EUROSLA22

22nd Annual Conference of the European Second Language Association

Expanding discipline boundaries

Adam Mickiewicz University,
Poznań, Poland
5-8 September 2012

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/eurosla22/
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1 Welcome to EuroSLA 22!

The EuroSLA 22 conference organizers warmly welcome you to Poznań! We are happy and proud to host the 22nd annual conference of the European Second Language Association, as it is great honour for both SLA researchers in Poland and the organizers, the newly established Faculty of English at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The Conference is held under the honorary auspices of the Rector of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Prof. dr hab. Bronislaw Marciniak, and the Mayor of the City of Poznań, Ryszard Grobelny.

Almost 300 abstracts were submitted for this year’s conference, and following a process of a double-blind peer review 191 accepted contributions will be presented at EuroSLA 22; out of which 151 as session papers, 4 as colloquium papers, 17 as posters, and 19 as pre-conference doctoral workshops. The conference programme is scheduled to include 7 parallel sessions and a colloquium on Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context: Input, Social and Psycholinguistic Perspectives.

We chose “Expanding discipline boundaries” as the theme of the conference to emphasize that second language acquisition research has almost always been interdisciplinary, connecting with fields as diverse as linguistics and cognitive neuroscience. The focus here is on expanding discipline boundaries, and not just interdisciplinarity, in order to emphasize that there is room for both insights from related fields of study and for what has so far become mainstream SLA research. This message is reflected in the selection of plenary speakers, including: Guillaume Thierry (Bangor University), Jean-Marc Dewaele (University of London), Alex Housen (Free University Brussels) and Anna B. Cieślicka (Texas A&M International University / Adam Mickiewicz University).

EuroSLA 22 is preceded by two pre-conference events to be held on 5 September, including the Doctoral Workshops that will take place in the morning, and the Language Learning Round Table in the afternoon. This year’s Round Table, generously sponsored by the Language Learning journal, focuses on interdisciplinary perspectives on the acquisition of second language phonology. This is the first EuroSLA Language Learning Round Table to be devoted to this area of linguistic inquiry which has been considerably underrepresented at general SLA conferences. It brings together leading experts working on L2 phonological acquisition from various perspectives and using different methodologies, with a view to providing a comprehensive picture of this complex phenomenon.

An integral part of a conference is its social programme. We are happy to announce that the Conference Reception will be held on Thursday in the Mirror Hall of Collegium Minus, a representative historical building of Adam Mickiewicz University. It will be preceded by a concert of the University Choir performed in a magnificent University Aula. The Conference Dinner on Friday will be served at the Brovaria restaurant, renowned for its excellent Polish cuisine and beautifully located in the Old Market Square. Prior to the dinner, the conference participants will have an opportunity to take part in a guided tour of this Renaissance Square and its surroundings.

We would like to assure you that Poznań has a lot to offer to its visitors. Being the biggest city in the west of Poland, it is one of the major academic centers in the country. While in Poznań, you can admire the baroque interiors of the Parish Church and the Franciscan Church, visit the Palm House in Wilson's Park, take a stroll along the regatta course at Lake
Malta, go shopping in the Old Brewery centre or just bask in the sun in one of the open-air cafes in the picturesque Old Market Square!

As conference organizers we gratefully acknowledge financial and logistic support from the following institutions:
- Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
- The City of Poznań
- John Benjamins Publishing Company
- Omnibus Bookshop
- Cambridge University Press.

We are also indebted for the ongoing assistance to the administrative staff of the Faculty of English and to numerous volunteer helpers including our colleagues and students.

Last but not least, a conference like the annual EUROSLA conference is a community event, organized by the international community of SLA researchers for SLA researchers. We wish to express our gratitude here to the members of the Scientific Committee for their effort in reviewing the submitted abstracts and to colleagues who agreed to chair the sessions and discuss PhD projects.

A conference is made by its participants. We wish you a very fruitful and enjoyable conference and the most pleasant stay in Poznań!

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2 Committees

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4 Our Sponsors
5 Plenary Presentations

Beyond a reasonable doubt? : The multidetermined nature of lexical ambiguity resolution in the bilingual mind

Anna B. Cieślicka

Texas A&M International University / Adam Mickiewicz University

Understanding and producing language involves resolving ambiguity inherent at both the word (e.g., bank in the sense of a “river” vs. a “financial institution”) and sentence levels (e.g., kick the bucket= “die” vs. “strike a pail with one’s foot”). For a second/foreign (L2) language learner or a bilingual fluent in both languages, this task is additionally complicated by the presence of two (or more) competing language systems. The purpose of this talk is to address the question of how bilingual language users resolve lexical ambiguity arising in the course of processing their nonnative (L2) language and what factors have emerged as crucial in determining this process. To this end, I will review a number of studies conducted in the domain of interlingual homographs, or words with different meanings exhibiting an orthographic overlap between languages (e.g., taller as in “height” or as in “shop” in Spanish), cognates (words whose meaning and orthographic representations overlap between languages), and idioms. In a series of behavioral studies exploring the processing of homographs and cognates by fluent Spanish-English bilinguals (Cieślicka, García, and Heredia, in preparation), context emerged as a major factor modulating cognate and homograph comprehension. Like ambiguous words, idioms pose a challenge for the language comprehension system, as they offer two competing plausible interpretations and so they can shed important light on the issue of the mechanisms underlying lexical ambiguity resolution. I will review a number of studies employing different behavioral methodologies, such as cross-modal priming, self-paced reading, and divided visual field technique (Cieślicka & Heredia, 2011, Cieślicka, under review), which have explored ambiguity resolution during L2 idiom processing by Polish proficient learners of English and I will discuss the factors that have been shown to affect this process, such as context, salience, idiom predictability, or idiom compositionality.
In this lecture I will consider the recent wave of research into emotion and multilingualism (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçeği -Dinn, 2009; Pavlenko, 2005, 2008). Cognitive psychologists, psychotherapists and applied linguists use different methodologies in order to answer common research questions: Are some languages of multilinguals perceived to be more emotional? What are the consequences for their use in various contexts? What is the status and nature of emotion words and emotion-laden words in the bilingual lexicon? Why do swearwords feel less offensive in a foreign language? I will also consider the role of foreign language instruction on the communication of emotion in the foreign language.

References
Not quite so simple – Complexity in L2 Research

Alex Housen

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

In this talk I will illustrate and critically discuss how the notion of complexity (along with related notions such as simplicity and difficulty) has been used in L2 studies. Although now a fixture in contemporary science (Mitchel 2009), including the language sciences (Sampson, Gil & Trudgill 2009; Dahl 2004), I will demonstrate several problems in terms of how complexity has been defined and operationalised as a construct in L2 research. As one step towards a more explicit definition of L2 complexity, and drawing extensively on previous studies and speculation, I will first try to unravel its multi-faceted nature by presenting a taxonomic model that identifies major types, dimensions, components and layers of L2 complexity, each of which can, and perhaps should, be independently investigated (Bulte & Housen 2012). In a second part, I evaluate how complexity has actually been operationalised in empirical L2 studies by inventorizing the complexity measures that have been used and by evaluating the construct validity and underlying logic of some popular linguistic complexity measures. I conclude by arguing for the development of more theoretically grounded, empirically substantiable and practically feasible criteria and measurement practices of complexity as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. This constitutes a major task for future research on L2 complexity as a structuring factor or as a basic descriptor of L2 performance, L2 proficiency and L2 development.

