

# Linguistic Awareness in Multilinguals

Ulrike Jessner



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‘Ulrike Jessner is a leading scholar in the field of multilingualism and third language acquisition. Her book’s major asset lies in its interdisciplinary approach and concentration on metalinguistic awareness as an emerging property of multilingual proficiency. The book is clear, amazingly informative and documented.’

Danièle Moore, Simon Fraser University,  
and Directeur de recherche, Sorbonne

‘It’s a terrific piece of work – so comprehensive, with new insights and very, very clear. It will become a landmark in research for all interested in metalinguistic awareness.’

Muiris O’Laoire, Institute of Technology Tralee

‘The new book contains an extensive discussion of third language acquisition and the nature of linguistic awareness . . . Jessner shows an impressive overview of the field, covering also brand-new works.’

Björn Hammarberg, University of Stockholm

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English as a Third Language

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Ulrike Jessner

Edinburgh University Press

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# List of abbreviations

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CLI	cross-linguistic influence
CLIN	cross-linguistic interaction
DMM	dynamic model of multilingualism
DST	dynamic systems theory
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELF	English as lingua franca
EMM	enhanced multilingual monitor
EMMA	'even more mysterious apparatus'
ESL	English as a second language
FL	foreign language
FLA	first language acquisition
IE	International English
IL	interlanguage
L1, L2, L3, Ln	first language, second language, third language, nth language
LA	language awareness
LS	language system
MC	metalinguistic comment
ML	metalanguage
MLA	(1) multilanguage aptitude; (2) metalinguistic awareness
MLAT	Modern Language Aptitude Test
MP	multilingual proficiency
MQ	metalinguistic question
MT	mother tongue
NL	native language
PLAB	Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery

RR	Representational Redescription
SILL	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
SLA	second language acquisition
TAP	thinking-aloud protocol
TLA	third language acquisition
VOICE	Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English
wipp	without identified pragmatic purpose
XLA	cross-linguistic awareness
XLI	cross-linguistic intuition

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# Introductory remarks

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‘Wer fremde Sprachen nicht kennt, weiß nichts von seiner eigenen.’  
Goethe (*Maximen und Reflexionen*)

‘If you do not know any foreign languages, you do not know  
anything about your own.’

(Translation by the author)

This is a rather well-known quotation by Goethe, who used it about two hundred years ago when contact with other languages or knowing other languages was not a common experience for the majority of the population in many parts of the world. Nowadays, due to increased mobility and globalization, the use of more than two languages has become a normal part of daily life for most human beings. This fact has increased scholarly interest in the phenomenon of multilingualism. From the discussion in this book it will become clear that Goethe’s assumption presents a very valid reflection on metalinguistic knowledge and the awareness of that knowledge in multilinguals.

With multilingualism growing in our society, research concerning the cognitive aspects of multilingual proficiency has increased over recent years. The assumption that bilinguals are better language learners than monolinguals has been discussed in studies on the linguistic and cognitive effects of bilingualism on third language learning. This area of research has recently started to emerge by pointing out that third language acquisition differs from second language acquisition in various respects. The cognitive advantages of bi- and multilinguals over monolinguals are often related to an increased level of metalinguistic awareness, which is assigned a crucial role in holistic approaches to multilingualism (e.g. Cook 1991; Grosjean 1985; Herdina and Jessner 2002).

In this book the reader is confronted with the expanding scope of the conceptualization of metalinguistic awareness due to the complex and dynamic nature of multilingual learning and use. This new perspective has implications for the definition of metalinguistic awareness in a multilingual context, the distinction between language awareness and metalinguistic awareness, and for its measurement as part of multilingual proficiency. This work presents an attempt to break new ground in the area of (applied) linguistics by concentrating on various aspects of multilingualism with English and various issues in research that have become more and more important over recent years, such as third language acquisition and trilingualism, cognitive aspects of language acquisition, language processing in multilinguals and metalinguistic awareness.

The approach taken in the book is innovative in several ways:

1. It represents a new, albeit growing, interest in applied linguistics by going beyond the study of two languages.
2. The interdisciplinary approach combines various strands of research within both multilingualism and awareness studies.
3. It concentrates on metalinguistic awareness as a fairly new area in studies of multiple language learning.
4. It provides a link between the study of English, where English as a lingua franca has become one of the most discussed issues, and up-to-date research in psycholinguistics.

## STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

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After this opening description of the aims and scope of the book, the first chapter concentrates on the sociolinguistic background of the study. The number of countries where English is often learnt and used as a third language and lingua franca is growing steadily. Chapter 1 provides an overview and description of multilingual contexts with English in Europe and world-wide. It ends with a discussion of the multilingual user by emphasizing the need to acknowledge the interdependence between psycho- and sociolinguistic conditions of language use. Chapter 2 turns to psycholinguistic aspects of multilingualism. It discusses the differences between second and third language acquisition. Metalinguistic awareness is focused on as an emerging property of multilingual proficiency. Chapter 3 takes a detailed look at the nature of metalinguistic awareness in multilingual learning and use. At the end of the chapter some challenges for future research by integrating language aptitude and monitoring into the discussion will be presented. Chapter 4 represents the core of the

book, in which an introspective study on linguistic awareness in trilingual adults is described and discussed. The study concentrates on the interaction of cross-linguistic influence and linguistic awareness during L<sub>3</sub> production. The reader is then invited to consider the implications of spreading multilingualism, and after the theory-oriented earlier chapters the practical implications for the classroom are dealt with in Chapter 5. The Envoi which makes up Chapter 6 presents some suggestions for future research perspectives, including a call for a multilingual norm in linguistics.



# Multilingualism with English

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Multilingualism is a growing phenomenon and certainly not an aberration – as many, in particular monolingual speakers, may still think – but a normal necessity for the world's majority. Such a monolingual perspective, or 'linguistic myopia', is often part of those speaking a powerful language of wider communication and is frequently accompanied by a narrow cultural awareness reinforced by state policies which in many cases elevate only one language to official status (Edwards 1994: 1). Among the different reasons leading to multilingual settings one could say three are dominant, that is (1) the increasing mobility resulting in migratory movements, (2) the role of English as a lingua franca and (3) the presence of former colonial forces.

The first chapter of the book concentrates on the sociolinguistic aspects of multilingualism, which are seen to develop in parallel with the changing status of English. Our focus on 'multilingualism with English', as Hoffmann (2000) termed it, will move from a global to a European-centred perspective where the status and characteristics of English as a third language, which in many cases is linked to its role as a lingua franca, will be concentrated on. Although the main focus of this book rests on the psycholinguistic study of third-language use, the interdependency between linguistic conditions on the societal level and the individual use and knowledge of languages needs to be emphasized. Therefore the closing section will address some issues which are relevant for both socio- and psycholinguistic aspects of the study of the multilingual individual.

## THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH WORLD-WIDE

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Much has been written about the spread of English in the world. This development has been most spectacular in those countries where English



is used as a second language, but in a growing number of countries world-wide English is learnt and taught as a third language.

‘Half the world’s population will be speaking or learning English by 2015’, researchers say. Two billion people are expected to start learning English within a decade and three billion will speak it, says a British Council estimate. ([www.news.independent.co.uk/world/environment/story.jsp](http://www.news.independent.co.uk/world/environment/story.jsp); accessed 10 December 2004)

English the world over can be seen as a factor in the creation of multilingualism today. In Europe, too, the position of English has changed, and this development carries significant sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic and educational implications.

In many countries in the world English is identified as a foreign language with no official status, but is increasingly used as the language of wider communication as a result of British colonial power in the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries and the dominance of the United States of America in the later twentieth century. In a number of these countries it is common for English to be learnt as a third language. The terms which have emerged in connection with the world-wide spread of English include Global English, Global Language, International English, World English, World Englishes, World Language and Global Lingua Franca (McArthur 2001: 4f.). English as International Language (EIL) and English as Lingua Franca (ELF) will be used as synonyms in the discussion of learning English as a foreign language, a phrase which is not usually employed to refer to intranational communication.

According to Kachru (1985, 1992) the spread of English can be visualized in terms of three circles: the inner circle includes those countries where English is the L1 for the majority of the population, such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. But it has to be noted that English is not the only language spoken in these countries because it is in contact with heritage languages or languages of the immigrant population. The outer circle includes those countries where English is a second language used at the institutional level as the result of colonization (India, Nigeria, the Philippines, etc.). The expanding circle comprises those countries where English has no official status and is taught as a foreign language (Continental Europe, Japan, China, South America, etc.).

The contact between English and other languages in the three circles and the spread of English in the outer and expanding circles bears important sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic implications. Sociolinguistically, the spread of English has important implications regarding the

ownership of English and its varieties (see, for example, McArthur 2001). For instance, the spread of English as a lingua franca threatens the traditional ownership of English as a property of its native speakers (Berns 1995; Widdowson 1997) and consequently the status of the native speaker (Graddol 1999; Davies 2001). At the same time, new non-native varieties of English, such as Nigerian English, have developed as the result of the contact between English and other languages in different parts of the world.

