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"I haven't got a clue what it means" – Crosslinguistic influences on multilingual learners' metalinguistic awareness in L3 French

This article deals with multilingual students' metalinguistic awareness in L3 French at the university level. The aim of the article is to study how the students' multilingualism influences their lexical strategies in a meaning construction task and to answer the following research questions: What type of crosslinguistic influence can be observed in an oral meaning construction task of L1-L2-L3 cognate words? What kind of metalinguistic strategies do the multilingual learners adopt in this test? The corpus consists of 12 first year students' productions; students were divided into three different proficiency levels (evaluated with a DIALANG test). The results show that the deliberate activation of L3, L2s and L1 by cognate words had a great impact on the meaning construction of the L3 words. Nevertheless, well learned common words seemed to resist this (combined) crosslinguistic influence. The analysis also revealed that in meaning construction, the participants had recourse to several form- and/or meaning-based strategies which, however, were not always successful.

Keywords: crosslinguistic influence, meaning construction, metalinguistic awareness, multilingual learners

1 Introduction

As stated in many recent studies, multilingualism is rather the rule than the exception, the majority of world population being multilingual, depending on the definition (Filatova 2010; Hammarberg 2001, 2010; Bassetti & Cook 2011). Nevertheless, research interests have focused, until quite recently, mostly on bilinguals and second language acquisition. The learning of additional languages has not been considered to differ from learning a second language (L2), which has led to possible overgeneralizations when the participants in bilingual, as well as monolingual studies, may have been actually multilingual (De Angelis 2007; Aronin & Hufeisen 2009; Filatova 2010). The term third language (L3) is used to refer to language users with a complex linguistic background in a specific situation (cf. Hammarberg 2010).

Earlier research has also shown that when using a L2, other languages are accessible at the same time at some level of activation, for instance through syntactic, lexical or phonological activation of parts of these languages (Bassetti & Cook 2011: 180; Green 2011: 230–231). The parallel involvement of more than one language in cognitive processing renders the relationship between language and cognition more complex than in monolingual or bilingual contexts – in the case of a negative or positive influence of these languages on each other, we can talk about a combined crosslinguistic influence (De Angelis 2007).

The objective of this study was to explore the influence of multilingual learners' other languages on their metalinguistic knowledge in L3 French in an oral meaning construction task. More precisely, the aim was to study how L3 learners construct the meaning of cognate[1] words that induce a high probability of crosslinguistic influence. In other words, we wanted to observe whether the deliberate activation of L2s and L1 by cognate words would have an impact on the meaning construction. The task was to orally translate French words into L1 (Finnish) words that were known to be L3, L2 or L1 cognates.

We wanted to answer the following research questions:

1. What type of crosslinguistic influence can be observed in an oral meaning construction task of L1-L2-L3 cognates?
2. What kind of metalinguistic strategies do the multilingual learners adopt in an oral meaning construction task in L3?

1 We use here the term cognate in order to refer to words having formal similarities despite the meaning (cf. Nilsson 2007: 9). Nevertheless, cognates are usually separated from **false friends** (i.e., chance or semantic false friends) or **partial false friends** (see, for instance, Chamizo Domínguez & Nerlich 2002; Chamizo Domínguez 2008). See also section 2.2.

The corpus consisted of 12 productions of first year university students of L3 French. They were all native speakers of Finnish and none of them were early or balanced bilinguals in Finnish and French, nor in any other language.

The next section discusses the theoretical background and the concepts of multilingualism, crosslinguistic influence, and metalinguistic awareness. In section 3, the study is presented, followed by section 4 on analysis and results. Section 5 presents some tentative conclusions.

2 Multilingualism and crosslinguistic influences on metalinguistic awareness

To provide a unanimously accepted definition of multilingualism is as impossible as that of bilingualism; they are always context-related concepts and used for different purposes, and therefore it might even be undesirable to try to cover them with one single definition (Bassetti & Cook 2011: 143–146). In addition, it seems that definitions vary according to the "knowledge of another language" and the "ability to use another language". The present article uses the term **multilingualism** including learners with knowledge of and the ability to use two or more languages with no assumption on level of fluency (see section 3).

2.1 Multilingual learners in L3 language

The definition of a first language or mother tongue (L1), second or foreign language (L2) and any additional languages seems as disperse as that of bilingualism, depending on context or suitability. In general, first language(s) refers to the language acquired through socialisation in childhood, whereas second language(s) is acquired later on, mostly through instruction (Hammarberg 2010: 92–94; see also Lindqvist 2006). Languages that are learned after the L2 can all be called L2, but recently there seems to be an urge to be more precise in defining, as multilingualism has become more evident, and one can talk about L2, L3, L4, L5, and so forth. According to Hammarberg (2010: 93–94), current definitions of L1-L2-L3 can, chronologically speaking, follow a linear time scale, which, however, rarely is accurate; for instance, several languages can be learned simultaneously with different proficiency levels and including different types of knowledge, acquisition might be interrupted and some intercomprehension between neighbouring languages, such as Scandinavian or Romance languages (see also Nilsson 2007: 10–11), can occur without a full knowledge of them.