References


An electrifying approach to language and bilingualism: Event-related brain potentials

Guillaume Thierry

Bangor University

In this talk I will explain how electrical activity recorded from the human scalp can shed light onto the cognitive mechanisms underlying language processing. I will provide examples regarding lexical access and syntactic processing in bilinguals during language comprehension and production and I will present evidence for linguistic relativity at a perceptual level. Pulling these examples together, I will propose that event-related brain potentials are the closest thing to mind reading available to date.
The effects of three types of planning on Language Performance in L2
Written Production

Mahmoud Abdi Tabari
University of Medical Sciences

Following previous studies of the effects of planning on L2 learners' written narratives and using Kellogg's (1996) model of writing, this study set out to investigate the differential effects of three types of task planning (pre-task planning, unpressured on-line planning, and the joint of pre-task and on-line planning) on 90 Iranian EFL learners' written descriptive output elicited by means of a picture composition. The results showed that pre-task planning encouraged process and text planning, including, in some cases, language planning. Thus, writers who had time for pre-task planning benefited in fluency and also in complexity. However, pre-task planning failed to contribute to translation, execution, and monitoring and thus had limited effect on accuracy. In contrast, the provision of time for unpressured on-line (within task) planning assisted translation, execution, and, in particular, monitoring. It had an adverse effect on fluency, but it led to fewer false starts and corrections as writers were able to iron out linguistic problems before execution. On-line planning time also fostered accuracy but at the price of complexity. The results of the joint of pre-task and on-line planning indicated that the third experimental condition had marked effects on different aspects of L2 writing processes, with pre-task planning promoting formulation and on-line planning providing better opportunities for monitoring. Writers in this planning condition succeeded to formulate, execute, and monitor their descriptive writings, with positive consequences for the fluency, complexity, and accuracy of the written product in comparison to the other two planning groups.
Exploring the receptive vocabulary of young CLIL and non-CLIL learners

Maria Del Pilar Agustin Llach

Universidad de La Rioja

Research claims that vocabulary acquisition is incremental and that it develops with proficiency and exposure to the language (e.g. Schmitt, Schmitt and Clapham, 2001: 79, Fan, 2000). With this consideration in mind, the present paper examines receptive vocabulary of two Spanish EFL learner cohorts using Schmitt et al. 2001 version 2 of Nation’s VLT. The first group of learners receives content and language integrated instruction (CLIL), with extra tuition in English in arts and environmental science added to the regular EFL classes (total of 700 hours of instruction in the FL). The other group of learners attends regular EFL classes within a communicative approach (419 hours of instruction in EFL). CLIL and non-CLIL learners are the same age but have received different input in quantitative and qualitative terms. Two main findings stand out: despite the longer exposure of CLIL learners, 1) there are no significant differences in their receptive vocabulary sizes. 2) A qualitative analysis of the data reveals no differences either. Results show that private and cream are the two most known target words (50% of learners), skirt, climb, difficult, scale, and salary also occupy prominent positions among the most known words for both cohorts. A close scrutiny of the results allows speculating that learners may have problems in understanding some of the definitions, and this may prevent them from recognising cognates in the test such as connect, limit, original or total, which score very low. It is really striking that learners in either group do not recognize these cognates. Another explanation might be that they are just too young, and cognitively and linguistically inexperienced to recognize cognates, e.g. they lack strategic competence. Further discussion should focus on the effectiveness of the CLIL approaches at this young age. More research is necessary to find out whether this teaching methodology is more effective in the long run.

References

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**L1 effects in L2 English relative clauses: Evidence from corpus production**

Theodora Alexopoulou\(^1\), Jeroen Geertzen\(^1\), Anna Korhonen\(^1\) and Detmar Meurers\(^2\)

\(^1\)University of Cambridge, \(^2\)University of Tuebingen

We investigate relative clause production by L2 learners of English in a novel corpus compiled by scripts submitted to Englishtown, the e-learning platform of Education First, an international school of English. The corpus includes syntactically annotated scripts involving longitudinal data from learners at 4 levels of proficiency and variable L1s; public release of the corpus to the research community is expected within 2012. We focus on a data subset produced by Brazilian, Italian, French, German, Chinese, Japanese and Turkish learners.

Our data exhibit the well established asymmetry in subject-object relatives with subject relatives outnumbering object ones (Schacher 1973, Diessel & Tomasello 2005), an asymmetry often attributed to the increased processing difficulty for the object relatives (O'Grady 2011, Gibson 1998). However, the asymmetry only kicks in just before the intermediate levels; throughout beginner levels (4-6) there are equal numbers of subject and object relatives. We hypothesise that at early stages (3-5) learners' production of relatives is formulaic (Ellis 2009); at levels 6&7 relative clause production (as a percentage of all produced sentences) increases 2-4 times (depending on L1). It is exactly at this point that the subject object asymmetry arises.

At the same time these general patterns interact with L1 effects. There is quantitative variation in the rate of relative clause production with Romance learners producing the highest rates and Japanese the lowest. Further, preliminary investigations show that Brazilian and Italian learners produce very low rates of pronoun relatives, while Japanese learners produce high rates of free relatives (cf. Flynn et al. 2004). Our current research focuses on: (i) tracing the development of different types of relatives across different L1s aiming at a typology of relatives and L1 effects and (ii) longitudinal productions of individual learners to evaluate the nature of individual variation and its interaction with general processing constraints and L1 effects.
The development of Case in Russian L2: Through morphology to syntax

Daniele Artoni
University of Verona

This paper aims to show how the development of the case system in Russian L2 can help clarify the morphology-syntax interface in SLA. A rich oral data set has been collected among 8 university students learning Russian at different levels (0.5-5 years of instruction). This has allowed to test some Processability Theory-based hypotheses for morpho-syntactic development (cf. Pienemann 1998; Di Biase & Kawaguchi 2002; Pienemann, Di Biase & Kawaguchi 2005; Baten 2011; Bettoni & Di Biase 2011).

Typologically, Russian is a non-configurational dependent-marking language (Nichols 1986), which means that Grammatical Functions (GFs) are not marked by position but inflectionally on the dependent rather than on the head. Morphologically, case in Russian is a difficult feature to acquire by L2 learners, because it varies according to gender, number, and class. Furthermore, it is marked on nouns, pronouns and adjectives that may or may not be preceded by prepositions.

The analysis shows that learners at an early stage of development use more basic grammatical case markers, producing only unmarked word orders (SV, SVO) with GFs are often marked inaccurately: ~30% of non-NOM GFs are wrongly case marked. More advanced learners display not only more accurate and a fuller range of case markers, but also the skills for deploying them to exercise alternative pragmatically driven syntactic choices, such as OVS. Thus, by interfacing the development of morphological case markers and GFs, results show how learners progress from an early match between form and fixed position for core arguments to full functional assignment by case independent of position of both arguments and adjuncts.

References

Second language acquisition and motion event cognition: Evidence from monolingual and bilingual speakers of Spanish and English

Fraibet Aveledo and Panos Athanasopoulos

Newcastle University

Cross-linguistic influence, Grammar, Lexicon, Psycholinguistics and SLA

Abstract: Studies show that dynamic motion events (MEs) are differently encoded across languages. Spanish focuses on expressing the path of the ME, by encoding this element in the main verb (e.g. el niño entró a la casa saltando); while English prefers to encode the manner of the ME (e.g. the child jumped towards the house). Additionally, when MEs involve causation, English favours the encoding of cause over path and manner, while Spanish prefers path. According to previous studies, these grammatical differences should influence speakers’ conceptualization of MEs.

We investigated: i) whether monolingual speakers of Spanish and English showed the systematic differences of their languages in MEs; and ii) the extent to which Spanish users of L2 English shifted their linguistic and cognitive processing of MEs towards the L2 as a function of age of L2 acquisition and L2 proficiency.