Here are some examples. English is a third language for many school-children who are speakers of heritage languages (Guarani, Quechua, Mohawk, etc.) and live in Spanish-speaking South America or French-speaking Canada. English is also a third language for many Africans living in countries where French is widely used as a second language (Mauritius, Mali), and also for those children who live in African countries where English is widely used at the institutional level (Kenya, Nigeria, etc.) but who already speak two languages before they enter school. English is also an L<sub>3</sub> for many speakers in other parts of the world such as Asia or the Pacific where a large number of languages are spoken but English is needed for wider communication. And English is the third language for a large number of immigrants who have established themselves in countries where English is learned as a second language (the francophone parts of Canada, Israel, Malta, etc.) as well as for immigrants who already spoke two languages before they established themselves in English-speaking countries included in the inner circle (the US, Australia, New Zealand, etc.). In Asia, for instance, it represents a third language for speakers in Hong Kong who already speak Cantonese and Mandarin, or a growing number of Japanese who learn it after Japanese and Korean.

Furthermore, the contact between English and other languages and the spread of English also have implications at the psycholinguistic level. English is acquired by many individuals not only as a second language but also as a third or fourth language, and in many cases it is one of the languages in the multilingual's linguistic repertoire. This is very often the case in Continental Europe, where the spread of the English language certainly shares some characteristics with the spread of English in other parts of the world. Most European countries are located in the expanding circle where English is a foreign language with no official status but is increasingly used as a language of wider communication.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH IN EUROPE

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Due to the increasingly extensive use of the English language in the European context we can speak of societal and individual multilingualism

with English in Europe (Hoffmann 2000; see above). In most European countries English is in contact with other languages since most European countries are either bi- or multilingual. As a consequence English is increasingly used both as a medium of communication with native speakers of English and as a lingua franca for people who do not share the same language or rather languages (see, for example, Gnutzmann 1999; Gnutzmann and Intemann 2005). In these cases it is not only used as the lingua franca but also as a third language, as envisaged by Johnson (1990: 303), who described International English or ELF as a variety which is

learned through formal education without reinforcement outside the classroom. It is used by the growing number of people (and nations) who need access to international scholarship, policy-making and administrative bodies, commerce and technology, and who do not use English as a community or national language, L1 or L2.

The spread of English in Europe cannot be considered a uniform phenomenon. While English has a long tradition in most Northern European countries, its importance is growing steadily in some Southern and Eastern European countries where other languages have traditionally been learned as foreign languages. And at the same time in the case of the European Union, where English is becoming a second rather than a foreign language, the status of English as a foreign language is changing because it is the main language of communication among European citizens. The influence of American English and the increasing use of English among non-native speakers is challenging the leadership of British English as the only model in the European context and a European non-native variety of English called Euro-English seems to be emerging (Modiano 1996; Crystal 1995). This variety shares characteristics of British and American English but presents some differences when compared to native varieties. In a model of European English it is presented in Northern Europe as a second language or lingua franca, in Southern Europe as a foreign language, in Central Europe as a foreign language but becoming a lingua franca and in Eastern Europe as having gained importance since the fall of the Iron Curtain (Viereck 1996: 16). Thus it is developing into a sort of European English, or even a number of European Englishes, because an expanding circle of Europeans now use English on a regular basis for professional as well as private purposes. One of the varieties is the specialized English developed by officials working in the European institutions (Fontenelle 1999).

Whereas for most Europeans English represents the second language, in many other cases it is learned as a third language, as shown in the following examples (see Cenoz and Jessner 2000). In Spain English is learnt as L<sub>3</sub> by native speakers of minority autochthonous languages, such as Basque and Catalan, who are also proficient in the majority language. The same applies to native speakers of Dutch who learn Frisian at school and also study English as a foreign language. In northern Italy English is learnt as L<sub>3</sub> alongside German and Italian. In this case native speakers of a widespread European language which is a minority language at the national level also learn English as L<sub>3</sub>. Another example would be German speakers living in Alsace who learn English as L<sub>3</sub>. In Romania English is learnt beside Romanian and Hungarian or German. In this case native speakers of a less widespread European language acquire a second and a third language. Other such examples are native speakers of Swedish in Vaasa who learn Finnish and English, or native speakers of Dutch in Belgium who learn French as L<sub>2</sub> and English as L<sub>3</sub>. This also applies to immigrants from non-European countries who learn the official language of the new country and study English as L<sub>3</sub>, such as Turkish immigrants in Germany or the Netherlands, or other Europeans learning English as L<sub>3</sub>, such as native speakers of Italian who learn French and English or German and English as adults (see also Hoffmann and Ytsma 2004). The relationship between English and the other languages in use depends on the status of the languages in contact and their typological relatedness.

