FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS' POTENTIAL EFFECTIVE TRANSFER IN THE USE OF MODAL PARTICLES

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The study presented in this paper treats potential *effective transfer* as a strategy which can be a useful tool to point learners to cross-linguistic equivalencies with the purpose of facilitating learning. Using the example of modal particles and equivalent modalizing elements in Croatian, English, and German, the study investigates how many occurrences of potential transfer can be tracked in the cloze task answers of 136 Croatian students of German and English as a foreign language. In a qualitative analysis, the nature of potential effective transfer is determined and the relevant subtypes of transfer are defined. The learners' first foreign language and all possible directions of possible transfer are also taken into account as relevant factors. Effective transfer is defined as the competence to correctly apply both the *form* and *function* of a particular linguistic element in performance in another language.

Keywords: Potential effective transfer, competence, cross-linguistic influence, modal particles, modalizing elements, L1 Croatian, FL English, FL German

1. *INTRODUCTION*

The study presented here is based on the claim that second and third language learning should take advantage of the rich knowledge and competences that learners already have when engaging in the learning of a new language (cf.

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Ringbom, 2007). It can be assumed with a relatively high degree of certainty that every form and instance of language learning taking place after first language acquisition is inevitably based upon linguistic knowledge and competence that is already available. Not only the first language, but all previously learned languages, can be conceived of as the precursor of subsequently learned languages (cf. Butzkamm, 2008: 23; Hufeisen, 2003). An interesting hypothesis arising out of these observations is that cross-linguistic influence (cf. De Angelis, Jessner and Kresić, 2015), i.e. transfer, can be used as a helpful and effective strategy in second and third language learning. In order to explore this question, the present study analyses the potential process of effective transfer in the linguistic performance of Croatian students with German and English as their foreign language (FL).

Our aim is to identify and describe potential effective transfer as a helpful learning tool based on metalinguistic or cross-linguistic awareness (e.g. Jessner, 2006, 2008; De Angelis, Jessner and Kresić, 2015), which can be used to master even linguistic phenomena with complex meanings and highly diverse formal equivalents in different languages, such as the word class of modal particles in German and Croatian. The underlying assumption is that even such complex functions and the equivalent forms in different languages can be successfully learned with the help of teaching materials and learning aids based on *potential effective transfer*. The final goal is to propose a teaching methodology which uses transfer as a useful and synergetic strategy in the language classroom.

This contribution is structured as follows: after this brief introduction, we will lay out the research context and the basic concepts of the present study, and describe the relevant characteristics of the word category of modal particles which will serve as an exemplary linguistic phenomenon in order to explore processes of potential effective transfer, we will present the aim of this study, lay out its methodology and discuss the results, the paper ends with a conclusion which sums up the insights of the study and elaborates on the implications with respect to metalinguistic awareness, as well as second and third language learning.

2. *POTENTIAL EFFECTIVE TRANSFER*

2.1 *Research context and basic concepts*

The term *transfer* (cf. Odlin, 1989; Jarvis and Pavlenko, 2008) is used as a general cover term for various potentially conscious, cognitive language learning processes which rely on the knowledge of previously learned languages and on preceding language learning experiences. These processes

occur naturally, but not necessarily effectively in the learning of second, third and multiple languages. The term cross-linguistic influence is widely used as an interchangeable term (e.g. Odlin, 2003; Jarvis and Pavlenko, 2008; De Angelis, Jessner and Kresić, 2015).

Interlingual identifications (Weinreich, 1953; Ringbom, 2007; Kresić and Gulan, 2012) can be considered as a prerequisite or as a specific form of linguistic transfer (cf. Odlin, 2003; Jarvis and Pavlenko, 2008). The term refers to the learner's cognitive activity of the cross-linguistic mapping of equivalent forms and functions.

A lot of criticism has been put forward with respect to the concept of transfer in the context of the first contrastive studies exploring cross-linguistic influence in terms of exclusively *positive and negative transfer* (e.g. Fries, 1945). Later studies offer a subtler distinction between various forms of transfer, such as Odlin (1989) and Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008: 20), who differentiate between different types of cross-linguistic influence across ten dimensions. After each item in the following list (cf. ibid.), its relevance for the present study is indicated:

(1) *Area of Language Knowledge/Use:* phonological, orthographic, lexical, semantic, morphological, syntactic, discursive, pragmatic, sociolinguistic;
Semantic, morphological and discursive-pragmatic aspects of cross-linguistic influence are investigated in the present study, since all these levels of linguistic description are relevant for analyzing the form and function of modal particles.