Results from a non-verbal triads matching task (in which participants watched triads of videos and had to match one of two alternate videos to a standard video) and a verbal production task, (in which speakers described videos showing MEs) showed that monolingual cognitive and linguistic performance was isomorphic to the typological differences between their languages. L2 users’ performance differed from both groups in both experiments, approximating the linguistic and cognitive patterns of monolinguals speakers of their L2. This shift in performance was related to both age of L2 acquisition and level of L2 proficiency. We discuss the implications of our results for: a) The relationship between linguistic typology and L2 acquisition, and b) the interaction of maturational constraints, language proficiency, and degree of cognitive restructuring in the mind of the L2 user.
The effects of short-term study abroad on Phonological Production Development

Pilar Avello

Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Previous research assessing second language (L2) phonological development in speech production has been conducted mainly in naturalistic immersion contexts exploring age and L2 experience effects (Flege & Fletcher 1992). However, Study Abroad (SA) is a different L2 learning context which combines content-based instruction in the target language and out-of-class interaction with native speakers. Research has analysed the impact of SA on overall L2 speaking proficiency (Brecht et al. 1995, Freed et. al 2004), but studies focusing on specific aspects of phonological development in learners’ speech production are scarce. The present study aims at contributing to this under-investigated SA domain by analysing the impact of a 3-month SA on L2 learners’ speech production development by means of acoustic-phonetic measures, as well as measures of perceived foreign accent (FA) provided by native and non-native listeners. The relationship between these two types of measures is also explored. Speech samples were collected from 23 bilingual Catalan/Spanish learners of English before (pre-test) and after (post-test) SA. Acoustic-phonetic measures consisted of measurements for voice onset time (VOT) in voiceless plosives and for vowel duration and quality, together with accuracy scores resulting from the computation of pronunciation errors (e.g., phonemic substitutions, stress misplacement). Perceived FA measures were obtained from a group of native listeners (N=20) and another group of bilingual Catalan/Spanish listeners (N=37) who performed two listening tasks: first, they rated the learners’ speech samples on a 7-point scale (1=native, 7=heavy FA), and in addition they performed a paired-comparison task in which they had to indicate which speech sample was more native-like out of two paired pre-test/post-test samples (same speaker). Results indicated a slight decrease in perceived FA and a significant improvement in accuracy scores after SA, which were strongly correlated (r>.7, p=<.005), although no large effect of SA was found in VOT and vowel measures.

References

Research on language and gender has documented male-female (MF) differences in the way language is used. Although this issue has not been researched very often in SLA, within the framework of the Interaction Hypothesis (IH) (Long, 1996), which claims that conversational interaction facilitates L2 learning, MF differences in interaction may play an important role. In fact, Ross-Feldman (2007) argued that both male and female ESL learners were advantaged when working with female partners and suggested that more research with different populations and tasks should be carried out.

Thus, the current study set out to investigate the influence of learner gender on L2 learning opportunities with participants in matched (male-male, female-female) and mixed (male-female) gender dyads. Learning opportunities were operationalized as language-related episodes (LREs), as they have been claimed to be a site where L2 learning might occur (Adams 2007; Kim 2008, Swain and Lapkin, 1998). If MF differences in the incidence and outcome of LREs are found, they might be related to the benefits learners obtain from interaction. Forty four (22 male, 22 female) intermediate EFL participants carried out four tasks, two requiring only spoken output (picture description and picture placement) and two requiring spoken and written output (dictogloss and text reconstruction). Twenty hours of conversational interaction were transcribed and codified and LREs were analyzed on the basis of their frequency and outcome type (correctly/incorrectly resolved or unresolved). The findings showed that (i) there was no significant difference between the LREs generated by matched- and mixed- gender dyads; (ii) there was a significant task effect - LREs were more common in those tasks where a writing component was included (Adams and Ross-Feldman, 2008)-, and a significant group x task interaction effect, and (iii) most LREs were resolved in a target-like manner. These findings will be commented on in light of recent research on the importance of individual variables and task-modality in task-based interaction.
Complexity and developmental stages in L2 German: Is subordination complex?

Kristof Baten

University of Ghent

This paper aims to contribute to the debate on complexity as a measure of second language development. Focussing on a widely used complexity measure (i.e., subordination ratios), I will explore whether or not complexity, as one component of the CAF triad, is a valid indicator of language development (see Housen & Kuiken, 2009). Recently, various scholars have questioned the reasoning that complexity as defined by a subordination ratio will always increase linearly. In other words, complexity may be a valid measure for describing linguistic performance, but not for language development itself (see Pallotti, 2009). In order to examine the process of language development, i.e. the route of acquisition, other measures are needed.

In this paper I will argue that cognitive complexity, in terms of the distance across which grammatical features have to be unified in a sentence (see Processability Theory, Pienemann 1998; applied to L2 Swedish, Håkansson 2011), may be a valid approach to measuring second language development. It accounts for a linear developmental sequence, which distinguishes structures that successively require no unification of grammatical features, unification within a clause, and finally unification between clauses. These cognitive complexity measures are more specific and complement the generic measure of linguistic complexity.
Spontaneous oral production data of 9 Dutch-speaking L2 learners of German was collected over a period of two years (6 interviews). The learners’ language shows that the linguistic complexity in terms of subordination ratio fluctuates extensively. From the beginning of data collection, all learners use subordinate clauses. However, their use does not increase linearly over time. When focusing on the cognitive complexity, on the other hand, a clear linear developmental sequence can be observed, from no feature unification to unification between clauses (as a consequence learners differentiate between main and subordinate clause word order).

References

Free relatives as a key to the mapping of grammatical functions

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This paper seeks to show how the acquisition of the free relatives’ informs the study of acquisition of complex sentence structures. More specifically, we argue that the unique syntactic properties of the free relative provide a window for understanding acquisition not provided by other structures. This paper focuses on the development of grammatical function primacy in relative clauses. The primacy of subject-modifying relatives was challenged by recent usage-based analyses (Kidd et al., 2007) arguing that emerging patterns are the result of non-linguistic mechanisms. Yet, abandoning the quest for underlying syntactic principles leaves essential cross-linguistic SLA findings unexplained.

Our experiment is based on the claim that free relatives act as developmental precursors to full lexically-headed relative clauses (Flynn et al., 2004), therefore providing a basis for “grammatical mapping” from UG principles to language-specific grammars (Foley 1996). Here, we report findings which support OO primacy in development of complex
structures. Secondly, we show that development, regardless of L1, is comparable. Error analyses reveal that group differences reflect the match/mismatch of L1/L2 CP features in the assembly of a new language-specific grammar.

A GermanL1 and a HungarianL1 group of EnglishL2 learners (N=78) were tested on their elicited production of free relatives (1) involving four variants according to function of head and gap (SS,SO,OS,OO) at three ESL levels. Both languages match English in CP-related directionality but contrast in subordinate word order.

1. The professor introduced whoever greeted the lawyer. (OS)

ANOVAs were conducted on these structures and results indicated the primacy of OO sentences. This suggests that grammatical role primacy effects are structure dependent, as in Chomsky (2007), and astructural accounts driven by pragmatic and cognitive factors alone are non-explanatory. By examining L1s with differing CP-related properties, the paper seeks to further elucidate how learners integrate innate linguistic and language-specific knowledge in subsequent language acquisition.

References

Cognitive factors as predictors of foreign language aptitude

Adriana Biedroń
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The construct of foreign language aptitude (FL aptitude) is related to the domain of human cognitive abilities and similar to the psychological construct of intelligence, in that it concerns a wide variety of cognitively-based learner differences. Contemporary researchers attribute special importance to memory abilities with emphasis on working memory (cf. Doughty et al., 2010, Robinson, 2002; Skehan & Wen, 2009), which plays
an important role in a number of complex cognitive abilities, such as language learning, reasoning, comprehension and cognitive control; WM measures are an indicator of intellectual ability (cf. Kane et al., 2008).