### South Tyrol

As already mentioned, one example of such a European context is the diglossic area of South Tyrol, where English is taught and learnt as a third language in contact (and conflict) with Italian and German. The German-speaking group represents the largest group of German speakers outside the 'closed' German-language area (Riehl 2001: 15). In the northern part of Italy there are native speakers of the minority autochthonous language, German, who are also proficient in Italian, the majority language of the country, and who learn English as a third language, as well as native speakers of Italian who are also proficient in German and learn English as a third language. It is clear that in a number of cases this linguistic contact has existed right from birth. In this book we will have a closer look at this population in Chapter 4.

As described by Eichinger (2002), German and Italian, the two main languages used in the diglossic region of South Tyrol in the north of Italy, are changing nowadays. In this area the two languages have coexisted

for several centuries. During the Second World War the use of German was restricted but today the minority language has the status of a second language. Though protective measures were introduced primarily to keep the linguistic identity of the Italian and German language groups stable, they have led to a considerable degree of individual bilingualism, especially with the speakers of German (see also Mittermaier 1986). At the same time certain measures were introduced to facilitate the use of German in the legal and administrative context of Italy.

Whereas mainly German is spoken in the valleys, Italian is the dominant language of the city Bolzano and some smaller places such as Leifers. But there is also another linguistic minority group of Ladin-speakers living in the valleys around the Sellastock, a massif near Bolzano with Gröden as the best-known tourist resort. In the trilingual Ladin valleys children grow up with Italian, Ladin and German (see Born 1984). Although it is estimated that there are about 8,000 mixed-language families to be found in South Tyrol, the exact number of bilingual or trilingual families is hard to pinpoint statistically since the citizens of South Tyrol are asked to declare their affiliation only to one of the language groups (Riehl 2001: 15).

In a number of studies Egger (e.g. 1985, 1994) has dealt with the situation of bi- and trilingual children in South Tyrol. With the goal of increasing and fostering interest in all the speech varieties which exist in South Tyrol he describes the commonalities in language development between the various linguistic groupings. One of his main concerns is the role of the specific Tyrolean dialect spoken in the region since dialect is more or less the only means of oral communication. The use of the German dialect is viewed as a symbol of South Tyrolean identity. Riehl (2001), who investigated children's writing, noted that the strong dialect-fixation might lead to the restriction of the use of Standard German to the written medium.

As in other countries, increasing integration with the rest of Europe has led to general trends in society like globalization and individualization. A new model of multilingual identity is developing which is oriented towards contemporary transcultural interaction as well as towards regional self-identification (see Egger 2001). Eichinger (2002) stated that this development has also led to a higher degree of linguistic variation in the society of South Tyrol. For instance, the integration of the Italian legal and administrative system led to an increasing amount of terminology which had to be translated into German and in consequence differed from common terminology in Germany and Austria.

One of the linguistic consequences of the orientation towards the rest of Europe is that, as everywhere in Europe, the use of English has increased

over the last decade and has now become more important, as is the case in the trilingual area of the Ladin valleys, where English is learnt as a fourth language and used as a lingua franca with tourists. The importance of knowing an international language of wider communication has also influenced curriculum planning, which is oriented towards the Italian school system. English, which for a long time had only been taught in some institutions – from the age of 14 in high school (*Oberschule*) and later from grade 3 in secondary school (*Mittelschule*) onwards – is now learnt by all from grade 1 at the age of 11. Additionally three hours per week were added to the English curriculum ([www.regione.taa.it/giunta/normativa\\_/leggi\\_prov\\_bz/2001](http://www.regione.taa.it/giunta/normativa_/leggi_prov_bz/2001); accessed 15 July 2004).

