Various factors have been shown to be crucial in determining the source and directionality of crosslinguistic influence (CLI) in Third Language Acquisition (L3A). While lexical (Angelovska & Hahn 2012) and morphosyntactic (Tsang 2009) development in L3A are relatively well documented, few studies have been conducted on L3 phonology (e.g., Llama et al. 2010). Furthermore, L3A studies do not systematically tease apart CLI from the potential contribution of linguistic (Bialystok et al. 2012) and cognitive (Jessner 2006) advantages of multilingualism. This gap begs for new studies in L3A that separate CLI effects from such advantages.

We investigate the extent of CLI and systematically separate it from non-transfer factors by testing age- and SES-matched young monolingual (German, n=12) vs. bilingual (Turkish-German, n=12) learners of English on their acquisition of various L2/L3 phonological features. Based on predicted CLI, we test several segmental and suprasegmental features that are expected to:

(A) positively transfer from the L1 (Turkish) of the bilinguals (e.g., final voiced obstruents),

(B) positively transfer from the participants’ L1/L2 (German, e.g., word initial consonant clusters),

and

(C) be intransferable from either language (e.g., interdental fricatives).

The experiments, currently underway, employ an AX discrimination and a delayed repetition task to test the perception and production of (A), (B), and (C) in English by the two groups.

We further investigate whether the perception and production results are modulated by cognitive and sociolinguistic (attitudinal/motivational) variables through a phonological working memory task and questionnaires.

Based on the Cumulative Enhancement Model (Berkes & Flynn 2012), we predict the bilinguals to outperform the monolinguals in (A), and both groups to perform equally well in (B). If bilinguals enjoy the cognitive and linguistic benefits of bilingualism, bilinguals should perform better in (C). Due to insufficient statistical power at this stage, we refrain from making generalizations on our preliminary findings.

Keywords: Phonological Working Memory, Third Language Phonetics and Phonology, Bilingual Crosslinguistic Interference.