

Abstract

Analysis of psycholinguistic variables in the interlanguage of L1 Polish students of L3 Spanish

The main aim of this thesis is to provide a detailed account of the psycholinguistic background of Polish students of L3 Spanish, as well as to analyze the impact of individual differences on such students' error production.

In order to carry out the first objective, a survey was designed to control the students' socio-psycholinguistic factors. Those factors in which no greater variation was found were the following: degree of language proficiency; language of identification; preferred language for the expression of emotions; frequency of use; age of onset; and type and amount of exposure to the target language. However, variation was found in terms of the following variables: perception of usefulness, perception of prestige, perception of stressfulness, and best sounding language. The present work also includes the control of the variable defined by Eric Kellerman as *psychotypology* (i.e. the psychological perception of linguistic proximity between languages), which allowed an analysis of the impact of individual differences on multilingual users of three distantly related languages (in this case, L1 Polish, L2 English, L3 Spanish).

In terms of the second objective, a student corpus was elaborated on the basis of three different pieces of writing related to topics which had been discussed previously in class in order to avoid an overproduction of errors due to ignorance of vocabulary. In total, the corpus consists of seventy-two (72) compositions, with a total of fifteen thousand two hundred and eighty-eight (15288) words. Next, both the type and frequency of errors (every hundred words, as well as by token) were analysed, followed by a statistical analysis in the form of nonparametric tests such as the Mann-Whitney U test (for two groups) and the Kruskal-Wallis test (for three or more groups) in order to check whether the aforementioned individual differences produce any significant statistical difference between the groups.

Although, as expected, the type of task had a considerable influence on the type of errors, the results of the present thesis report both positive and negative effects of the perception of linguistic closeness on the students' frequency of errors.

Positive effects were found in: 1) the perception of the L2 as most useful in terms of the use of the noun in general (p 0.03) (especially when it comes to the use of nonexistent nouns in Spanish, p 0.03236), and in terms of verbal agreement errors in the B1 group (p 0.03752); 2) the perception of Spanish as the most prestigious language in the case of the use of incorrect verbs (p 0.02382); 3) lexical psychotypology (Spanish/Polish) in the frequency of verbal agreement errors in the B1 group (p 0.02444); and 4) the grammatical psychotypology (Spanish/Polish), in the B2 group, with regard to verb conjugation errors (p 0.00544), wrong article use (p 0.0477), article avoidance (p 0.04136), and preposition avoidance (p 0.0278); and generally speaking (B1 + B2) on the use of the Spanish articles (p 0.02034) (particularly in connection with article avoidance errors, p 0.03156), as well as prepositions (p 0.03846).

On the other hand, negative effects were found in: 1) the perception of the L2 as most useful in terms of the use of incorrect prepositions in the B2 group (p 0.0455); 2) the perception of Spanish as the most prestigious language with regard to article avoidance errors (p 0.03); 3) the perception of Spanish as the most stressful language in connection with the use of verbs (p 0.034) (particularly with regard to verb conjugation errors, p 0.04444), as well as with errors of category when it comes to the article (p 0.0466) (mainly in the B1 group, p 0.00328); 4) the perception of Spanish as the best sounding language with regard to the frequency of gender and number errors (p 0.00736), as well as to prepositional errors (in the B2 group, p 0.0455); 5) lexical psychotypology (Spanish/Polish) in terms of article use in the

B2 group (p 0.04444); 6) phonetic psychotypology (Spanish/Polish) in respect of verbal agreement errors (p 0.0477) and of the use of incorrect articles (p 0.0477) in the B1 group; and 7) grammatical psychotypology (Spanish/Polish) as to the frequency of lexical errors (i.e. use of the wrong verb, p 0.0226) and in the unnecessary use of articles in the B1 group (p 0.03846).

The findings obtained from the present investigation reveal the complexity of the interaction of individual variables in the production of errors of Polish learners of L3 Spanish and call for the research of the causes that motivate the aforementioned correlations, especially with regard to the negative effects of the perception of linguistic closeness between L1 and L3.

Key words: multilingualism, individual differences, third language acquisition, L3 Spanish, psycholinguistics, psychotypology