The present study investigated the role of working memory (WM), short-term memory (STM) and intelligence as predictors of FL aptitude in 126 foreign language learners. The subjects of the study were 44 accomplished multilinguals, termed as ‘gifted L2 learners’ and 82 mainstream English philology students, termed as ‘non-gifted L2 learners’. Four instruments were used in the study: the Polish Reading Span – PRSPAN, designed by the present author, the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – WAIS-R (PL) (Brzezinski et al., 1996), the Modern Language Aptitude Test – MLAT (Carroll & Sapon, 2002), and the Language Ability Test – TZJ (Wojtowicz, 2006). The independent variables in regression analysis were the WAIS-R (PL) indices, namely Verbal Comprehension, Perceptual Organisation, and Memory and Resistance to Distraction, and working memory. The dependent variables were the MLAT and the TZJ scales. It emerges that working memory (the Memory and Resistance to Distraction index and the PRSPAN) is the strongest predictor of the MLAT score, whereas verbal intelligence (the Verbal Comprehension index) is the best predictor of the TZJ score. Moreover, significant differences between the two samples were observed, especially in the memory tests based on verbal material, with those of the gifted L2 learners being higher. The results of the study are in line with Kane et al.’s (2008) hypothesis that WM and STM are much more domain-specific in people with high IQ, than in those from lower IQ groups.

References

Many contemporary EFL textbooks and vocabulary study books contain exercises with a focus on collocations, with verb-noun collocations (e.g. make a mistake) being particularly popular as targets for collocation learning. At first sight, this looks like an appropriate response to research findings which suggest that L2 collocation learning is a very slow process in the absence of explicit instruction (e.g., Boers & Lindstromberg, 2009: 39-54; Laufer & Waldman, 2011). The majority of exercises on collocations that we have found in EFL materials ask the learners to create appropriate matches between the components of the collocations, e.g., they require learners to decide whether a photo is preceded by do, make or take. This (re-)assembling of fragmented collocations does not appear to chime well with the psycholinguistics view that collocations facilitate language processing by virtue of their presentation in the mental lexicon as integral units (e.g., Wray, 2002). Moreover, the matching exercises almost inevitably carry a risk of erroneous verb-noun associations. We report a series of trials (total n > 100) (each consisting of a pre-test, exercises, and a post-test) in which the learning gains obtained from three types of verb-noun matching exercises were gauged in comparison with the learning gains obtained from a format in which the target collocations are presented to the learners as integral wholes. The latter type of exercise was consistently found to be the more beneficial. As feared, erroneous verb-noun associations made during the matching exercises were often replicated in the post-test. It must be conceded that learning gains were far from spectacular even under the more cautious exercise format in which collocations are manipulated as integral wholes, however. We discuss potential reasons for the lack of effectiveness of the exercise formats examined, and propose alternative approaches to collocation instruction.

References
Pictorial glosses: To what extent do they foster retention of new words?

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Contemporary pedagogic materials for second language learning abound with visual illustrations intended to make the language input, especially vocabulary, more memorable. The theory that is most often cited to argue in favour of presenting learners with pictures alongside new vocabulary items is Dual Coding theory\textsuperscript{1}, according to which pictorial representations associated with verbal information facilitate recollection of the latter. A pillar upon which the Dual Coding model rests is the well-attested picture superiority effect\textsuperscript{2}: After having been exposed to pictorial and verbal stimuli, one tends to remember the pictorials best. But it does not logically follow from this that presenting pictures alongside new words facilitates recall of those new words. Attention-allocation models would even predict that the attention usurped by the pictures will be at the expense of the attention that learners might otherwise give to the phonological / orthographic form of the new words.\textsuperscript{3}

The belief in the benefits of illustrations for word retention in a second language appears to be backed up by a couple of studies, but these are hardly conclusive.\textsuperscript{4} Other studies actually report better recall of new words when these were not learned in association with a picture.\textsuperscript{5} The research question addressed in our paper is thus whether or not pictorial elucidation of new words helps second language learners remember those words better than if the meaning of those words are explained only verbally (e.g., by means of a translation equivalent). We report a series of experiments (total n > 100) in which learners read a narrative text with marginal glosses with or without pictures to elucidate the meaning of new words. After the reading task, the participants’ were given unannounced post-tests to measure retention of word form and word meaning. Little evidence of a mnemonic advantage of pictorial glosses for word learning was found.
Individual differences in native-like selection ability of long term immigrants: The interactions of exposure, memory and frequency

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How do advanced L2 users resident in the L2 speech community learn that certain lexical combinations may be semantically and syntactically plausible while still being dispreferred or unconventional? For example, one may speak of someone holding a ‘mistaken belief’ while the alternate formulation of ‘wrong belief’ sounds odd to most native English speakers. Pawley & Syder (1983) termed this facet of linguistic competence native-like selection ability and it has since been found to be a problematic and late acquired component of L2 competence.

A recent study of Polish L1 long term resident immigrants in the UK (author in prep), found that the only significant predictor of L2 native-like selection ability in post pubescent onset was a serial recall measure of phonological short term memory (pSTM) \( r = .67, p<.01 \). This finding supports claims that a relatively simple associational learning mechanism underlies the development of native-like selection ability in L2
immersion contexts as well as in L1 (Ellis 2003: 75-77), and led us to question whether L2 users might be sensitive to the indirect negative evidence provided by consistently witnessing a semantically and pragmatically equivalent formulation in place of one which might be expected in a similar context, what Boyd & Goldberg (2011) have termed statistical pre-emption.

The findings of a follow-up study investigating sources of variation in L2 native-like selection ability will be discussed here. In the present study, 33 Polish L1 long term residents in the UK (10+yrs) with age of onset greater than 18, and 30 native speakers, were tested on their ability to identify non native-like selections embedded in 5 short texts about films. The Polish participants also completed measures of serial recall ability, non word repetition ability, and complex working memory ability. Findings will be discussed with respect to the interaction of individual differences and features in the input.

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Authors (in review) Native-like selection in second language acquisition: the effects of age, aptitude and socialisation.


Roles of L1 and L2 Lemmatic Properties in the L2A of English prepositions 'at', 'on', and 'in'

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Why do Korean-speaking learners (KSLs) and Japanese-speaking learners (JSLs) find it difficult to master English prepositions? Which prepositions are more difficult than others? Which sense of a preposition is easier than others? In attempting to answer these questions on variability or on differential difficulties (i.e. development order) in L2A of English prepositions, several L2A studies have been conducted and have put forward various accounts and hypotheses: e.g. Prototypicality Hypothesis (e.g. Yamaoka 1995, 6, Hayashi 2001; cf. Hayashi 2008), or the Economy-Driven Development Hypothesis (e.g. Bong 2009).
Adopting the theory of prototype in which ‘senses/meanings’ of prepositions are hierarchically organized and each preposition has a prototypical sense (or prototypical senses) and lower/less prototypical senses, the Prototypicality hypothesis predicts that prototypical senses are easy to acquire than less prototypical ones while less prototypical ones are more difficult to acquire. On the other hand, assuming ‘lemmatic properties’ which includes not only semantic properties but also syntactic properties, the latter argues that both L1 and L2 lemmatic properties (e.g. agreement, subcategorization, ±Dimension, ±Direction, ±Temporality, ±Boundary) and the economy government process (hypothesis-testing) are crucial factors in determining the development order, and also important causal factors for apparent variability (e.g. misdevelopment, fossilization, and so on).

In order to test the two hypotheses, the two experimental studies on L2A of English prepositions, ‘at’, ‘on’ and ‘in’ were conducted: the one experimental study was conducted with adult JSLs and KSLs of English as a foreign language (EFL) incorporating a graded acceptability judgment task on the sentences that were used by Hayashi (2008), and the other experimental study incorporated a cloze test which made it possible to analyze commission and omission errors made my L2 learners.

The results obtained from the two experimental studies support neither the claim of the prototypicality effects nor the claim of L1 effects at conceptual level, undermining the prototypicality hypothesis, but confirm the claims of the Economy-Driven Development hypothesis. One interesting finding is that the L2 learners find it easy to acquire PPs with external space (+Dimension, +Boundary) first, but difficult to encode the information of internal (abstract) space (-Dimension, -Boundary) to PPs.