Some researchers use the term L3 to cover all languages from the third onwards, and have recourse to terms like "third or additional language" (De Angelis 2007: 8–12), or they separate them more precisely like "the third and all consecutive languages (L3 and L(2+n)" (Filatova 2010: 85); in these cases, the linear model also prevails. However, this phenomenon could also be approached from another angle, namely from dividing earlier acquired or learned languages from the one which is currently being acquired (see e.g., Hammarberg 2001; Lindqvist 2006). In this case, the L3 is not necessarily the learner's third language in chronological order, but a language under study or a currently used language. Hammarberg (2010: 97) defines it the following way:

> In dealing with the linguistic situation of a multilingual, the term *third language (L3)* refers to a non-native language which is currently being used or acquired in a situation where the person already has knowledge of one or more L2s in addition to one or more L1s.

In this definition, the term third language (L3) is used to refer to language users with a complex linguistic background in "the situation when the current language is used", and the other languages can be named **prior L2(s)** (Hammarberg 2010: 97).[2] In this article, the term L3 is used to refer to French studied at the university level and the term second languages (L2s) to refer to all other languages except for the first language (L1).

Some central factors that have relevance in bilingual cognition research are the age of the onset of acquisition, proficiency and the use of these languages, length and type of stay in these linguistic environments, and knowledge of other languages (Bassetti & Cook 2011: 177–178; for a more detailed presentation, see, for instance, De Angelis 2007: 12, 21). Multilingualism cannot be treated without questioning if all these languages are activated during language processing and, if so, in which manner, and therefore crosslinguistic influence is discussed in the next section.

2.2 Lexical crosslinguistic influence

It has become evident in recent L3 studies that, on top of L1, L2s have an important impact on the processing of L3 in the sense that prior L2s, for example, other non-native languages, seem to contribute more easily to crosslinguistic influence than L1 (De Angelis 2007; Bardel & Falk 2007; Hammarberg 2010). Learners of their first L2 have prior knowledge only of their L1, whereas learners of further languages can have recourse to all other languages, native or non-native, they have acquired or of which they have prior knowledge. Therefore, the crosslinguistic influence (CLI) differs in the case of multilingual

2 Hammarberg (2010: 98–101) also introduces alternative terms **primary**, **secondary** and **tertiary language**, which might create more confusion than clarification because of the resemblance to educational terminology used in another sense.

learning from that of bilingual acquisition (Hammarberg 2010; Aronin & Hufeisen 2009). The term **combined crosslinguistic influence** (combined CLI) can be used in the case of the simultaneous influence of multiple languages upon a target language, for instance, when "one language influences another, and the already influenced language in turn influences another language in the process of being acquired" (De Angelis 2007: 21). In other words, transfer can occur from several languages at the same time.

This is due to the fact that cognitive demands on multilingual language users affect the processes that coordinate the use of different languages in different contexts. Green (2011: 230) argues that "[l]anguage control in these different contexts requires the dynamic regulation of two [or more] language systems and specific patterns of coordination". This means that some inhibitory processes suppress activation in the language that is not targeted at the moment and only the targeted language is in use; on other occasions, they modulate language activation when two or more languages are needed at the same time. Multilingual language users must therefore coordinate potentially competing alternatives between languages and even if the goal of using one language was set, it "does not preclude the activation of lexical alternatives in other languages" (Green 2011: 231; see also Bassetti & Cook 2011: 180; De Angelis 2007: 83–86).

In multilingual and L3 acquisition research, the lexicon seems be most studied due to its explicit nature, for example, non-target information is easily recognisable (Filatova 2010: 86; De Angelis 2007: 41). Lexical interference or crosslinguistic influence can be explained through at least three theories: **default supplier theory**, **system shift theory** and **language mode theory** (Filatova 2010: 86–89). According to Filatova (2010: 88), Hammarberg (2001) gives four criteria for choosing another language, a default supplier, when a speaker needs lexical compensation for a missing target language lexical unit: typological similarity between the default supplier and the target language, proficiency in the default language, recency of activation, and status of the default language (see also De Angelis 2007; Ringbom 2007; Ringbom & Jarvis 2009). In the system shift theory, De Angelis (2005) postulates that there is a separate cognitive process involved in lexical transfer from a non-target language to the guest system, for example, target language where the speaker fails to recognise the source of the knowledge; this system shift is determined by perception of correctness and association of foreignness (Filatova 2010: 88). Finally, Grosjean's (1997, 2001) language mode theory underlies the state of activation of the languages involved; activation which is a continuum ranging from no activation to total activation of these languages (see also Filatova 2010: 89; Butler & Hakuta 2006: 120). In all these theories, it is supposed that L2 is much more likely to be chosen instead of one's L1 in a L3 language processing context, as the L1 is judged as 'non-foreign' in the needed context.

Some other factors also affect word recognition and lexical retrieval. Dijkstra (2005: 180) describes them as follows:

> *Lexical access* is the process of entering the mental lexicon to retrieve information about words. The *mental lexicon* is the database containing all words in the mind of the language user. Lexical information can be, for instance, orthographic (spelling), phonological (sound), or semantic (meaning) in kind. Word recognition can then be defined as the process of retrieving these word characteristics on the basis of the input string.