(2) *Directionality*: forward, reverse, lateral, bi- or multi-directional
Multi-directional transfer is analysed in the data of this study.

(3) *Cognitive level*: linguistic, conceptual
This study focuses on linguistic transfer (= transfer of form) and conceptual transfer (= transfer of modal particle meanings).

(4) *Type of Knowledge*: implicit, explicit
The type of knowledge that was tested was both potentially implicit and explicit (with respect to the correct use of modal particles).

(5) *Intentionality*: intentional, unintentional
Although the study did not measure intentionality directly, both intentional and unintentional cross-linguistic influences were potentially included in the participants' answers.

(6) *Mode*: productive, receptive
The tested mode of cross-linguistic influence was productive.

(7) *Channel*: aural, visual

The study includes only the visual channel, i.e. the experimental tasks have the form of written sentences.

(8) *Form*: verbal, nonverbal

The tested form of cross-linguistic influence was exclusively verbal.

(9) *Manifestation*: overt, covert

Both overt and covert forms of cross-linguistic influence were potentially encompassed by the present study.

(10) *Outcome*: positive, negative

Participants' answers with incorrect uses of modal particles and modalizing elements potentially stem from negative transfer, whereas the concept of potential effective transfer corresponds to a positive outcome of cross-linguistic influence (see below).

The study presented here introduces and investigates the concept of potential *effective transfer* which is defined as the competence to correctly apply the *form* and *function* of a particular linguistic element in the performance in another language on the basis of the learner's interlingual identifications (cf. Kresić and Gulan, 2012). The concrete linguistic elements used to express a particular meaning are often language-specific, whereas many meanings/functions are universal. This dichotomy represents the true challenge in mastering effective transfer as the strategy of successfully performing and applying interlingual identifications in a learner's language production and reception. Potential effective transfer can be identified and can vary with respect to the following dimensions of cross-linguistic influence (see above, Jarvis and Pavlenko, 2008: 20): area of linguistic knowledge/use, directionality, cognitive level, type of knowledge, intentionality, mode, channel, form and manifestation. Its manifestation is exclusively positive.

Thus, the competence to employ *effective transfer* means that a speaker is able to choose the appropriate linguistic means from various existing linguistic options to express a particular, cross-linguistically equivalent function.

2.2 *Modal particles as a learning problem*

Modal particles are uninflected words used mainly in spontaneous spoken language. "Their function is a discourse grammatical one: a modal particle marks the utterance containing it as a non-initial turn. This is achieved by relating the proposition to a pragmatically presupposed unit" (Diewald, Kresić and Smirnova, 2009: 190). Modal particles constitute a formal word

class of their own and are typical of the German language. The following lexemes constitute the pool of German modal particles (Gelhaus, 1998): *aber, auch, bloß, denn, doch, eben, eigentlich, etwa, halt, ja, mal, nur, schon, vielleicht, wohl*. Peripheral members are the following: *fein, ganz, gerade, gleich, einfach, erst, ruhig* (Diewald, 2007). Croatian has even more linguistic elements that are equivalent to the German word category of modal particles: *a, al, ala, ama, bar, barem, baš, čekaj, daj/dajte, deder, e, eto, hajde, i, inače, ipak, jednostavno, li, ma, malo, naprosto, nego, ono, opet, ovaj, pa, pobogu, prosto, samo, slobodno, stvarno, ta, uglavnom, uistinu, uopće, ustvari, valjda, vjerojatno, zaista, zapravo, zar* (cf. Uvanović, 2006: 66-76; Kresić and Batinić, 2014). Some languages on the other hand, such as English, display no linguistic equivalent to the German modal particles at all.

