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L3 learning: lexical effects from L1 and L2

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Abstract: Learning a new L2/L3 will undoubtedly be affected by the L1/L2 knowledge of the language learners. The present study examined the lexical interplay among L1, L2 and L3. Two different types of L3 (German and Japanese) were used to evaluate how the bilingual learners' knowledge of L1 (Chinese) and L2 (English) would impact on the learning of L3 in terms of their different types of lexical relationship (syntactic similarity vs. graphemic similarity). Two groups of Chinese-English bilingual participants (one is German L3 group and the other one is Japanese L3 group) were recruited to participate in a translation task. Results (translation time and accuracy of translation) partially support that the effects of graphemic similarity of languages are larger than the effects of syntactic similarity in learning a new L3.