"Comparative constructions in CLIL vs. Non-CLIL French-speaking Belgian learners of English: A case study"

Assessing the impact of CLIL is the purpose of an ongoing large-scale longitudinal and interdisciplinary research project in French-speaking Belgium (Hiligsmann et al., 2017). In this presentation, I modestly contribute to this line of research by examining the interlanguage grammar of intermediate French-speaking learners of English through the lens of comparative constructions. I first carry out a contrastive analysis of comparative constructions in French and English and then investigate their acquisition by our population of learners through the extraction and the analysis of 399 instances of comparative constructions in five small-scale comparable datasets: one control corpus of L1 English, two corpora of L1 French (CLIL and non-CLIL) and two corresponding learner corpora of L2 English (CLIL and non-CLIL) collected in 2016 and 2017 in Belgium and Florida, USA.

Through the analysis of the errors made by the students, I identify that the two groups differ with regards to the frequency and type of errors related to the use of comparatives. Three types of errors are distinguished: (1) Functional errors, due to confusion between comparative and superlative marking; (2) Formal errors consisting in the use of a syntactic comparative in domains taking morphological marking; and (3) Syntactic errors, due to the addition or omission of syntactic elements within the comparative construction. While non-CLIL learners made errors in all three categories, CLIL learners only made errors of the functional type.

The results of the corpus analysis highlight that both groups of learners show a preference for syntactic rather than morphological comparatives, likely due to the influence of their L1 (Hendrikx et al. 2017). CLIL students generally form English comparative constructions more frequently and more diversely than non-CLIL students, but non-CLIL students use morphological and syntactic comparatives in proportions that are more native-like. Both the CLIL and the traditional teaching methods each have their advantages (and drawbacks), but ultimately I argue that, in the populations under study, the CLIL approach appears to produce better learning outcomes in the case of comparative constructions: less native-like in formal proportions, perhaps, but with a lower rate of error and a higher degree of productivity and diversity.

Hendrikx, I., Van Goethem, K., Meunier, F. & Hiligsmann, P. (2017). Language-specific tendencies towards morphological or syntactic constructions: A corpus study on adjective intensification in L1 Dutch, L1 French and L2 Dutch. *Nederlandse Taalkunde/Dutch Linguistics*, 22 (3), 389-420.

Hiligsmann, P., Van Mensel, L., Galand, B., Mettewie, L., Meunier, F., Szmalec, A., Van Goethem, K., Bulon, A., De Smet, A., Hendrikx, I. & Simonis, M. (2017). Content and Language Integrated Learning: Linguistic, Cognitive and Educational Perspectives. *Cahiers du Girsef* 109, 1-25. 4