Example sentences taken from the research conducted in the framework of the study will serve to illustrate possible counterparts in the three languages. The elements in question are italicized:

Croatian: *Pa* on uvijek puno radi. (= modal particle)
German: Er arbeitet *ja* immer viel. (= modal particle)
English: He always works a lot, *you know*. (= idiomatic expression)

Croatian: *Ama* sjedi. (= modal particle)
German: Setz dich *doch*! (= modal particle)
English: *DO* sit down! (= verum focus construction, stressed intonation)

Croatian: *Ma* zašto to nije ranije rekao? (= modal particle)
German: Warum hat er das *denn* nicht früher gesagt? (= modal particle)
English: Why *on earth* didn't he say so earlier? (= idiomatic expression)

Modal particles often represent a problem in learning German as a foreign language. The difficulties in learning how to use this word category have various possible causes: a) modal particles are mostly used in informal, spontaneous communication, which can hardly be practiced in the foreign language classroom, b) they have doublets in other word classes, such as conjunctions, c) modal particles have complex, context-dependent meanings, and d) for many languages, a sound and exhaustive linguistic description of their meaning has not been provided yet (cf. Kresić and Batinić, 2014).

The example of modal particles was chosen as a matter of investigation for the present study because it simultaneously represents a learning challenge and a very suitable linguistic phenomenon for analyzing potential effective

transfer. The shared and transferable universal meaning is the particle's *function* to relate the respective utterance to the pragmatic context in a specific way (e.g. affirmative, sedative etc., cf. Kresić and Batinić, 2014), whereas the *form* 'modal particle' is language-specific. To a large extent, linguistic *forms* prove to be cross-linguistically not transferable. The example of the word category of modal particles shows that their meaning can be expressed in various ways in different languages: intonation, verbal aspect, syntactic constructions, specific types of sentences, phrasemes, etc. The languages Croatian (L1), German and English (FL1 or FL2)[1] were chosen since they allow either a clear form-function mapping (modal particles as a word category exist both in German and Croatian) or a transfer only of the function (English uses other modal elements and linguistic strategies to express the same meaning).

2.3 *Aim of the study*

The aim of this study is to identify and describe potential effective transfer in the participants' production of modal particles and equivalent linguistic elements by means of a qualitative and quantitative data analysis. In the present study, it was assumed that there would be more transfer of modal particles (= domain of form) in the FL German, since the learners' L1 (= Croatian) has an equivalent formal category of modal particles. With respect to English as a FL, it was assumed that a transfer of meanings (= functional domain) would be predominant, as English has no formal equivalent to the word category that was tested, but uses various other linguistic means to express the respective function. Furthermore, it was assumed that 4th year students would be more successful in employing potential effective transfer than 1st year students. This assumption was derived from the observation that modal particles, if at all, are taught in courses of German as a foreign language at advanced levels and are typical of a higher level of competence in the foreign language.

Since the actual occurrence of the process of interlingual identifications at the time of speech production cannot be proved on the basis of the learners' answers delivered in written form, the phenomenon that the investigation aims at is described as *potential effective transfer*. The present study also investigates how many occurrences of various forms of potential effective transfer can be tracked in the cloze task answers of 136 Croatian students of German (FL1) or English (FL1), i.e. students whose first foreign language was either German or English.

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[1] The abbreviation FL refers to *foreign language*, while FL1 denotes the first foreign language and FL2 the second foreign language learned by the participants of this study.

2.4 *Methodology*

Instances of potential effective transfer and its combination with no transfer and partial transfer were determined by identifying the type of the transferred element – either transfer of form, transfer of function or both – in the learners' answers in Croatian, German and English. Furthermore, the most probable transfer direction was determined, also taking the learners' FL1 into account.

2.4.1. *Participants*

Two groups of university students of German language and literature participated in the study (N = 136). Both, the 1st year (N = 87) and the 4th year students (N = 49)[2] were native Croatian speakers. The ratio of FL1 English and FL1 German learners in the 1st and 4th year of university studies as well as the average length of FL1 learning is shown in Table 1. Some students of 1st and 4th years were also studying English as their second major. The total of 20 1st year students (out of 87) of German were enrolled in English language and literature as a major study programme, while a total of 9 (out of 49) 4th year students of German were enrolled in English language and literature as a major study programme.

