

The L1 of Polish emigrants in Denmark – a comparison of three emigration waves

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The study of how and why the native language of a healthy adult may differ from a recognised and accepted standard has been approached from a number of perspectives including language attrition (Schmid 2004, Schmid and Köpke 2008), multi-competence (Cook 2003) or cross-linguistic influence in the form of reverse transfer from the foreign language(s) (e.g. Chang 2010, 2012). In the present study, the latter approach is adopted. The particular aim is to decide whether regressive transfer from L2 Danish and L3 English on L1 Polish in three waves of emigrants is conditioned by each wave's different attitude towards the native language and home country. The first wave included Poles of Jewish origin who were deported or otherwise forced to leave Poland following the 1968 March events and the anti-Jewish smear campaign of the late 1960s and early 1970s (n=12). The second wave of emigration comprised refugees who fled the country in the 1980s with the outbreak of political repression against Solidarność activists (n=10). The last wave can be subsumed under the category of labour migrants who came to Denmark of their own accord in the search of better paid jobs and more comfortable lives in the 1990s and early 2000s (n=8).

Attitude has been claimed to be a key factor influencing the amount of L1 attrition (Köpke and Schmid 2004; Schmid 2011) however studies based on questionnaires (e.g. Attitude and Motivation Test Battery used by Schmid and Dusseldorp (2010)) tend not to find significant links between attitude towards the L1 and amount of influence on the L1. That is why in the present study an interview was run to tap the attitudes of the study subjects towards their home country and native language in qualitative terms. The Poles deported due to their Jewish origin had a clearly affronted attitude towards Poland. They were hurt to be asked to leave the country they grew up in. The second wave included people who actively stood up against the Communist regime in Poland. Their attitude towards their homeland was much more favourable as they blamed the communists and not Poland as such for their need to flee the country. The third wave had the most positive attitude towards Poland and treated their stay in Denmark only as a means of bettering their financial situation. Interestingly, the first wave showed a very positive attitude to the native language and the second and third wave a neutral attitude. The differences in the attitudes of the emigrant waves were hypothesised to condition the magnitude of foreign language influence (L2 Danish in the bilingual group and L2 Danish and L3 English in the multilingual group) on their L1 Polish with the first wave showing the most and the last wave the least influence. The influence of the foreign languages was determined by means of comparing the first and the second formant (F1, F2) of the Polish /ɛ/ with a control group consisting of Polish natives residing in Poland. It was visible in the form of a higher and fronter Polish vowel that was clearly becoming more similar to the closest Danish vowel set /e,ɛ,æ/ in the Bilingual group and Danish /e,ɛ,æ/ and English /ɛ/ in the Multilingual group.

As a first step in the analysis, no main effect of length of residence, age of onset or L2 and L3 proficiency were found in the data. The factor of emigrant wave was analysed by means of a one-way ANOVA with emigrant wave (I,II,III) as independent variable and F1 and F2 measured at vowel midpoint as dependent variables. Two-syllable words with initial stress were extracted from spontaneous conversations with the participants and the formants were measured in PRAAT (Boersma and Weenink 2019). The results give evidence of the influence of emigrant wave on F2 ($F=6,73613$, $p<.001$) but not on F1 ($F=2,23717$, $p=.11$). The observed tendency was for F2 to rise from the first to the third emigrant wave making it more similar to the Danish sounds but with no statistically significant difference between the second and the third wave. The conclusion is that a positive attitude towards the native

language may trump a negative attitude towards the home country in conditioning the amount of regressive transfer to the L1. On the other hand, a positive attitude towards the L1 country together with a neutral attitude towards the L1 are not able to block it.

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