Factors that have an impact on lexical retrieval are related both to cognitive processes and to words or lexical units: rapidity of processes (in the sense of degree of automaticity), phonological similarities, formal and semantic similarity, and word frequency (Nilsson 2007: 12). In the case of crosslinguistic influence, studies usually make a distinction between words that are semantically or formally similar and could affect word recognition or production. **Cognates** are words that have similarities in both areas, whereas **interlexical homographs** or **false friends** (*faux-amis*) only present formal similarities between words in different languages; furthermore, phonological similarities may prevent word recognition or at least make it slower (Nilsson 2007: 8–9, 14). One could also make a distinction between **chance false friends** that are words which are similar in graphic and/or phonological form without any semantic overlapping, and **semantic false friends** which are "words that are graphically and/or phonetically similar in various languages, but their meanings have diverged" (Chamizo Domínguez & Nerlich 2002: 1836; for **full and partial semantic false friends** see Chamizo Domínguez 2008). In the case of cognate words, language learners may assume that words have shared meanings in both languages, which might lead to erroneous assumptions (Pavlenko 2009: 145; Lowie, Verspoor & Seton 2010: 136). All of these phenomena may emerge in language production whenever the language users try to have access to their mental lexicon. Therefore, we decided to use the term **cognate** in this study for all words having formal similarities, including cognates and full and partial false friends.

One main reason for this is that several French words are homophonic, homographic or polysemic in nature. For example, in the case of homophones, the words *ceint* 'donned', *saint* 'holy', *sain* 'healthy' and *sein* 'breast' are all pronounced [sɛ̃)] in French, whereas the words *amer* 'bitter' and *amer* 'buoy' are examples of homographic words. A polysemic word is one that has several meanings, which could sometimes be quite different, such as the word *affaire*, which can mean 'scandal', 'transaction', or 'case' depending on the context. This leads easily to errors in interpretation by language learners, in particular if their knowledge of the target language is fairly low. One might ask whether it is possible to know all the meanings of these types of words, especially in specific terminological contexts; this is also the case sometimes in L1 (Ringbom 1987). It

would have been difficult to judge whether learners knew all of the meanings of some of the words used in the task of this study because of the particular case study design (see section 3).

Furthermore, word frequency is an important factor in all word recognition tasks. More frequent words are known to be recognized faster and more accurately (Babin 1998 cited in Nilsson 2007: 12); see however Pavlenko (2009) and Ellis (2009) for different kinds of word and construction frequencies, and Veivo and Järvikivi (2013) for discussions on subjective familiarity or frequency. Low-frequency words might provoke, in some cases, erroneous crosslinguistic transfer due to the formal similarity between words (Ringbom & Jarvis 2009: 109). Ringbom and Jarvis (2009: 106) remind us that, in the end, perceiving crosslinguistic similarities is "a subjective process that often results in an inaccurate or incomplete awareness of the actual similarities" between languages (see section 2.3). They add that crosslinguistic influence of other prior languages than L1 on L3 require a higher level of proficiency in these languages, since at the early stage of L2/L3 learning, the L1 is the main source for comparison between the languages (Ringbom and Jarvis 2009: 106). A detailed analysis based on word frequency is however beyond the scope of the present article.

To sum up, crosslinguistic influence refers here to any influence of prior linguistic knowledge on the production, comprehension or development of a target language, whereas the parallel involvement of more than one language in cognitive processing is called combined crosslinguistic influence.

According to earlier studies, bilinguals and multilinguals benefit from an increased awareness of language, namely metalinguistic awareness, which seems to help them in cognitive processing and thus the acquisition of these languages (De Angelis 2007: 137). This phenomenon is discussed here in relation to the metalinguistic output in a specific situation.

2.3 Metalinguistic awareness in L3

Definitions of language awareness or metalinguistic awareness vary a great deal depending on researchers and viewpoints; one can talk, for instance, about phonological, morphological and syntactic, lexical and pragmatic awareness (Sajavaara, Alanen, Dufva, Mäntylä, Pääkkönen and Saarela 1999: 228–230; De Angelis 2007: 120–124). DeKeyser (2009: 122–123) notices that in the field of second language learning the term metalinguistic awareness is used in different meanings on the basis of explicitness: it can refer to what Gombert (1992) called epilinguistic (= metalinguistic without explicit knowledge) signifying the capacity to judge for instance the correctness of linguistic phenomena without being able to explain why; or it can mean the explicit knowledge

about one's linguistic behaviour; or it can refer to "the ability to verbalize, for which explicit knowledge is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition" (DeKeyser 2009: 123). In general, explicit knowledge is something of which one is aware and conscious in such a way that it can be verbalised; however, it seems that not all language users have the capacity to articulate this knowledge in a clear and complete way (DeKeyser 2009: 121). Because of the great variability of the definitions, metalinguistic awareness is used in this article in a broad sense referring to:

> learners' ability to think of language and of perceiving language, including the ability to separate meanings and forms, discriminate language components, identify ambiguity and understand the use of grammatical forms and structures (De Angelis 2007: 121).