Expanding vocabulary in a foreign language and morphological awareness of the native language

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The connection between morphological awareness and vocabulary has been studied mainly in first language acquisition for a long time (eg. Carlisle 2000, McBride 2005, Berko 1958). From these studies a conclusion could be drawn upon some aspects of second language learning as well. In Hungarian papers has not been paid enough attention to the role of suffixes in learning a foreign language. According to my main hypothesis the morphological awareness of the native language plays an important role in the development of derivational vocabulary of the foreign language (Russian in this
(case) and it affects both the number of learned words and the quality of known vocabulary (depth and breadth of vocabulary).

Thus the main question of my research in progress is: what effect does the implicit knowledge of morphology of our mother tongue has on the acquisition of foreign language vocabulary in the case of two complex languages – Hungarian and Russian?

My previous experiments have shown that explicit instructions built in a 90 minute conversational lesson can help students focus on the form of words and learn vocabulary in a more aware way – so there is no need to pay attention only to word forms and only to grammar, but both methods can be successfully used while learning living language and developing conversational skills.

3rd semester students learning Russian language at the University of Pécs, Hungary filled in a test at the beginning of the lesson and had to react on words with 3 different prefixes. Throughout the lesson we were doing the usual conversational lesson in Russian but students were paying special attention to the function of prefixes in verbs and nouns and they mentioned other words than in our texts where the prefix fills the same function. It turned out that they knew 81% percent of the stems in the test but could not figure out the meaning of the whole word due to a lack of morphological awareness. At the end of the lesson the test was repeated and students had an average of 200% percent improvement, which was gained only by emphasizing the meaning and function of prefixes and not only giving the meaning of a lexeme.

In the summer semester of 2011/2012 a whole course is going to be given to expanding Russian language vocabulary (skills) through the development of both native and foreign language morphological awareness. Special attention will be paid to the function of prefixes and suffixes, to the Russian word families and to the relation between Russian word families where the members are formed by similar affixes.

In relation to (the learning of) foreign language morphological knowledge, in most cases we meet papers that deal only with inflexion, mainly because of the higher degree of regularity. Linguists turned their attention to measuring vocabulary, to the concept of vocabulary, to the connection between derivation and learning a foreign language only many years later. The positive effects of explicit methods on the growth of receptive and productive vocabulary has been studied only for 10 years (eg. Morin 2003) and great breakthrough about the vocabulary itself happened no more than 15 years ago (Schmitt-Meara 1997).

A specific language material for adults focusing on derivation rules in Russian language is being under development at the moment. Thanks to the courses in the summer semester the main chapters of the book is planned to be finished in the following months. At the conference in September I am planning to give a short introduction on the material along with the newest experimental results on the relationship between
expanding vocabulary in a foreign language and morphological awareness of the native language.

References


The Beauty and the Beast effect: Unconscious retrieval of grammatical gender during semantic decisions on objects

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Does language shape thought? This question has excited linguists, psycholinguists, neurolinguists, and more recently, cognitive neuroscientists for almost a century. One way to approach this question is to study the effects of grammatical gender in bilinguals who have gender present only in one of their languages. Here, we tested Spanish-English bilinguals and control “monolingual” speakers of English and Spanish in a semantic categorisation task on triplets of pictures in an all-in-English context while measuring event-related brain potentials (ERPs). Participants were asked to press one button when the third picture of a triplet belonged to the same semantic category as the first two, and another button when it belonged to a different category. Unbeknownst to them, in half of the trials, the gender of the third picture name in Spanish was the same as that of the first two, and the opposite gender in the other half. Behavioural results showed a clear semantic priming effect, but no measurable effect of gender consistency in either participant group. In contrast, ERPs showed not only the expected semantic priming effect in both groups, but also a negative modulation by gender inconsistency in Spanish-English bilinguals and Spanish monolinguals, exclusively. The effect in the
Spanish monolingual group was earlier and different in topography. These results provide the first evidence of spontaneous and unconscious access to grammatical gender in bilinguals functioning in a context requiring no access to such information, thereby establishing a neurophysiological basis for the linguistic theory of relativity in the grammatical gender domain.

L3 acquisition of Russian by different learner groups in German institutional settings

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For students who acquire Russian in German institutional settings, Russian is a typical L3. However, most studies (see Mehlhorn & Heyer 2011) concentrate on the effects of previously learned foreign languages (especially English) for the acquisition of Russian. Our paper approaches the issue from a different perspective: the diversity of the learners with respect to their L1. Three groups of learners can typically be distinguished: (a) heritage speakers (HS) of Russian; (b) learners from a monolingual German background; and (c) speakers with an L1 other than Russian or German. The latter group is especially interesting since most students represent HS of another Slavic language (e.g., Polish or Croatian/Serbian). Often this genetic proximity is considered a good precondition for acquiring Russian successfully by the learners themselves. However, the very few existing studies that consider constellations where L1 and L3 (but not L2) are genetically close could not confirm that this is the case (e.g., Bild & Swain 1989).

We present results of a pilot study on a group of 50 learners of Russian at an intermediate level. All three learner types are present in the sample. They were tested on their productive skills in Russian in two domains: (i) grammar and (ii) (free) writing. Furthermore, interviews about extra-linguistic factors like language learning strategies and motivations were conducted with the informants. The results clearly show that HS of another Slavic language do not differ significantly from the learner group from monolingual German backgrounds, even independently of their proficiency level in their L1. It is thus argued that (at least for the investigated domains) metalinguistic awareness with regard to their heritage language, the notion of psychotypology (see Kellerman 1983, Cenoz 2001, Ringbom 1986) and the learners’ motivation are more important factors for successfully acquiring L3 Russian than genetic proximity of the languages itself.
The development of complexity over time. A longitudinal analysis of English L2 writing

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Recently, the measures of linguistic complexity commonly used in L2 research have been criticized for their lack of validity and reliability, also because many studies only use one specific complexity measure to assess overall complexity (see Norris & Ortega 2009). In the study reported here, different measures tapping into different subdimensions of complexity as identified in a taxonomic complexity model (Bulté & Housen in press) are used to provide a more comprehensive overview of how the complexity of the written production of L2 learners develops over time.

Using dynamic systems theory as a framework (e.g. Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008; Verspoor et al. 2011), change, individual development and variation are placed at the center of attention. In most empirical SLA research, the focus is on finding significant group differences (typically by means of a cross-sectional or a pre-/post-test design). Only few studies have analyzed the development of L2 production longitudinally (see Larsen-Freeman 2006), and even fewer have done this using more than five data collection points (see Spoelman & Verspoor 2010 for an exception).

In this exploratory empirical study, recent theoretical insights into the nature of complexity in L2 production are combined with methodological considerations based on dynamic systems theory, and applied to a longitudinal corpus of English L2 writing. The goal of this study is twofold: a) to provide a detailed description of how different dimensions of complexity develop over time in L2 writing, and b) to explore how complexity evolves over time.
different complexity measures manage (or fail) to capture this development. For this purpose, ten Dutch-speaking learners of English were followed over a period of three years. In the course of this period, they were asked to complete a similar creative writing task on 19 different occasions (data collected by Verspoor and colleagues).

References


The stop-spirant alternation and residual variation in L2 Spanish: An Optimality Theoretic account

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In Spanish, unlike in English, the postvocalic voiced stops /b d g/ surface as spirants. Following the prosodic hierarchy (Nespor & Vogel 1986) that delimits the levels at which a phonological phenomenon applies, Zampini (1997, 1998) determines that the prosodic domain of the alternation is the intonational phrase, indicating that the phenomenon also occurs within the domains below it, the clitic group and phonological word. Zampini also shows that L2 Spanish learners start with the most restrictive grammar (at the level of the phonological word) and expand their grammar via positive evidence. The present study further tests the hypothesis that late L2 learners acquire the stop-spirant alternation according to the prosodic hierarchy, this time analyzing learners’ productions in terms of dynamic interlanguage constraint rankings.