Table 1. Percentage of participants' FL1 per group

	FL1 English	FL1 German	Average length of FL1 learning (English and German)
1st year students	39 (45%)	48 (55%)	8 years
4th year students	15 (30%)	34 (70%)	10 years

Participants' knowledge of language(s) represents an important variable in studies dealing with language learning. This study used tasks in which specific knowledge of English and German was tested. In the Croatian educational system, English is usually learned from the 1st grade of elementary school until the end of secondary school. Consequently, it can be assumed that students' knowledge of English was on the appropriate level to participate in this study. Furthermore, all participants were German language students at the university level which justified the testing of their performance in English and German tasks. In this study, the participants' knowledge of English and German could not be assessed with a standardized test at the beginning of the

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[2] We tested 1st and 4th year students in order to be able to compare a group learning the respective language at a beginners' university level and at an advanced university level of foreign language learning.

testing. The reasons for this are twofold. First, an additional test would have taken too much time which might have resulted in a decrease of both participants' motivation and concentration. Second, the nature of a formal testing of the participants might have influenced the results of the study. The participants were told that some hypotheses about language learning in general are being tested. By subjecting them to a classical class exam in order to assess their knowledge of language they might have questioned the actual aim of the study. However, in order to have at least some control over this variable, participants were asked to assess their own knowledge of the languages in question, as well as to indicate the last grade in the framework of their formal education for the assessed languages (Table 2).

Table 2. Average value (mean value) for the self-assessment of knowledge of each language and the average value of students' grades (median value)

	Self-assessment	Grade	Self-assessment	Grade	Self-assessment	Grade	Self-assessment	Grade
	FL1 English		**FL1 German**		**FL2 English**		**FL2 German**	
1st year students	3.67	4.5	4	4.5	3.41	4	3.35	4.5
4th year students	3.63	4	4.28	4	3.34	4	3.21	4

Participants assessed their FL1 knowledge higher than their FL2 knowledge, regardless of the language (English or German). The self-assessment of their FL1 and FL2 knowledge was also correlated with their grades (in secondary school and at university level) and with the performance in the cloze task, separately for those with FL1 English and FL2 German and for those with FL1 German and FL2 English.[3] The results showed only one significant correlation: The self-assessment of 1st year participants with FL1 German was significantly correlated with their performance in the cloze task ($r=.37$, $p<.05$). All other correlations were statistically insignificant. Those insignificant correlations might be due to the specific nature of the task. Besides, the overall knowledge that was graded in the educational system and by the participants themselves appears to be an unreliable indicator of the competences required for completing the tasks. Moreover, the use of modalizing elements which belong to the pragmatic or discourse level of spoken communication is usually not a central topic in language classes in schools.

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[3] Those students who had German as FL1 had English as FL2, and those with FL1 English had FL2 German.

2.4.2. *Research instruments*

The instruments used in this study were a) a questionnaire, b) tasks on personal computers and c) *SuperLab 4.0.*, software for designing and conducting psycholinguistic experiments. The questionnaire served to survey information on the participants' language learning biography, i.e. the order of language acquisition, the age of acquisition, the length of language learning, the context of learning, and students' self-assessments of their knowledge of FL1, FL2, FLn. The questionnaire also gathered information concerning learners' age, sex, major and minor degree courses, and their native language. Participants first filled in the questionnaire. Then they were presented an introduction on personal computers explaining the task, which was followed by an example and a short exercise.

The stimuli used in the study consisted of cloze tasks in Croatian, English and German which were presented simultaneously. Sixteen different sentence triplets were used, one triplet for each of the sixteen German particles. In the cloze tasks, only the first sentence was complete, whereas the other two were missing the modalizing element that was printed bold in the first sentence. e.g. **Ma** *zna ona što radi.* / *She knows what she's doing, ___ .* / *Sie weiß __ , was sie tut.* The order of the sentence appearance was randomized between participants. The participants' task was to fill in the missing modalizing element in the second and third sentence which would correspond to the bold word from the first sentence.

