3 did not finish the translation task, after which they stated they would have written the word if they had heard the pronunciation, it was believed there would be less transfer in dictation than in translation. We even found more transfer in dictation than before, and it might be because all the students finished writing the dictation.

Direction of transfer	L1 →L3	L2 → L3
No. of occurrences of transfer	–	41

Table 7: Number of occurrences of transfer in dictation

Transfer was of the same type as in the previous task: *sommer - summer*, *musik - music*, *see - sea*, *onkel - uncle*, *janger, yunger - younger*, *den - then*, *kome - comes*. Almost all students made the same errors in both tasks, even the proficient student who was not expected to do so (*see - sea*).

There was also no essential difference in the transfer between less proficient and average students, and the errors were mainly from L2.

Direction of transfer	L1 →L3	L2 → L3
Less proficient	–	21
Average	–	19
Proficient	–	1

Table 8: Number of occurrences of transfer in dictation with respect to language proficiency

## 7. DISCUSSION

Our study examined the frequency, type and direction of language transfer from the previously learned languages on the third language. Regardless of the small number of students included in the study, as well as their different language background, the obtained results confirmed some previous results and expanded the basis for future research in the field of cross-linguistic influence. Our first hypothesis that the most influence would be found in less proficient and average students seems to be confirmed. As it has been expected, less proficient and average students experienced more influence than proficient ones. Generally speaking, language transfer is more likely to happen at lower levels of proficiency, and some studies proved that the transfer can happen at the beginning stage of studying the language, when students have not completely mastered the language. According to Munoz (2004), as grade (or the stage of studying) increases, so does proficiency (Navés et al 2005). Studies concerning language proficiency also showed that language transfer happens regardless of the student's stage of language learning, and whether or not the student possesses high or low level of second language proficiency (Williams & Hammarberg 1998; Ecke 2001). The second hypothesis was that the frequency of transfer would depend on the exposure to L2 and L3 outside school regardless of formal instruction of both languages. It was not confirmed. The students used more German words (as their L2) and made orthographic mistakes in both tasks in English, although they were exposed more to English than

German. Results in this case do not even confirm the statement made by Letica & Mardešić (2007: 308) who claim that it seems logical that there is a possibility that in non-native production the speaker's transfer can come from a non-native language they are most exposed to. In our case, students were not exposed to German most, but they still transferred from the mentioned language. Although it was considered there would be an evident difference between translation and dictation in the frequency of influence, it also did not happen, so our last hypothesis is not confirmed, either. The dominance of transfer in two different types of tasks was almost equal, and the translation as a more demanding writing task when compared to the dictation did not confirm our presumption.

Most observed instances of transfer were directed from L2 to L3, and it was mainly the transfer of form. The influence from L1 to L3 was only negligible, and was related to the transfer of meaning. Ringbom (1987, 2001) believes that the transfer of meaning can only occur from languages the speaker knows well. When there is no transfer of meaning, transfer becomes a more superficial phenomenon and the learners' errors are best viewed as forms of borrowing (De Angelis 2007: 42). Apart from the different levels of proficiency of students in both languages (because those who were less proficient in English were proficient in German), the reason could be the students' perception of the similarities between German and English, because many students found those two languages similar, as they really are, since they belong to the same Germanic group. In relation to the type of influence we found cognates to be the most present type. They were mainly of true and deceptive types (*true cognates: hause – house, musik – music* and *deceptive cognates: see – sea, denn – then*).

One of the reasons why we found a lot of transfer from L2 might be because students mentioned in their background questionnaire that they were better in writing in German (N=11) than in English (N=5). German orthography is surely much easier than English, but the words that seemed to be simple to write in English were also difficult for some students in both tasks.

However, the study presented has shown a necessity for a more thorough examination of language proficiency and language exposure, as unavoidable factors in foreign language learning from a psycholinguistic perspective, especially when we have in mind, not just one, but two or even more foreign languages being learned.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Odlin (1989) points out that at the early stages of acquisition transfer is often negative, as was in this study, and is used as a general strategy to fill knowl-

edge gaps in the target language. He also notes that transfer cannot be safely assumed to decline as proficiency in the target language grows, not at least until an individual has reached a very high level of proficiency and automaticity in the target language (De Angelis 2007: 33). That is why more research is needed with respect to students' language proficiency. Studies in terms of language proficiency have also shown that transfer happens regardless of the students' stage of learning and whether students know or do not know their non-native language well. Therefore, occurrences of transfer in our students' tasks might be the result of the students' low proficiency in the target language. It has also been proven that the more the students are exposed to certain languages the greater the possibility for transfer to happen in a new language. In our study, the students were only exposed to particular foreign languages through the media outside school, and not in a non-native language environment (as in Stedje 1977; Fouser 2001), so the factor of exposure to languages of this kind needs further investigation. Other interesting factors that are not investigated in this study, but deserve special attention are recency and psychotypology. Some researchers also assume that there will be more transfer from the language that has actively been used by the learners and between the languages that are perceived typologically closer by students. Due to the small number of participants and their homogeneity (it means they did not have the same level of proficiency in the languages), the results obtained in the study cannot be generalized. Observing the cross-linguistic transfer, only three languages were considered: Croatian, German and English, where German and English are seen as typologically closer languages. The direction of transfer that was examined was *forward* transfer (from L1 and L2 to L3). In future studies it would be interesting to include typologically unrelated languages as well as observe other directions of transfer, like *lateral* transfer (from L3 to L2 and L1).

However, in a foreign language classroom it is important to prevent negative transfer and enable positive one, and to do that, teachers should use various techniques to combine contrastive, cognitive and communicative elements in their language activities. Students should also be aware of the presence of possible ways of transfer between the language they have previously learned and a new one. Carefully selecting foreign languages to be taught in schools and making differences between them is an essential phenomenon of multilingual Europe.

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### MEĐUJEZIČKI UTICAJ U USVAJANJU ENGLESKOG JEZIKA

#### Sažetak

Usled uvođenja obavezne ili izborne nastave dva ili više stranih jezika u škole, razvilo se i zanimanje za međujezičko istraživanje višejezičnih učenika. Cilj ovog rada je da istraži ovaj međujezički fenomen u školskom kontekstu usmeravajući se na višejezične učenike engleskog jezika kao trećeg jezika. U prvom delu rad se bavi važnim aspektima međujezičkog uticaja na usvajanje trećeg jezika. Bavimo se, takođe, bavimo ranijim istraživanjima međujezičkog uticaja na usvajanje trećeg jezika i faktorima koji se u tim istraživanjima ispituju. U drugom delu dajemo pregled istraživanja koje je sprovedeno za potrebe ovog rada na uzorku od 16 učenika srednje škole tokom dva pismena zadatka na engleskom jeziku, gde opisujemo frekvenciju, tip i smer međujezičkih uticaja u usvajanju engleskog jezika.

**Cljučne reči:** usvajanje trećeg jezika, međujezički uticaj, engleski jezik.