Piñeros (2002) posits that LAZY (Kirchner 1998), which militates against articulatory effort, ranks above stricture faithfulness in Spanish, allowing spirants to surface in
postvocalic position. Extending this to L2 Spanish, we assume that L1 English speakers start with a ranking in which stricture faithfulness outranks LAZY, proposing separate stricture faithfulness constraints for each prosodic level. We hypothesize gradual demotion of the stricture faithfulness constraints in the L2, extending the domain of the stop-spirant alternation until LAZY is undominated and spirants surface in all domains. Importantly, variation typical of even native-like L2 speakers can be illustrated in OT by overlapping rankings that yield variable outputs.

Between-groups analyses of data from a phrase recitation task performed by intermediate (n=15) and advanced speakers (n=15) of L2 Spanish were significant, evidencing development between intermediate and advanced L2 Spanish proficiency levels. Intermediate learner data showed within-group effects for prosodic domain, indicating an extension of prosodic domain to the clitic group and demotion of stricture faithfulness constraints. However, there were no within-group effects for the advanced learners, suggesting a native-like ranking.

References


How do L1 Danish speakers ‘put’ things in L2 Spanish?

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The present study addresses the conference theme of “expanding discipline boundaries” by examining second language acquisition (SLA) from the theoretical perspective of Cognitive Linguistics and specifically, Slobin’s (1996) Thinking for Speaking (TFS) hypothesis. Whereas previous research in this area has focused on the expression of motion events in a second language (L2) (e.g., see Cadierno, 2008 for an overview), this investigation examines the linguistic encoding of placement events in which a figure
moves an object to a given location in space. The investigation of placement events is an interesting area for SLA as recent research (e.g., Kopecka & Narasimham, 2012) has revealed considerable variation in the linguistic conceptualization of this domain by native speakers (NSs) of different languages. For example, NSs of Germanic languages such as Dutch or Danish use posture verbs (e.g., Dutch: zetten vs. leggen; Danish: stille vs. lægge) that express properties of the figure object and its orientation with respect to the ground, while NSs of Romance languages such as Spanish tend to employ several verbs that vary along the parameters of force dynamics and intentionality (e.g., caerse, dejar caer, tirar) (e.g., Gullberg, 2011; Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2012).

The present investigation examines the implications of these results for adult L2 acquisition by investigating how learners learn to re-think for speaking (Robinson & Ellis, 2008) when talking about placement. A group of L1 Danish learners of L2 Spanish and two groups of Danish and Spanish-speaking ‘monolinguals’ were asked to describe a series of video clips picturing systematic distinctions in placement events (cf. Bowerman et al., 2004). The results of the study revealed instances of cross-linguistic influence at the level of TFS, as well as the use of specific communicative strategies on the part of the learner group when attempting to talk about placement in an L2.

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What can Elicited Imitation tell us about the structural knowledge of English of 10-year-old language learners?

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The foreign language curriculum in Poland recognises that for young learners exposure to spoken language and a focus on developing oral skills should be key elements. Evaluating these skills presents a challenge since after the initial three years of classroom exposure obtaining spontaneous speech is difficult as learners still remain largely pre-conversational.

This work is an investigation of oral production skills of 10-year-old learners using Elicited Imitation (EI) as a measure of their structural knowledge of English. The task has long been used in first and second language acquisition studies with child and adult participants. EI is reconstructive in nature (Erlam, 2006), involves mechanisms similar to those used in spontaneous speech and measures oral language proficiency (Hamayan et al. 1977; Munnich et al. 1994). Children being tested may be able to understand more difficult sentences than those they are able to imitate (Naiman, 1974). However, their ability to imitate cue sentences reflects the level of representation that internal grammar controls (Bley-Vroman and Chaudron, 1994) thus giving insight into structural knowledge of the target language.

Six hundred children were asked to imitate a range of 40 specially-chosen sentences ranging in length from four to thirteen syllables. This study demonstrated that words and phrases, however short, not supported by mental representation could not be imitated with the rhythm and intonation of the cue. The results of EI will be presented in the context of measures of listening and reading comprehension and correlated with other contextual data. We have shown that it is possible to employ this measure on large sample and plan more efficient computerised tools for future large scale work.

References


Speech perception is not limited to the auditory modality. As McGurk and MacDonald (1976) demonstrated, visual cues play a crucial role too, being capable of overruling auditory information in some cases. Some studies have explored this finding further in second language (L2) speech perception. For example, Sekiyama & Tokhura (1993) found a greater bias for visual cues in L2 perception than in L1 perception. Hardison (1996) reported that L2 perceivers make use of the most informative least ambiguous cues. Further, Wang et al. (2009) observed that the greater the length of residence in the target-language country, the greater the role of visual information in L2 perception.

This study addressed these issues by examining the effect L2 proficiency on the use of auditory and visual cues in the perception of non-native consonants. Two groups of bilingual Catalan/Spanish learners of English differing in amount and type of instruction and a control group of native English speakers were tested on their perception of auditory-only, visual-only and audiovisual English stimuli. The audiovisual stimuli included a congruent (matched auditory-visual stimuli) condition and an incongruent (mismatched auditory-visual stimuli) condition. The stimuli involved consonant sounds that were common to both the L1 and the L2 (/b/, /g/), sounds with a different status in the L1 and the L2 (/d/, /ð/), and non-L1 sounds (/v/). Results showed that all groups were affected by the visual salience of the sound, but there was no clear indication of a visual bias for the L2 learners, whose performance was found to be affected by L1-L2 inventory differences. Importantly, the more advanced learners outperformed the less experienced group in all conditions, revealing a positive effect of L2 experience across all modalities of perception.
References


Acquisition of be by Cantonese ESL learners: Implications for L2 acquisition of tense and aspect

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This paper reports the findings of the study concerning acquisition of "be" by Cantonese ESL learners in Hong Kong. "Be" is an exponent of two fundamental properties of sentence structures in English: tense and subject verb agreement. Neither of these properties is realized overtly in Cantonese and therefore Cantonese ESL learners have to acquire these properties from scratch.

The present study examines grammaticality judgment data, production data and acceptability judgment data from 243 Cantonese ESL learners (divided into beginners, elementary, lower intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced and very advanced according to the results of the Oxford Placement Test), and a control group of 12 native English speakers.

Evidence was found showing that the L2 learners are sensitive to properties of English from very early on, in that they accept sentences with "be" significantly more than those without "be" even where a counterpart to "be" is absent in Cantonese. All these show that the early learners display L1 influence and sensitivity to properties of the L2 not available in the L1, and because these properties are associated with a functional category (Infl), this suggests that learners have grammars with functional categories from the earliest stages of development. However, the limited production of functional categories in the production task, and the difficulty of the L2 beginners in distinguishing the progressive and habitualaspectual meanings of be+V-ing and simple verb forms in the acceptability judgment task, suggest that the early functional Infl projection may be underspecified for tense and agreement properties. Results also show that there may be problems for L2 learners to realize the past tense forms, despite their developing knowledge of the corresponding syntactic representations concerned, supporting the
syntax-before-morphology hypothesis (Lardiere 2000; White 2003). Findings of this study are consistent with a Full Transfer/Full Access view of second language development.