In the tasks, modal particles and modalizing elements were presented and had to be supplied in sentences which represent their prototypical usages, involving a maximum of contextual unambiguity and a minimum of necessary length. Students were required to read the utterances and decide which modal particle or equivalent modalizing element would be appropriate for the given sentence and its context. Although German and Croatian modal particles do have an equivalent function, participants could not merely supply a translation, since there are no one-to-one mappings of equivalent modal particles, but various possible formal and functional equivalents in German, English and Croatian. Besides, the elements in question do not have a clear-cut denotative (referential) meaning, but complex context-sensitive meanings which have to be induced from the utterance and its assumed pragmatic context. In order to supply the correct answers, students had to recognize the pragmatic function of modal particles and modal elements in both FLs. The challenge for participants was to grasp the cross-linguistically equivalent modal function and to correctly supply the corresponding, diverse equivalent forms in the different languages.

2.4.3. *Method and procedure*

After the testing, all data were analyzed with respect to the year of study (1st and 4th year) and the respective foreign language (English/German). We used an explorative analysis of the learners' answers in order to determine types of transfer processes in their language production. Answers from five tasks were analyzed with respect to English, from five tasks with respect to German and from six tasks with respect to Croatian as potential source languages. The different types of transfer were determined on the basis of assumed cross-linguistic processes that could be derived from learners' answers. Looking closely at the provided answers, several types of potential effective transfer were defined with respect to the learners' FL1. In addition to *potential effective transfer* (= transfer both of function and form) [*Ma* zna ona što radi./ She knows what she is doing, *you know*./ Sie weiss *doch*, was sie tut.], the following types of transfer were tracked in the students' answers: *a combination of effective transfer and no transfer* (= instances in which participants had to supply two answers, i.e. one in English and one in German, and one answer revealed potential effective transfer, whereas the other revealed neither transfer of form nor of function) [*Ma* zna ona što radi./ She knows what she is doing,_____./ Sie weiss *ja*, was sie tut.], as well as *partial transfer* (= only transfer of function or transfer of form, the latter is illustrated by the following example) [*Ma* zna ona što radi./ She knows what she is doing, *surley*./ Sie weiss *sicher*, was sie tut.]. For the purpose of this analysis, only potential effective transfer and partial transfer were examined, whereas negative transfer was not taken into account, which is the reason for a different number of answers in each task. Answers were analyzed separately, by first determining the types of answers/types of transfers and then the potential transfer direction.

The possible transfer directions were determined according to provided and correct answers (as listed in Table 3). The data were cross-coded by two English and German proficient researchers. However, in cases where participants provided one correct answer and one partial answer, the possible transfer direction had to be determined by taking into account participants' answers and the participants' FL. The following Table shows an example of possible transfer directions that were tracked across three languages. In the given example, the source language was Croatian, whereas in other tasks the source language was German or English (e.g. ENG: *Well*, let her go! / *Pa* pusti ju neka ide! / Lass sie *doch* gehen! // GER: Warum ist sie *denn* einfach so gegangen? / *Ma* zašto je samo tako otišla? / Why *on earth* did she just leave?).

Table 3. Coding of possible transfer directions: Croatian as the source language

TASK: *Ma* zna ona što radi. / She knows what she's doing, *of course/all right.* / Sie weiβ *ja/doch/schon*, was sie tut.

↓ Type of provided answers	Possible transfer directions	Number of possible directions to correct answer
1. English provided and correct German not provided	1. CRO → ENG	One possible direction
2. English not provided German provided and correct	1. CRO → GER	One possible direction
3. English provided and correct German provided and correct	1. CRO → GER → ENG 2. CRO → ENG→ GER 3. CRO → GER; CRO → ENG	Three possible directions
4. English provided and partially correct German provided and correct	1. CRO → GER; CRO → ENG 2. CRO → GER → ENG	Two possible directions
5. English provided and correct German provided and partially correct	1. CRO → ENG; CRO → GER 2. CRO → ENG → GER	Two possible directions

When, for example, both English and German equivalents were provided for a Croatian (= source language) modalizing element in an answer, three possible transfer directions for this translation were assumed. Participants could either transfer a modalizing element from Croatian to German, and then transfer it from German to English (CRO → GER → ENG = one possible direction). This would imply that their transfer from Croatian to English was mediated through German. Or, they could transfer form and/or function from Croatian to English, then go back to Croatian and transfer it to English (CRO → GER; CRO → ENG = second possible direction). This would imply that the two transfers occurred independently. Furthermore, since all three sentences were presented simultaneously, the participant could have transferred the element from Croatian to English, and then from English to German (CRO → ENG→ GER = third possible direction). This would imply a mediation through English. Because we did not use verbal protocols we cannot conclude which transfer direction actually occurred, so we listed all possible directions.

