Within research on the role of the background languages in L3 learning, there is an ongoing discussion on whether typology (e.g. the Typological Proximity Model, Rothman 2013) or language status (e.g. the L2 status factor, Bardel and Falk 2012) exerts strongest impact on the transfer source. In the present study explores two learners of L3 German. More specifically we look at transferred lexical items and their pronunciation. The longitudinal data comprise two absolute beginners of German with the following background languages (L1 Swedish, L2 English, French, Spanish and Italian). Data consist of semi-guided spontaneous speech; the learners were given various tasks that had to be solved, with help from a German-speaking interlocutor. Since they did not yet have knowledge about all the German words needed for the conversation, they transferred words from both their weakest L2s (Spanish and Italian) and from the L1. The results showed the following pattern: when transferring a lexical item from the L1, the word was phonetically adapted to German (e.g. ein forsättsning), but when transferring a lexical item from a romance L2 (e.g., eine condizion) the word was not adapted to German at all. There is a progress concerning their pronunciation at the segmental level to a more native-like in the last recordings. However, both learners still have a prosodic pattern like their L1 at the phrasal level.

References:


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