**Effects of learning second language vocabulary in different semantic categories**

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In its most basic terms, second language vocabulary learning involves acquisition of new lexical forms and their mapping to the corresponding meanings. Previous investigations have demonstrated that these processes are impeded when new lexemes are mapped to the semantic fields of closely related concepts. These findings, however, suffer from several important limitations: Most experiments examined only immediate vocabulary gains, and limited their attention to the semantic categories of concrete entities. More importantly, little discussion has been devoted a nature of the negative effects, as most investigations sought to demonstrate rather than explicate these effects. The purpose of this study is to provide the evidence concerning immediate and delayed effects of learning L2 lexemes associated with different kinds of semantic categories, as well as to a take step towards a better understanding of these effects by exploring a relationship between the learning outcomes and working memory capacity (WMC). Sixty-four native English speakers will be randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions, and learn novel artificial words paired with English lexical items naming (a) biological objects, (b) man-made objects, (c) actions (verbs), and (d) properties (adjectives). In addition, all participants will learn a set of semantically unrelated words. One week after the initial learning participant will relearn the original paired-lists. The study utilizes a computerized version of the trials-to-criterion procedure, and compares the numbers of trials needed to learn new vocabulary within and across different experimental conditions on learning and relearning phases of the experiment. To measure WMC, the study uses automated-reading span task. The preliminary findings indicate that different semantic categories equally impede initial L2 vocabulary learning, and that some categorical distinctions emerge on the delayed phase. WMC is primarily associated with initial learning of semantically related words. Discussion presents analysis of the learning patterns and proposes guidelines for further investigations.
Vocabulary learning: The word frequency factor in textbooks and in the teacher’s implementation of activities in the classroom

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Abundant opportunities for repetition and practice are the main door to access vocabulary consolidation in SLA studies focused on reading and vocabulary development (Laufer & Rozovski-Roitblat, 2011; Nation & Wang, 1999; Waring, 2003; Webb, 2007). However, to our knowledge no previous studies have specifically analysed the role of lexical frequency in an instructed SLA context where both word frequency in the teaching materials and in the teacher’s talk are considered.

Our goal addresses this issue by implementing an ongoing four-week experimental study with a repeated-measures design. The participants were 17 Spanish EFL undergraduate learners with a low-intermediate level (A2-B1). A list with the new words selected as such by the textbook was compiled for the units covered by the experimental period. The frequency of occurrence of such words was quantified in the textbook and is currently being computed in the teacher’s talk when implementing the activities in the classroom –both the actual number of times that the targeted words are repeated by her and the number of times that she prompts the students to repeat them (e.g. “repeat”, “once again”, etc.). For this purpose the lessons are being tape-recorded. Students were administered an unannounced tailor-made pre-test and will be administered an unannounced tailor-made post-test, both consisting of written recognition and production of the targeted words. We will analyse three aspects: subjects’ total vocabulary gains as revealed by the comparison between the pre-test and post-test results; correlations between such gains and lexical frequency in textbooks and teachers’ talk in the classroom; correlations between the students’ gains and lexical frequency in textbooks on the one hand and the teacher’s talk in the classroom on the other. The findings obtained may be used for 1) the formulation of related hypotheses and the design of quasi-experimental studies and 2) the design of teaching materials.

References


The Age Factor and verb placement in L2 German

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Investigating the age factor in L2-acquisition is an interdisciplinary endeavor: The (psycho)linguistic argumentation is complemented by sociolinguistic, psychological and neurological reasoning. Most data come from cross-sectional experimental studies, longitudinal observations of comparable learners are rare. This paper presents data from a longitudinal corpus of two untutored learners of German with L1 Russian (the DaZ-AF corpus, see e.g. Dimroth 2008a, Dimroth 2008b, Pagonis 2009). As sisters living in Germany together with their mother, the two learners mainly differ in age of acquisition (AoA 8;7 vs. 14;2). For this case study I have analyzed 21 one-hour-recordings of spontaneous speech per informant covering the whole observation period. This corpus contains roughly 10,500 clauses containing verbs, about 30% of which are potential prefabricated chunks.

The acquisition of the two structural positions of the finite verb in German (V2 in main and V-final in embedded clauses) seems to be strongly affected by age of acquisition: Sentences with the finite verb in third position (V3) are attested in adult L2-acquisition as an intermediate step towards V2-syntax (cf. CLahsen, Meisel & Pienemann 1983), but not in L1- or in early L2-aquisition (cf. Tracy & Thoma 2009, Rothweiler 2006). Similarly, acquiring the verb-final position in subordinate clauses can take a long time for adults to learn, at least if their L1 is not an SOV-language, but is mastered by L1-children as soon as they start to produce subordinate clauses (cf. Rothweiler 1993).

Both learners in the DaZ-AF-corpus produce declarative main clauses with V3-order and subordinate clauses with the finite verb in non-final position. But the younger learner goes through these intermediate phases much faster than the older one, who still retains the deviant patterns at the end of the observation period. Still, the adolescent learner is developing much faster than the adult learners attested in the literature. Differences in L2-acquisition between preschoolers, young school children, adolescents and adults cannot be explained by maturation (alone), they call for a multifactorial explanation of the age factor.
Distributions of pauses in native and non-native speech

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In second language oral proficiency tests, individual differences in measures of fluency are used as indicators of overall speaking proficiency. Individual differences with respect to fluency, however, also exist for native speakers where they may reflect idiosyncrasies and differences in speaking style. This research is concerned with the question which aspects of L2 fluency are due to individual speaking style, and which aspects of L2 fluency can be attributed to specific L2 linguistic skills. In this presentation, in addition to global measures of fluency such as number of pauses and pause durations, we compare the pause distributions of native and non-native speech in order to disentangle natural pauses that are also apparent in L1 from pauses that arise due to difficulties in L2 speaking.

Speech data of 44 Dutch L1 and intermediate to advanced L2 speakers performing monologic speaking tasks was transcribed and coded for syntactic information, parts of speech, and word frequency (taken from the corpus of spoken Dutch). Replicating Tavakoli (2011) who found that non-native speakers pause more often mid-clause than native speakers do, we also found differences in pause distributions for native and non-native speakers. The overall patterns were similar for the two groups but the effects of locations were stronger for native speakers than non-native speakers. For example, logistic regression analyses revealed an effect of word frequency: pausing occurred less often before high-frequent words than for low-frequent words, and this effect was stronger for native speakers than for non-native speakers. We will discuss the implications for measuring L2-specific fluency. For instance, when using objective measures of fluency, rather than simply calculating the global number of pauses and global pause durations, a measure that is more specific for L2 speaking may be to incorporate weights that are dependent on pause locations.
Differences in Second Language Reading Achievement: French in Grade 8 explored from the perspective of Educational Effectiveness Research

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Educational effectiveness research (EER) investigates “what factors [...] at different levels such as the classroom, the school and the above-school levels can explain the differences in the outcomes of students, taking into account background characteristics” (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008, pp. 12). Although EER can thus offer insights into what may work in instructed second language acquisition (SLA), it has not yet given considerable attention to this topic, rather focussing on mathematics and the native language (Creemers, 2005). The proposed paper intends to bring change by exploring the dataset from the Flemish national assessment of the attainment targets for French (L2) reading in Grade 8.

