

# Trilingualism - Tertiary Languages - German in a multilingual world

Dear colleagues,

trilingualism, multilingualism and tertiary language learning have been around for a long time, but they were not recognized as special cases of language acquisition and language competence. Only recently have researchers begun to check out what distinguishes third and fourth language learning/acquisition from second language learning/acquisition and to search for differences and common features in bilingualism and tri-/multilingualism. Around the globe, researchers are working in areas like sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and educational linguistics in order to determine the scope of trilingualism and related areas. We were fascinated to see the broad variety of research questions, topics, methods, and languages under investigation when we opened the Innsbruck International Conference on Third Language Acquisition and Trilingualism in September 1999. In this issue we would like to introduce you to some of the topics discussed in Innsbruck.

German is a typical tertiary language, i.e. it is most often acquired/learned as a second foreign language. With this issue of *ZIF* we would like to acquaint you with some papers that deal with German, and we hope to bring you closer to this very exciting research area. The papers have been revised for this publication.

In this issue, you will find articles on various aspects of L3. The first three articles deal with different aspects of learning German in a university environment.

Nicole Marx reports on her findings how (the interlanguage) English as a first foreign language interferes with the learning process and the production of German as a second foreign language in learners whose L1 is a non Indo-European language. A few studies have been published on this very language sequence, but Marx' study is the first to deal with subjects who are learning German in the target-language country, in Germany. Most other studies have dealt with learners in their respective home countries.

Pauleen Cusack-Striepe had a closer look at the phonological structure of learner utterances of native speakers of English who had learned French before coming to Germany and starting to learn German. Interestingly, she found out that the learners produce German units that seem to have a French accent although the respective utterance does not exist in French.

Beate Lindemann reports on a study in which she videotaped think-aloud-protocols of Norwegian subjects reading a German text. She found that the learners verbalize their word finding processes in Norwegian and English, even when they have reached an advanced level of proficiency in German. When asked about it in interviews afterwards the learners are not aware of the fact that they mixed the different languages in their verbalizations. Lindemann concludes that the respective L1 *and* L2 seem to function as help languages.

The next article deals with the trilingual situation of families whose parents speak two different languages and who live in a third-language country. Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert reports on the language choices made by the families and the children and on other sociolinguistic topics.

Rita Franceschini's short report describes the language mixing processes of trilinguals (German - Italian - French) which occur when they are addressed in one particular language. She explains the phenomenon by means of the concept of re-activating a multilingual network.

The **guest editors** of this issue are working on different L3-aspects in different areas of Europe with various languages:

**Jasone Cenoz** is Associate Professor at the University of Vitoria and is working on the L3-language acquisition of English in bilingual speakers of Basque and Spanish.

**Ulrike Jessner** is Associate Professor at the University of Innsbruck. Her main interest is in English as a third language but also on the dynamics of multilingualism.

**Britta Hufeisen** is Director of the Language Resource Center at the University of Darmstadt. Her main research interests are tertiary language learning and text linguistics.

This introduction has been written in English because it is the common language of the three guest editors of this issue.

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