Haastrup (1991) presents three categories of inferencing[3] of other words when reading a text, a distinction Nilsson (2007: 6) also uses in her research on French L3: intralexical, interlexical and contextual cues. In the present study, there is no context from which the language learner could explicitly induce the meaning of a word in question in the test situation (see next section). However, they have access to their mental multilingual lexicon on the basis of which they can try to find the accurate meaning in L3; in other terms, all their prior linguistic knowledge helps them to construct the meaning of the word.

To study metalinguistic awareness, the verbal protocol method is used: language learners verbalise concurrently their meaning construction in their first language. This kind of think-aloud protocol has mainly been criticised because of the phenomenon of reactivity, for example, the act of thinking aloud potentially influencing the participants' cognitive processes while performing the task. Nevertheless, when not using chronometric methods (reactions times, double tasks, pauses, etc.), non-chronometric methods, such as verbal protocols, are frequently used in the language-learning field (Bowles 2010; for restrictions, see, for instance, Nilsson 2007: 51–53). What is interesting here is the metalinguistic output during the meaning construction task. In other terms, how the language learners verbalise their (meta)linguistic knowledge of French vocabulary in a test situation.

3 According to Haastrup (1991: 40), inferencing means "making informed guesses as to the meaning of a word in the light of all available linguistic cues in combination with the learner's general knowledge of the world, her awareness of the co-text and her relevant linguistic knowledge" (cited in Nilsson 2007: 6).

3 Participants and research design

3.1 Participants

All in all, 35 university-level students participated in the study (Veivo & Mutta 2011), but only twelve students representing different proficiency levels were chosen for the lexical meaning construction test. Before the test, the participants were asked to take a diagnostic language test (The DIALANG Test Server) to evaluate their proficiency in French. The scores on the vocabulary subtest together with the overall scores were used to divide the participants into three proficiency groups: low, intermediate, and high.

The students were all native speakers of Finnish and none of them was an early or balanced bilingual speaker in Finnish and French, or in any other languages. At the time of the tests, the participants were studying first-year French at the university. The background factors that were controlled are presented in Figure 1 – AoA and the proficiency in DIALANG scores according to European language levels (CEFR) refers to French:

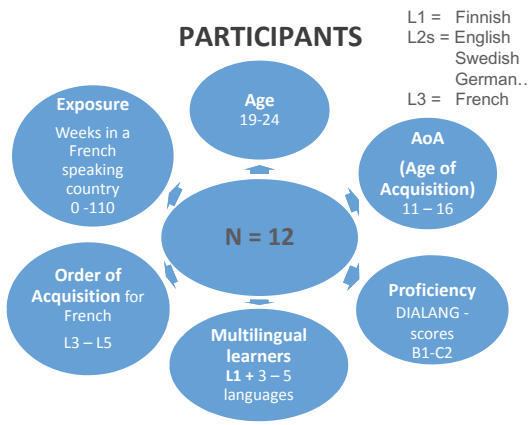

FIGURE 1. Background factors of the participants.

These factors represent a quite general picture of average first-year university students of French in Finland, which means that it is an extremely heterogeneous group. The use of these foreign languages is not in balance. Whereas the daily exposure to English in Finland is excessive, French and Swedish have a much less important presence in everyday life (see for instance Ringbom 2007; *Tilastotietoa kielivalinnoista*). In Grosjean's terms (1997, 2001) most young adults in Finland live in a Finnish-English bilingual mode, even if the country is officially Finnish-Swedish bilingual. This situation changes slightly

when the students start their studies in the French department, because during the first year of their studies the daily exposure to both spoken and written French is relatively important. According to their self-report assessment for other languages than French, their proficiency varied from C1 to C2 in English[4], from A2 to C2 in Swedish, from A1 to C2 in German (5 students) and from A1 to B2 in Spanish (6 students).

3.2 Research design

The aim of this small-scale, mainly qualitative study was to study how French L3 learners construct the meaning of cognate words that induce a high probability of crosslinguistic influence. The oral meaning construction task was deliberately designed to probe the crosslinguistic influence of L1-L2-L3 cognate words. The experimenter presented a list of 40 words to each participant individually (see Appendix). The words were randomly selected from the site *Les faux-amis* (*Un site sur les faux-amis de l'anglais*) and on the basis of Anna Nilsson's research (2007) on intra- and interlexical similarities in French L3 in Sweden. Furthermore, the words were presented in four different orders in each group level. The experimenter showed the words one by one on a sheet of paper to each participant individually, and they gave the translation in Finnish. These sessions were recorded with a digital Dictaphone. To orient the discussion, the experimenter also asked questions such as: Do you recognise the word?; Do you know its meaning?; Are you sure about the meaning (a simplified adaptation of subjective frequency in Ferrand, Bonin, Méot & Augustinova 2008)?; If you do not know the meaning, could you guess it?; and how do you deduce the meaning?

4 Analysis and results

4.1 Crosslinguistic influence and familiarity of the words

The results show that in 40% of the cases (192 cases), the participants gave a correct answer to the given word (12x 40 words = 480 cases). For polysemic words, the answer was judged correct if one of the meanings was correct[5] (see Veivo & Mutta 2011). The

4 Except for one student who clearly underestimated her proficiency level, in that her self-report assessment varied in all languages between A2 and B2, but she scored the second best on the DIALANG test and on the word recognition test. In the same way, some other students might have overestimated their proficiency levels.