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

At first sight English as L3 might be seen simply as a variant of English as a foreign language, but actually it seems to be developing differing characteristics as it is increasingly and more extensively used as a lingua franca on a more or less daily basis. Seidlhofer (2000: 54) described this development as '[...] spreading, developing independently, with a great deal of variation but enough stability to be viable for lingua franca communication.' This implies that English is losing its 'foreignness' (McArthur 1996: 10) and that it is developing structural commonalities characterizing the lingua franca in its various contexts. Over recent years various empirical investigations into a number of speech situations, such as business talk in Denmark (Firth 1996), student talk in London (Meierkord 1996) and youth talk in Austria (James 2000), have been carried out and larger databases have been compiled. The main aim of the work based on the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE for short) is to identify salient features of non-native English and to find out about regularities which exist in any natural language (Seidlhofer 2005).

As described by James (2005), in oral and written language commonalities have been found at various levels of linguistic structure, such as segmental and inflectional phonology, derivational morphology, syntax (the article system, relative pronouns, tags, prepositions) and pragmatics with regard to directness, politeness and supportive verbal behaviour. He offered various examples to support the assumption that these speakers produce a local form of standardized or normalized English which can be compared to those forms of English which are produced in Kachru's

outer circle (see above) such as Nigeria and Singapore or in other parts of the world with varying degrees of local codification. The level of proficiency and the discourse/speech type, which are not very different from native-speaker English, form the two overall determining factors behind the local form of ELF, as can be seen in the following two examples.

'I don wanna drink alcohol.'  
 'Me too.'  
 'I also not.'

(James 2000: 22)

1. Rashid: I went to *supermarket*.
2. Anja: Supermarket, wh[at supermarket]ket?
3. Rashid: [I mean this – ] I mean – you said to this –
4. Camden Town market.
5. Anja: Hm?
6. Rashid: This Cam [den Town.]
7. Anja: [Camden] Town market. It's not a supermarket.
8. Rashid: Well, Saturday market.

(Meierkord 2005: 100)

As for the lexicon of ELF, several investigations have been carried out to find a core lexicon of English in international contexts. Peyawary (1999, quoted in Meierkord 2005: 91) conducted frequency analyses on three corpora (the Lancaster-Bergen corpus of British English, the Brown corpus of American English and the Kolhapur corpus of Indian English) in order to derive a core vocabulary of International English (IE) or ELF. Meierkord (2005) carried out research on the interactions across different varieties of English or Englishes which involve speakers with different mother tongues. She stressed the fact that English does not have a stable community of language users but one which is in constant flux. She found that ELF speakers largely adhere to the norms of either British or American English but at the same time develop a set of highly heterogeneous features. She described the lexicon as reduced and culturally more or less neutral but also unstable and variable in terms of individual conversations. But she also emphasized that the regularity of use of certain lexical items depends on the number of times the speakers had encountered them.

Drawing on his work on the the trilingual context in the Alpine-Adriatic region of Carinthia-Friuli-Slovenia where English is used as a lingua franca, James (2000) suggested that ELF shows characteristics of

a register, that is a variety according to the use, rather than a dialect, that is a variety according to the user. He summarized his line of argumentation by saying that ELF

is characterized as that which the user is speaking at the time, is determined by the nature of the social activity, is semantically flexible and diverse, has restricted (special purpose) function, will show typical features of spoken (as opposed to written) varieties and 'language in action' (as opposed to 'language [in] reflection'), and will be controlled by the on-line variables of field, tenor and mode. (James 2000: 33)

How the role of ELF will be related to English language norms also needs to be discussed in the future, as suggested by Modiano (1999: 12):

In the definition of standard English, a definition which will have grave consequences for the educational standards which will be deployed in the years ahead, it is imperative that a democratic *modus operandi* is applied. The rights of participation in this process are equally as important to all speakers of English, to the Americans and the British, to the other members of the major varieties group, to speakers of local varieties, as well as to foreign language speakers. Defining standard English as the features of English that all of these people have in common is a logical way to establish a lingua franca. Dismantling the insistence on near-native proficiency goals in the language-learning process can also be seen as a means of constructing a more democratic platform for English as the lingua franca.

Similarly, Seidlhofer (2005) pointed out that by definition nobody speaks ELF natively and advocates that speakers of ELF should be considered as language users in their own right (Seidlhofer 2001) since expanding circle speakers are using English successfully but in their own way, which sometimes may and sometimes may not conform to inner circle English (see also Chapter 5).

As already mentioned, the increasing number of speakers of ELF presents a crucial factor in the growth of global multilingualism. This development has stimulated research interest in linguistics over the last decade. Consequently the knowledge and use of two and more languages have been the subject of focus from various disciplinary perspectives in a growing number of studies in the fields of bi- and multilingualism and second language acquisition.



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