

ABSTRACT

The present dissertation investigates the **development** in the production and perception of **inflectional morphology in second-language learners of English** and the role of their mother tongue during this development. The data analysed in this thesis stem from three psycholinguistic experiments that examine the production and comprehension of English novel words (thus investigating the sublexicon without the activation of word meaning). The **first experiment** focuses on the perception of inflectional morphemes in English novel words in L2 students at the A0 to C1 proficiency levels. Reaction-times analysis has shown that L2 learners seem to be (similarly to native speakers (e.g., Post et al., 2008)) sensitive to the presence of morphosyntactic information at the sublexical level, and they appear to decompose inflected forms into stems and affixes during perception and conduct an implicit phonetic analysis of the stem. The presence of these patterns across all levels suggests that L2 performance might be influenced by L1: Czech is morphologically much richer than English, and Czech speakers might thus be in general sensitive to morphological analysis of words. The **second experiment** investigates the production of inflected forms, more specifically those of past tense, in L2 learners of English at the A1 to C1 levels (and in a control group of English native speakers) with an elicitation task. The analysis of produced forms has shown that the L2 learners display a progressive development from the application of default rules (at the A1 to B1 levels) to the use of analogy (in more proficient B2 and C1 levels), a procedure that is used productively by native speakers. Reaction-times analysis has shown that L1 Czech functions as a facilitator at the lowest language levels (items that are phototactically legal in both Czech and English are analysed more quickly). Given the findings of the first two experiments (pointing in partly different directions), I suggest the presence of redundant processing, which enables parallel activation of two (redundant) mechanisms. The **third experiment** focuses on language transfer, using a lexical decision task with the novel verbs from Experiment 2, paired with existing English words, and it assesses L2 learners distributed on a proficiency scale. Reaction-times analysis has shown that Czech has a mild facilitatory effect on performance, not only for the lowest language levels but also for more proficient learners, suggesting that transfer effects are not limited to non-proficient speakers. Altogether, the findings of this thesis offer complex look into how inflectional morphology develops in L2 learners from the lowest to the proficient levels and also into the role of L1. In the last chapter, I additionally discuss possible **pedagogical implementations** of these findings into an L2 classroom.

Key words: inflectional morphology, interference effects, production, perception, language transfer, second-language acquisition, rules, analogy, morpheme storage, lexicon organization, Czech, English