5 Except the word *procès*, which is influenced mainly by L1 *prosessi* and English L2 *process*. The word is considered a lexical false friend, even if it can have the meaning of linguistic (verbal) process (*procès linguistique*); this is not familiar to the first year students. One of them even commented "olen itse käyttänyt sanaa siinä merkityksessä" [I've used myself the word in that meaning].

types of crosslinguistic, also including here intralinguistic influence (from L3), were classified in eight categories presented in the following Table 1 influence means that the participants have mentioned explicitly prior linguistic knowledge and/or the meaning they have chosen indicates this specific knowledge:

TABLE 1. Types of crosslinguistic influence.

Types of crosslinguistic influence	N	%	C	%
1. No influence	15	3.1	0	0
2. Intralinguistic L3-L3*	213	44.4	145	75.5
3. Combined crosslinguistic influence L1-L2-L3*	42	8.8	13	6.8
4. Combined crosslinguistic influence L1-L2 à L3α	22	4.6	4	2.0
5. Combined crosslinguistic influence L1-L3	5	1	3	1.6
6. Combined crosslinguistic influence L2-L3	109	22.7	27	14.1
7. Crosslinguistic influence L1 -> L3	2	0.4	0	0
8. Crosslinguistic influence L2 -> L3	72β	15	0	0
8a. L2 (only) English	65		0	0
8b. L2 (only) Swedish	4		0	0
TOTAL	**480**	100	**192**	**100**

N = number and percentage of occurrences, C = correct answers and their percentage of all correct answers (N = 192)
* = the participants constructed lexical meaning on the basis of L3 knowledge only, or on the basis of L1-L2-L3 knowledge
α = the participants constructed lexical meaning on the basis of L1-L2 only, which influenced the L3
β = in three cases, both English and Swedish influenced the choice; all answers were incorrect.

The first category, 'no influence' means that the language learner's comments, for instance, that s/he has no idea of the word and cannot guess it either, and therefore, naturally, there were no correct answers. The table indicates that the biggest category is intralinguistic influence (213 cases, 44.4%), which contains correct and wrong answers – inside the category two thirds being correct ones (68.1%), and 75.5% of all correct answers. The second biggest type of influence is combined crosslinguistic influence, where both L2 and L3 have an impact on the meaning construction of the word (109 cases, 22.7%). In this type of influence, the percentage of correct answers diminishes a great deal (14.1% of all correct answers). The same tendency continues with the crosslinguistic influence from L2 towards L3 (72 cases, 15%), where no correct answers could be found. All in all, almost all the right answers contained the influence of the L3 – this is expected with the present definition of linguistic influence, namely to find the correct meaning, one has to have an L3 influence. Furthermore, if the participants rely

on their acquired knowledge in L3 (it means, for instance, that they knew the word or they could deduce the word meaning from the L3), they ended up more often with the right answer than if there was crosslinguistic or combined crosslinguistic influence from L1, L2 or combined with L3 (there is a significant correlation between the right answer and L3, Pearson Correlation, $r = .407$, $p < 0.01$).

This result was also related to the familiarity of the words. The participants were asked to indicate whether they were sure about or familiar with the meaning of the word (including a familiar-looking word), or whether the word was unfamiliar/not seen in French and/or they were guessing the meaning. Table 2 illustrates with how much certainty the participants recognised the words:

TABLE 2. Recognition of words.

Familiarity of words	N	%	Correct answers	%
1. Recognised / (quite) sure of meaning	177	36.9	130	73.5
2. Familiar / have seen	214	44.6	52	24.3
3. Unfamiliar / not seen in French / guessing	89	18.5	10	11.2
TOTAL	480	100	192	

The results show that the surer the participants were about the meaning of the word, the more often they answered correctly in the test. The words that were all correct and recognised with certainty were the most frequent words in French (frequency < 1000, except *ballon*, frequency 1001 < 2000; VocabProfile): *journée* (12), *main* (12), *nouvelle* (12), *ballon* (11) and *parent* (11). These words seem to be well-acquired (meaning that their use is automaticised), and therefore they resisted the impact of an eventual erroneous meaning of similar words in other languages. The second recognition group was the biggest, but in this case the familiarity was often misleading. The third category consists of unknown words, which end up mostly with a wrong answer. In order to find out how the learners ended up filling the required task, namely translating the presented words into Finnish, metalinguistic awareness, including metalinguistic strategies, was analysed in more detail.

4.2 Metalinguistic awareness in meaning construction

As said earlier, in the present study, there is no context from which the language learner could explicitly induce and construct the meaning of a word in question. Therefore, the meaning construction refers here to how they had access to their mental multilingual

lexicon on the basis of which they could try to find the accurate meaning in L3 in the test situation.

4.2.1 Examples according to familiarity

The following examples, which are representative of each category (see Table 2), illustrate the three-level scale of recognition – comments are translated from Finnish[6]:

1. Recognised and correct:

(1) *main*:
Marita: *käsi* [[hand]]
E: and you are sure about it?
Marita: yeh

Example 1 represents the case when the word is familiar and well-acquired. Meaning construction is rapid and automaticised with no hesitation. There is no evidence of the impact of eventual cognate words (see Babin 1998 cited in Nilsson 2007: 12).