3. *ANALYSIS*
In this section, the results of the analysis with respect to an example task for each of the source languages, Croatian, English and German, are presented. The corresponding results will be discussed in section 4.

Table 4. Example task with Croatian as the source language

TASK: *A* jesi li nahranila psa? / Did you *really/actually* feed the dog? /
Hast du a*uch/nun/eigentlich/vielleicht/denn* den Hund gefüttert?

		1st year students		4th year students	
	Answer category	FL1 German	FL1 English	FL1 German	FL1 English
1.	English provided and correct German not provided	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
2.	English not provided German provided and correct	37.5 %	44 %	65 %	43 %
3.	English provided and correct German provided and correct	12.5 %	6 %	15 %	14 %
4.	English provided and partially correct German provided and correct	44 %	44 %	15 %	43%
5.	English provided and correct German provided and partially correct	6 %	6 %	5 %	0 %

Table 5. Example task with English as the source language

TASK: *Well*, let her go. / *Pa/Ma* pusti ju neka ide. / Lass sie *doch/nur/einfach/ruhig* gehen!

		1st year students		4th year students	
	Answer category	FL1 German	FL1 English	FL1 German	FL1 English
1.	Croatian provided and correct German not provided	10. 5 %	32 %	0 %	7 %
2.	Croatian not provided German provided and correct	5 %	0 %	6 %	0 %
3.	Croatian provided and correct German provided and correct	66 %	50 %	77 %	71%
4.	Croatian provided and partially correct German provided and correct	8 %	9 %	6 %	0 %
5.	Croatian provided and correct German provided and partially correct	10. 5 %	9 %	11 %	21 %

Table 6. Example task with German as the source language

TASK: Warum ist sie *denn* einfach gegangen?/ *Ma/A/Pa* zašto je samo tako otišla?/
**   *Why on earth* did she just leave?**

		1st year students		4th year students	
	Answer category	FL1 German	FL1English	FL1German	FL1English
1.	Croatian provided and correct English not provided	76 %	59 %	67 %	83 %
2.	Croatian not provided English provided and correct	4 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
3.	Croatian provided and correct English provided and correct	10 %	18 %	18 %	17 %
4.	Croatian provided and partially correct English provided and correct	7 %	6 %	0 %	0%
5.	Croatian provided and correct English provided and partially correct	3 %	18 %	15 %	0%

The Tables present the percentage of each possible type of provided answer for four groups of students, i.e. with different years of study (1st and 4th year students) and different FL1s (German or English) and they show the possible transfer direction(s).

4. *DISCUSSION*

In order to gain a better insight into a potential effective transfer occurring in the cloze task, we first categorized the data into five different categories according to the given answers and their respective languages. In those categories in which the potential transfer direction could not be identified directly, we looked more closely at the learners' answers, also taking into account their FL1 and their parallel answers (in all languages). For instance, if the source language was Croatian, participants had to provide answers in English and German, therefore it was assumed that Croatian could be the source language for the answers in one or both of the mentioned languages. In Table 2, all possible categories of answer combinations are given.

In the task with Croatian as the source language (Table 4), most participants provided the correct answer in German, either in combination with no English answer or in combination with a partially correct English answer. These results refer to the group of 1st and 4th year students. In the 1st year group, this result was obtained regardless of the FL1, whereas within the 4th year group participants with FL1 German had a smaller number of partially provided English answers and more cases in which an English answer was not provided at all. This leads to the conclusion that students might rely on their mother tongue, which has the category of modal particles, when transferring the respective form and function. This is supported by the observation that there were no answer combinations with a correctly provided English answer and without a provided German answer, regardless of the year of study or FL1. A similar finding refers to the case of the combination of a correct English answer and a partially correct German answer. A close analysis of the respective answers reveals the possible transfer direction from Croatian to German and then to English. For instance, participants with FL1 German provided answers such as *maybe-vielleicht* and *also-auch*. It can be assumed that these correct answers in German resulted from transferring the function of modal particles by simply translating the German answers, i.e. particles. Furthermore, in cases where *really-wirklich* was provided as an answer, it can be seen that the transfer direction probably was from Croatian to English, since *wirklich* is not a modal particle in the German language. In cases of partially provided answers in English, a transfer of form usually occurred,

while in the case of a partially correct German answer the function was transferred. It is necessary to point out that assumed transfer processes are discussed here.

