

Cross-Language Interaction during Trilingual Production

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Abstract: *This is a case study which focuses on the pragmatic component of language competence, the trilingual's ability to make the appropriate linguistic choices in monolingual, bilingual, or trilingual communication modes, and the potential developmental stages learners undergo. Pragmatic competence is a key factor for successful language communication in socio-cultural surroundings and a language aspect that causes many challenges for FL learners. Although pragmatic competence is generally neglected in second language acquisition, learners should be fostered to develop pragmatic skills in the target language. For many years, learning a foreign language was equated with linguistic or grammatical accuracy but since the adoption of the communicative approach, the focus has moved to the achievement of functional abilities in the target language, language understanding and language production which are appropriate to the communicative situation in accordance with specific sociocultural parameters.*

Mia is the research subject who has grown up in a trilingual language environment of German from birth (L1), English since the age of four (L2), and Bulgarian when she was five (L3). She is a trilingual child who has been brought up with two home languages (English and Bulgarian) which are different from the one spoken in the wider community (German). Mia has grown up with rich exposure to all three languages while her parents followed practices that promoted language development. For this reason, she has developed active trilingual language abilities, although she seemed to favour German over English and Bulgarian for spontaneous language production.

The aim of the study is to analyse the nature of the trilingual's interlanguage competence and cross-language interaction through examining her performance data, which will undoubtedly contribute to the research of trilingualism and multilingualism and ascertain the importance of different environmental factors in fostering active trilingualism. The present study investigates how trilingual's native and non-native languages interact in the process of language production. It disputes Chomsky's Universal Grammar and his view that human language faculty is innate and proves that languages are learned through experience and exposure to stimuli in the environment rather than being innately endowed.

Language exposure, the quantity of input for each language, interlocutor language, and parenting language strategies are considered as key factors to trilingual language acquisition and active trilingualism. Mia's language production was observed in her natural environment as particular attention was given to the influence of language exposure patterns and parenting language strategies.

In conclusion, this study follows the language development of a trilingual child but it also looks for evidence that trilingual children have later in their years an advantage over their monolingual peers because they can use structural knowledge

of three languages instead of one language only. Language creates culture and emotions, and moving from one country to another could influence one in a different way.

Keywords: *trilingualism; cross-language interaction; language production; pragmatic competence;*