2. Familiar and wrong:

(2) *averse* 'shower':
Anneli: like / *vastakkainen* [[opposite]] or / or that someone is like # / an opinion for instance is contrary to or something like that / is # that is like quite a familiar word
E: ok good

Example 2 illustrates a combined crosslinguistic influence L2-L3 based on similarity in form (*adverse* in English, *inverse* in French), whereas examples 3 and 4 present combined crosslinguistic influence based on L2 and L3 form and meaning and L1-L2-L3 form and meaning, respectively:

(3) *avertissement* 'warning':
Larissa: well again that comes from a verb so it's some noun now / would it come would it be something like *avertir* the verb I don't / it's a very familiar word but I just can't recall its meaning either / in principle if you'd approach the word through English then it would be something like *mainos* [[advertisement]] it could be but I'm not quite sure if it's necessarily the same in French
E: yeah / but [anyway] you recognized there was the verb [*avertir*] / but you can't remember what it means
Larissa: [mmm] / [yeah] / well I'm not quite sure / I should know [eh]

6 Students' names are pseudonyms. Transcription conventions: E = experimenter, / = pause, [] = simultaneous discourse, [[]] = added comment by researcher, {XXX} = incomprehensible or inaudible, # = construction interrupted, WORD = emphasized word.

E: [you] can't always [remember everything {XXX} yeah]
Larissa: [well no obviously you certainly can't] remember everything
E: and you know when they are [out of context so]
Larissa: [but] but it's a very familiar word though / but indeed when you have no context there so
E: mmm / so that'd help if there was
Larissa: yeah it'd [help]
E: [mmm]

(4) *luxure* 'lust':
Sara: *luxure* / well yeah *luksus* [[luxury]] is the first I can think of something eh fancy / *luxure* but then again / lux luxus / I haven't seen the word like this / I mean in this form / so it looks a bit unfamiliar
E: so there's something
Sara: there's something strange about it / to be honest / but not # well / *luxure* [{XXX}]
E: [yeah but] that's still what you think it means
Sara: yeah that it would relate to something [I mean if it is] something like this then it could relate to [luxury] and to something fancier / *luxure* / but [yeah] that's [all] what #
E: [luxury] / [yeah] / [yeah] / good
Sara: yeah
E: good

These words are less frequent in French (> 3001; VocabProfile), which has probably influenced the choices. In example 4, Sara hesitates with the meaning "there's something strange about it", but cannot explain what and decides finally to vote for the meaning 'luxury', which is incorrect. These examples represent the complexity of lexical meaning construction when there is no context to provide cues and the learners have to rely purely on their prior linguistic knowledge. This is also the case with examples from 5 to 8, illustrating unfamiliar words which, after the meaning construction, ended up with a wrong lexical choice:

3. Unfamiliar and wrong:

(5) *navet* 'turnip':
Marjatta: *navetta* [[cowhouse]] / I don't know {XXX} haven't seen this either at least it doesn't look familiar
E: mmm
Marjatta: no / I haven't got a clue what it means
E: can you think of any subject field to which it could belong
Marjatta: well I can think of the Finnish *navetta* and nothing else you know
E: ok the Finnish word *navetta*
Marjatta: yeah
E: ok ok well the beginning of the word is the same
Marjatta: yeah
E: yes / good

(6) *rape* 'grater, rasp':
Anneli: e::h / well MAYbe you know something like *kypsä* [[ripe, mature]] or something but I don't / think I've seen it / but then well you know from English / so maybe / but that's not at all familiar
E: you've never seen [in French] / [yeah]
Anneli: [no] / [no]

(7) *parcelle* 'parcel':
Merja: *parcelle* / it's not familiar it e::h I've maybe seen it sometimes / *parcelle* / mmm / *parcelle* / *persilja* [[parsley]] / {XXX} / I'm only guessing / I don't know more specifically / *parcelle* / mmm it could some type of cloth again / {XXX} [only comes to my mind]
E: [mmm] yeah / that's ok

In examples 5, 6 and 7, the learners based their meaning construction on the L1, L2 form and on L2/L3, respectively. These words are not very frequent and thus probably unfamiliar (> 3001; VocabProfile). The source of crosslinguistic influence was, however, more variable; for instance in the case of *navet*, five learners said that the meaning was completely opaque to them, some others proposed words such as *avaruussukkula* 'space shuttle' (< L3, *navette spatiale*) or something related to the sea, navigation or navy (< L2 and/or L3 influence); for the word *râpe*, they proposed *köysi* 'rope' (< L2 English) and for *parcelle, paketti* 'parcel, packet' (< L2 English, L1), *pussukka* 'sachet' (< L3?), *putkilo* 'tube' (< L2/L3?). We could talk about chance false friends here (Chamizo Domínguez & Nerlich 2002: 1836). In example 8, the learner tried to construct the lexical meaning of the word *galanterie* on the basis of the L3 form and meaning; however, she could not find the exact translation:

