

Cross-linguistic Influence in Multilingualism: Phonology and Syntax (CLIMPS)

Multilingualism has been the norm in many parts of the world, and it is currently rapidly expanding. Due to the globalized reality that we all live in, an increasing number of people find themselves in a situation where they acquire several languages across the lifespan. However, many issues related to the interaction of three (or more) languages in a speaker's mind are still poorly understood, and more in-depth research in this area is therefore much needed.

The goal of the project is to investigate the complexity of third or additional language acquisition across different linguistic domains, such as the sound system (phonology), grammar (syntax) and meaning (semantics). The project aims to explore the sources and directions of influence between language systems coexisting in multilingual minds. The investigation will compare learners acquiring their third/additional language in a naturalistic manner with those learning it formally at school, taking into consideration varying levels of language proficiency (initial vs. advanced). Study participants will include different groups of multilingual users who have Polish, English and Norwegian in their language repertoires and who vary with respect to where and when they have learnt their non-native languages. A series of studies will be conducted in parallel in Poland and in Norway and will involve all three of the participants' languages. Experimental tasks will include production and perception tests, acceptability judgments, eyetracking and electroencephalography (EEG).

The results are expected to show if the patterns of cross-linguistic influence in multilinguals occur holistically or are specific to a particular linguistic domain and to what extent they are moderated by the investigated factors. Through the application of modern methodologies (brain imaging and eyetracking), the project will improve our understanding of multilingual processing. Further empirical evidence will allow us to revise and reformulate recent theoretical models, in order to explain the process of multilingual acquisition. The findings will contribute to a greater understanding of multilingual speech and its acquisition and processing in general, and it will also document the speech patterns of Polish-Norwegian multilingual communities with different learning profiles.

The planned project is innovative as it has an unprecedented broad scope, it is interdisciplinary and applies cutting-edge technologies alongside a range of more traditional research methods. It is based on a close international co-operation between active research groups from three renowned European universities (AMU in Poznań, UiT in Tromsø and NTNU in Trondheim), with each partner institution specializing in one of the selected linguistic domains. The CLIMPS project will provide cutting-edge research on a complex topic that is currently very significant to the research community as well as to the general public. Thus, we expect this to be the beginning of sustainable Polish-Norwegian collaboration in this area of linguistics. The project will offer a research program and methodological design that may be further developed and extended by other researchers in the field. It will broaden the current state of knowledge in this field, which will also be important for policy-makers, educators, parents of multilingual children, and many others.