In general, 4th year students with FL1 German had the highest number of correctly provided German answers, as was expected. Furthermore, participants performed worse in giving correct English answers than they did in providing German answers.

In Table 4, a task was presented in which English was the source language. In the case of a given stimulus, i.e. a modalizing element in English, although the form is different students could have transferred the functional domain. The third category contains the most correct answers (50-77%) in all the analyzed tasks, with both potential transfer directions, from English to Croatian and from English to German. Students seem to be aware of the form and function of modal particles in Croatian and German, regardless whether their FL1 is German or English. Besides, the percentage of correct answers is somewhat higher in the 4th year, especially with FL1 German. This leads to the conclusion that the cross-linguistic awareness of using modal particles both in the mother tongue and in the FL1 might rise with increasing language learning experience. This is in line with the results of previous research according to which multilingual speakers have a higher degree of metalinguistic or cross-linguistic awareness (e.g. Jessner, 2006, 2008).

In the fourth category, the answer combination *ajde-doch* was provided. The corresponding function was assumedly transferred from English. Besides, Croatian *ajde* (a spoken form of the standard Croatian particle *hajde*) can take the initial position in the sentence, just like *well* in the English language. The German answer was correct, which indicates the transfer direction from English to German. In the fifth category, the parallel answers *pa-ja* were provided by a participant whose FL1 was English, which points to a possible transfer direction from English to Croatian. The group of 1st year students performed worse in giving correct answers in German, especially if their FL1 was English. This might be due to a smaller degree of prior instruction in German and their smaller overall knowledge of that language.

In the final task (Table 6), German was the source language and the participants had to provide a modal particle or modal element in Croatian and English. The results show that both tested years of students were better in providing Croatian answers than they were in providing English answers. Fourth year students were better than 1st year students in supplying a German element with the given Croatian source language. First year students were better in giving Croatian answers if their FL1 was German. However, 4th year

students had no particular advantage from the fact that German or English was their FL1. The most common assumed transfer direction was from German to Croatian, and there was a very small number of form-function mappings correctly transferred into English. The group of 1st year students with FL1 German performed worst in the task of providing English answers. The case of the answers *ali-then* exemplifies this: *ali* is correct, but *then* is a direct translation from previously provided German *den(n)*, the predominant language being German in this case. It can be assumed that students can identify interlingual equivalencies between German modal particles and their Croatian counterparts.

A general finding is that all groups of participants were better in transferring modal particles from Croatian to German and vice versa than they were in any language combination involving English. Fourth year students outperformed 1st year students in transferring elements in Croatian-German task pairs regardless of the possible transfer direction. In the group of 4th year students the FL1 did not prove to be a relevant variable, i.e. these students were equally successful in giving answers no matter whether their FL1 was German or English. However, in the group of 1st year students, the FL1 German seems to be a good predictor of students' success in German answers, i.e. 1st year students with FL1 German performed better in German tasks than FL1 English students did.

The answers in the English sentences show more variation, probably depending on how the students understood the meaning of the respective Croatian particle. In German there are particles which were supplied correctly, whereas in English the students knew that a modalizing element was necessary, but might not have been sure about which element to use. The investigated learners tend to use one-word modaliziers in English, as in the case of German and most Croatian modal particles, which consist of single morphemes or morpheme combinations. These findings are consistent with previous work on cross-linguistic similarity in foreign language learning. Ringbom (2007), for example, points out the importance of cross-linguistic equivalence and similarity (in the present study: the formal equivalence of modal particles in German and Croatian and the functional equivalence of their meaning), as well as the necessity to account for cross-linguistic differences in language learning (in the present study: English modalizing elements formally differ from modal particles in German and Croatian).