(8) *galanterie* 'gallantry':
Merja: *galanterie* / I don't know / and like / then / I think that it could be something like you know / such / a specialized shop for something like *pâtisserie* you know or something but well I don't what they'd sell there / I mean what that / e::h *galanter* or what it'd be / I've never even seen it
E: ok / you've never seen it mmm

This example shows the metalinguistic ability of the learner to combine form and meaning, even if she did not finally succeed in the task. Examples 2–8 illustrate the fact that when the presented words are less familiar or completely opaque, the learners try to construct the lexical meaning from prior linguistic knowledge, but they cannot always verbalise their search very clearly (cf. DeKeyser 2009: 121). They also show that English L2 cognate words interfere heavily, especially if the word form is sustained by an L1 resemblance (see Appendix), and the word is not well-acquired as in example 1.

The omnipresence of the English language in the Finnish context is quite evident (cf. Ringbom & Jarvis 2009).

These examples also indicate that similarity in form and in meaning have a great impact on lexical retrieval (Ringbom 2007, 2009; De Angelis 2007: 34), which could also be seen in metalinguistic strategies to which the learner had recourse explicitly during the meaning construction. These strategies were often intermingled and could not thus be easily separated; moreover, learners may have had recourse to several strategies when trying to construct the lexical meaning in question.

4.4.2 Form- and meaning-based metalinguistic strategies

The form based strategies relied, for instance, on pronunciation; some participants pronounced the word aloud, such as *relief* [rəliɛf] or combined it with an L1 pronunciation *relief*, which allowed them to make a connection between the word orthography and pronunciation and by means of it (see also Veivo & Järvikivi 2013), distinguish the word from the English cognate word pronounced differently [rɪ'liːf]. According to Green (2011: 231), deliberate switching to another language (here the target L3 French) may yield a cognitive benefit, which means that it may help to activate the right words. Nevertheless, in general, the correct meaning was not familiar to them, and they voted for *helpotus* 'alleviation' (8 out of 12). This overt strategic behaviour, namely pronouncing aloud the word, was nevertheless not always successful. Secondly, intralinguistic influence from L3 was another form based strategy, for example, *habit* – "verb *habiter* and its form **il habit*", or *vaisselle* – "I first think about the word *laukku* 'bag' (< F3 *valise*)". These examples show that these learners tried to rely on their prior knowledge of L3, which was not sufficient here.

On some occasions, learners had recourse to an L3 expression, which helped them to construct the right meaning, for example, *vaisselle – faire la vaisselle* 'do the dishes'. Some other meaning-based strategies were the comparison with other languages or within the French system itself: for instance, the participants could start by reflecting on the grammatical category of the word, that is by using a metalinguistic rule (L3/L2): *user* – "It's a verb for sure, its meaning differs from English". Or they could eliminate the possible word candidates like in example 9:

(9) *engagé* 'engaged'
Veera: I know that word it's very familiar and I've used it but then you know {XXX} just goes blank now / at least it's either an adjective / because of that ending or then it is in well in / *passé composé* but it just hasn't that # / but a it a verb and it can be well it can be a verb or it can be an adjective
E: do you recall what it could mean or in what kind of context you've seen it

Veera: eh well *KIHlat* [[*~engagement*]] of course comes to my mind but I know that because my Facebook is in French I know that it can't be kihlois [[*engaged*]] / at least what it is Facebook
E: well do you remember what it is in Facebook
Veera: eh it was something like *fiancé à* / at least as I remember
E: yeah
Veera: [Facebook can be very useful]
E: [that's good you learn from Facebook] yeah
Veera: it really is already because mine has been in French for a long time now
E: that's good
Veera: e::h this has nothing to do with it I guess that this is something like / Oh it's so familiar and I still can't recall it / I can't even guess anything / because then I'd come out with anything
E: [but you know that you know it and mmm]
Veera: [but {XXX} yeah I know it] / yeah it really annoys me that I just can't find [the word]
E: [yeah so it's on [the TIP of your tongue]
Veera: [yeah it is]

This example shows that the learner can eliminate the cognate L2 English meaning relying on the virtual linguistic context where she could locate the word, but she could not find the actual meaning in the end without the appropriate linguistic context. In the last example, the learner thinks she recognized the word and its meaning, but the L3-L2-L1 cognate form misled her:

(10) *sort* 'destiny':
Jenna: *sort* / mmm / a small word which meaning I can't fully the really own / it reminds me of *quelque sort* / that is *jonkinlainen* [[*of a kind*]] / or you know / if you had to choose *quelque sort* it'd be *jonkinlainen* [[*of a kind*]] *jokin* [[*some(thing)*, *one*]] / e::h / and the first translation into Finnish that comes into my mind from this is maybe *sortti* [*sort*]]
E: yeah it is easily translated
Jenna: it'd be easily translated / but then I have the feeling that it probably has another meaning as well / than *sortti* [[*sort*]] / so / I can't find a completely clear meaning for it / but I know that it is used a lot and / I've used it myself with *quelque sort* / [it's fairly familiar / familiar]
E: [but familiar / but you're not] completely sure about the mean[ing] / or
Jenna: [yeah]
E: you know you think it's that one then
Jenna: m[mm]
E: [yeah]

All these examples illustrate used strategies, which unfortunately could end up with a failure depending of the recognition level and automaticity of the prior acquired word.