5. *CONCLUSION*

By means of a qualitative analysis of the performance of two groups (1st year and 4th year students) with Croatian as L1 and FL1 as either German or English in a cloze task test, the present study investigated potential effective transfer as the cross-linguistic competence of correctly applying the form *and* the function of modal particles in the learners' L1 Croatian and FL1, being German or English. It proved to be possible to track both *potential effective transfer* (= transfer of form, i.e. the learner supplying a modal particle in Croatian and German, and transfer of function, i.e. the learner supplying another linguistic means with an equivalent meaning) and *partial transfer* (= only transfer of function or form), as well as combinations of effective transfer and no transfer, i.e. instances in which potential effective transfer occurred in the answer for one language, whereas it did not occur in the answer for the second language within the same task.

The findings of the study are briefly summarized with reference to the initially formulated hypotheses:

As expected, 4th year students were better in applying potential effective transfer than 1st year students. The two groups were equally successful in providing answers regardless whether their FL1 was German or English.

The answers of both groups of participants reveal more potential transfers of the form and function of modal particles from Croatian to German and vice versa than corresponding transfers of form or function from these two languages to English. It seems that learners were aware of the necessity to use a modalizing element in English, but their answers show variation with respect to how they interpreted the meaning expressed by the particle in Croatian or German.

Whenever English was the source language, learners recognized the form and the function of the respective modalizing element and were successful in providing a cross-linguistically equivalent element in Croatian and German. However, when English was the target language, participants' performance did not meet the demands of the tasks. This is not surprising since English, unlike German and Croatian, does not possess the word category of modal particles, so that the lack of a formal equivalent might even have impeded the transfer of the function. It can also be assumed that the learners possess implicit knowledge of these elements in English, but fail in producing them on demand.

The present study analyzed potential effective transfer which was tracked in learners' utterances. In this investigation, the term *effective transfer* refers to the potential and (from a learning perspective) desirable linguistic outcome,

not the actual cognitive process of cross-linguistically mapping forms and functions, the analysis of which would require a different experimental design. Previous research has shown that pointing out cross-linguistic similarities (e.g. Ringbom, 2007) in particular and the raising of metalinguistic and especially cross-linguistic awareness (cf. Jessner, 2006; Jessner, 2008; Bono, 2011; De Angelis, Jessner and Kresić, 2015) in general can be highly beneficial for different types of language learning. Awareness-raising activities are expected to be particularly useful for putting into practice this type of cross-linguistic learning. Metalinguistic awareness seems to be–indispensable with respect to modal particles due to their complex and context-dependent meaning and due to the lack of corresponding forms in many languages. Apart from facilitating the learning of modal particles, the competence of effective transfer can certainly be applied to numerous other linguistic phenomena in FL1 and FL2 acquisition, with a particular benefit for all instances of multiple language learning. Future studies should investigate the impact of other linguistic and extralinguistic factors on the applicability of effective transfer in language learning, such as language distance, proficiency in the target language and source languages, and the context of learning (cf. De Angelis, 2007: 22-40).

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POTENCIJALNI UČINKOVITI TRANSFER PRILIKOM UPORABE MODALNIH ČESTICA KOD UČENIKA STRANOGA JEZIKA

Istraživanje predstavljeno u ovome članku definira mogući *učinkoviti transfer* kao strategiju koja može poslužiti kao koristan alat pomoću kojega se učenicima može ukazati na međujezične ekvivalencije u svrhu olakšavanja učenja. Na primjeru modalnih čestica i ekvivalentnih modalizirajućih elemenata u hrvatskome, engleskome i njemačkom jeziku, istraživao se broj pojava potencijalnog transfera u odgovorima na zadatku popunjavanja praznina kod 136 hrvatskih učenika njemačkog (SJ1) i engleskog (SJ1) jezika. Na temelju kvalitativne analize opisala se priroda potencijalnog efektivnog transfera te su definirani relevantni podtipovi transfera. Strani jezik učenika (SJ1) i mogući pravci potencijalnog transfera uzeti su u obzir kao relevantni faktori. Učinkoviti je transfer definiran kao sposobnost za ispravnu primjenu i *oblika* i *funkcije* određenog jezičnog elementa u jezičnoj izvedbi na drugome jeziku.

Ključne riječi: učinkoviti transfer, kompetencija, međujezični utjecaj, modalne čestice, modalizirajući elementi, J1 hrvatski, SJ1 engleski, SJ1 njemački