5 Conclusions and discussion

In this study, the main languages involved were Finnish, French, Swedish and English, the first being L1, the second L3 and the two last L2 according to our definition. In order to answer the first research question concerning the type of crosslinguistic influence in an oral meaning construction task of L1-L2-L3 cognate words, the results show that in an isolated word translation task in L3 the crosslinguistic influence from a more widely used foreign language, here English, is more important than that of L1 (cf. Ringbom 2007; Ringbom & Jarvis 2009). This tendency is even more obvious in a context where eventual L1-L2-L3 cognate words are used as stimuli, because there are very few similarities between the French and Finnish languages. Typologically, Finnish differs from the other languages (Finno-Ugrian), Swedish and English are Germanic languages, and even if French is a Romance language, there is a lexical resemblance between English and French because of historical events (Ringbom 2007; Ringbom & Jarvis 2009). This indicates the strong relationship between the English and French languages and gives evidence of the difficulty that language learners with different origins have to make a clear distinction between certain related words. Indeed, they might be aware of the cognates shared by English and French (Ó Laoire & Singleton 2009) but not be sure whether they recognise them correctly.

Furthermore, intralinguistic influence was the biggest category (44.4%) ending up with correct and wrong answers (68.1% of them correct). Combined crosslinguistic influence was very important (all together 37%), in which case several languages influenced the decision making simultaneously (see De Angelis 2007). These influences were in some cases explicitly verbalised by the participants and thus overt, but in other cases implicit and covert (see DeKeyser 2009). On the basis of the task, it can be concluded that the crosslinguistic influence can vary considerably and it is not always quite clear what the source of the influence is (cf. Green 2011; Bassetti & Cook 2011; De Angelis 2007). Well-learned common words seem to resist crosslinguistic influence in cognate words.

To answer the second research question on used metalinguistic strategies, the analysis revealed that in meaning construction, the participants had recourse to several different strategies based on form or form and meaning. These strategies were however not always successful. This is partly due to the research design, namely the deliberate activation of isolated L1-L2-L3 cognate words where the influence of a more obvious foreign language mode prevailed. The use of less frequent words could also have had an impact on the meaning construction (see Ringbom & Jarvis 2009). Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that some words, such as *vaisselle*, are categorized as not frequent words (> 3001) according to VocabProfile, but the word is used in school textbooks fairly

early in a well-known expression *faire la vaisselle*. The subjective familiarity or frequency should also be studied in more detail (cf. Veivo & Mutta 2011; Veivo & Järvikivi 2013).

To conclude, on the basis of this study it seems that in a task concerning isolated lexical items, it is the target language L3, which is the most probable source of both positive and negative influence. If (combined) crosslinguistic influences occur, at least for Finnish learners of French, their source is most probably L2 and not L1. Whether these influences are due to language distance, order of acquisition or the amount of exposure to source and target languages is still a matter of further analyses. Nevertheless, these results contribute to a pedagogical application in classroom teaching in the sense that multilingual language learners metalinguistic awareness could be taken into account in teaching curriculum. Indeed, some of the cognates are similar in several languages because of borrowing from other languages; in Finnish, these are called *sivistyssana* 'international words' (lit. civilised, educated words). These loan words could facilitate learning if their meanings are known by the learner, for instance, the French word *relief* in the sense of 'work of art done by moulding or carving', which has two equivalents in Finnish, *korkokuva* and *reliefi*. Learners could be invited to make comparisons and learn to distinguish similarities between different languages that can facilitate their learning on some occasions. A multilingual learners' mental lexicon is a rich source for pedagogical use.

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APPENDIX 1.

List of the words with their eventual cognates

Words	Correct answers N = 12	Cognate words in English	Cognate words in Swedish	Cognate words in Finnish
affaire	11	affair	affär	
académicien	5	academic	akademiker	akateemikko
averse	0	adverse	avers	
avertissement	1	advertisement		
ballon	11	balloon	ballong	
cadet	12	cadet	kadett	kadetti
concours	7	concourse	konkurs	
couvert	8		kuvert	
délai	1	delay		
dirigeant	5		dirigent	
engagé	5	engaged	engagerad	
éventuel	2	eventual	eventuell	
faillir	2	fail		
galanterie	0	gallantry	galanteri	
habit	1	habit	habit	
informateur	12	informer	informant	informantti
journée	12	journey		
luxure	0	luxury	luxyös	
main	12	main		
navet	0	nave		
nouvelle	12	novel		
officieux	1	officious		
parcelle	0	parcel		
parent	11	parent		
patent	0	patent		patentti
pension	12	pension	pension	
procès	0	process	process	prosessi
râpe	1	rape		
rate	4	rate		
relatif	10	relative	relativ	
relief	3	relief	relief	reliefi
semestre	9	semester	semester	
sort	4	sort	sort	sortti
supplier	1	supplier		
targette	0	target		
tenant	3	tenant		
trépasser	0	trespass		
trompe	7	trump		
user	0	user		
vaisselle	6	vessel		