The assessment used a test consisting of 46 multiple choice items on a total of 11 different texts, along with background questionnaires for the students (N = 9375), their parents and their teachers. Techniques from EER – such as multilevel analyses within the CIPO-model (Scheerens, 1990) and models from Item Response Theory – were used in relation to insights from applied linguistics (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005; Norris & Ortega, 2006). It turned out that 90% of the differences in achievement between schools could be explained by factors outside of the schools’ reach, e.g., the students’ gender, socio-economic status and mother tongue; the class’ study option; and the schools’ location. Considering factors that schools could impact upon, a significant effect was found of variables such as the students’ extracurricular contact with the French language, the degree to which they found French important and fun, the grade in which students had started learning French, their preferred class activity, and the time they reportedly spent on their homework. Interestingly, students of teachers who considered conveying knowledge a priority showed better reading skills than their peers. The proposed paper will present and elaborate on these and other results of the study.
References


Learning discourse functions: The syntactic-pragmatic interface

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This paper aims to show that the Topic Hypothesis proposed by Pienemann, Di Biase & Kawaguchi (2005) as extending Processability Theory should encompass also the other main discourse function, Focus, to account for L2 development. Integrating pragmatic information within the proposition is difficult for learners who can barely handle the L2 phonology and morpho-syntax (Hopp 2007; Kormos 2000; Segalowitz 2003). On the other hand, native speakers use a range of means to guide the listener’s attention and achieve their communicative intention – among them prosodic, grammatical, and linear order means (Levelt 1989). Languages may use any, or a mix, of such means (e.g., prosodic stress, topicalization, null or full subject and object realization, precedence relations, etc.) to make this pragmatic information available (cf. Lambrecht 1994; Van Valin 2004). L2 learners will need to discover and appropriate these specific means along their path towards ultimate attainment. An added difficulty in this appropriation is that such speaker choices are, by necessity, marked, hence less frequently heard by learners; e.g., questions are less frequent than canonical declaratives.

We will trace the developmental path of Topic and Focus realization within a Processability Theory framework (Pienemann 1998), among adult learners at different stages of development acquiring a variety of typologically diverse languages: Chinese (Zhang 2007), English (Yamaguchi 2008), Italian (Bettoni & Di Biase 2011), Japanese (Itani-Adams 2009; Kawaguchi 2010), and German (Jansen, in preparation). Spoken production data, elicited through communicative tasks, are analysed to investigate learners’ strategies instantiating pragmatic information. Results suggest a clear developmental path from inappropriate use of prodrop and full or pronominal subject
realization towards canonical word order, to the addition of a fronted topical adjunct or focal question phrase, up to the competent manipulation of marked constituent orders.

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How formulaic is the beginner’s formula? Towards a prosodic bootstrapping of morphology hypothesis

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This study attempts to bridge a gap between two fields of investigation in SLA, phonology and morphology, which are usually studied in isolation. An example of this isolation, among many, is Pienemann’s (1998) Processability Theory, which focuses on morphosyntactic phenomena. PT’s discourse-pragmatics extension (Pienemann, Di Biase and Kawaguchi 2005) likewise excludes phonology. Although a narrow disciplinary focus may be regarded as a desirable scientific virtue, expanding discipline boundaries may be fruitful (e.g., Mycock 2007’s examination of prosodic contours in constituent question). This paper broaches a puzzle: the first stage in L2 learning, i.e., the lemma-procedure in PT, is assumed to be an invariant ‘formula’. Yet learners of Italian L2, for instance, frequently vary word-final syllables of ‘single words and formulas’ before morphological encoding status can be attributed to that variation. Why does this happen? In reviewing L1 and L2 listening studies, Cutler (2000) explains how “[s]egmentation of fluent speech by adult listeners is in principle made easier by the availability of a well-stocked vocabulary. Adults can tell where a word begins by identifying the end of the preceding word, for instance.” As the L2 lexicon grows along with the opportunities to use it, learners attune (cf. Best and Tyler 2007) and adjust their L1 word perception and segmentation mechanism for the identification of novel prosodic patterns presented by the L2 input. A language such as Italian, where morphological variability is high but also quite regular, may provide the L2 learner with a key, a kind of ‘prosodic bootstrap’ to morphological encoding.

To test this hypothesis I will examine elicited production data of two adult English L1 early learners of Italian focusing on verb forms. Results indicate that early morphological encoding hinges on the acquisition of prosodic patterns and variation in the prosodic shapes of single words and formulaic expressions.

References

Modelling word difficulty

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It is generally acknowledged that the frequency of a word’s occurrence in the English language reflects reasonably reliably the likelihood of an L2 learner knowing that word; evidence for this relationship has accrued over years of research into lexical knowledge and acquisition. However, a number of other factors are often discussed as affecting the intrinsic difficulty of knowing a word. This paper reports on a quantitative study which tested for the influence of a number of linguistic and psycholinguistic variables on word knowledge, whilst controlling for frequency.

Data were collected using a vocabulary test undertaken by 250 sixteen/seventeen year-old, basic – intermediate level Hungarian EFL learners attending secondary schools in Budapest. Selecting students from a single language background allowed investigation of hypothesised sources of word difficulty whilst controlling for cognates (accounting for the diverse influence of L1/L2 interrelationships was beyond the scope of the current analysis).

The vocabulary test itself consisted of 119 items divided into four groups. Each item group utilised a slightly different means of measuring the students’ ability to draw a link between the written form and (one) meaning of an individual word. Items comprised: multiple choice items from Nation and Beglar’s (2007) vocabulary levels test; word completion items from Laufer and Nation’s (1999) controlled production vocabulary levels test; English to Hungarian, and Hungarian to English single-word translation exercises. None of the item types provided more than minimal contextualisation for the word tested.

The approach used to explain item difficulty employs a recently developed Item Response Theory (IRT) model, the LLTM+e (DeBoeck, 2008). Outcomes indicate that – in addition to frequency effects – a higher ‘imageability’ rating (Paivio et al, 1968)
significantly reduced the difficulty of a word amongst learners at all ability levels. No other explanatory variables were found to make a significant impact.

References

Factors impacting on language gain in instructed foreign language acquisition: A complex systems approach to research design in a pedagogical setting

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This paper describes the rationale and design of a longitudinal study of foreign language acquisition in secondary school (learners aged 13-15) in Poland. With the aim of describing the current situation in schools the study takes a multi-method approach to investigate different aspects which may have an impact on language gain. Taking the view that instructed language learning takes place within a system which has components that interact dynamically, all of which influence the learning, (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron 2008: 26) information is gathered from language teachers, learners and school directors in the form of questionnaires and interviews. Learners are asked about attitudes to and beliefs about learning a foreign language, about their previous and current language learning experiences, and also about opinions on their current language learning. This is matched by questions to teachers about beliefs, attitudes and opinions on their teaching. Detailed information about the school’s mission and their vision of language teaching and learning, organization of teaching and approach to individual learners is collected from directors. An independent study of the socio-economic status of the region in which the school is situated is also conducted. What learners and teachers claim is confronted with data obtained during lesson observations. Language gain is measured using a pre-post test of grammar and vocabulary, interspersed with achievement tests at the end of each year of the study.
Using the different strands of data the study aims to trace conjunctures in the language learning contexts which appear to impact positively on language gain, expanding understanding by considering these interrelationships. Traced across three years of learning this should provide valuable information about factors impacting on foreign language acquisition in instructed settings.

References


The effect of input vs. output form-focused practice on the explicit and implicit knowledge of intermediate Iranian foreign language learners

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This study investigates and compares the effect of two packets of practice tasks on the acquisition of English modals. The acquisition is measured in terms of explicit and implicit knowledge on the target structure. A pretest posttest (posttest and delayed posttest) design was used where the explicit knowledge was specifically operationalized through the groups’ performance on the untimed grammaticality judgment test, and implicit knowledge was operationalized by their performance on the timed grammaticality judgment test. Three intact classes of intermediate EFL learners in Iran were randomly assigned to one of the groups involved in the study. The input group (n=25) received a teacher fronted explicit grammar instruction, a combination of three input tasks: error recognition, focused listening and focused reading, and preemptive/reactive feedback. The treatment for the output group (n=27) was similar to the input group except that they received output tasks for practice, namely dictogloss, corrected close translation and text reconstruction. The control group (n=25) did not receive any treatment and were just exposed to the listening and reading texts followed by some questions which were irrelevant to the target structure of the study. Results showed that on the posttest, administered 10 days after the last treatment session, both the input and the output groups outperformed the control group in the explicit and implicit measures of knowledge. Forty days later, the input group’s performance was significantly better that on pretest. This group failed to retain its outperformance on delayed posttest of implicit and explicit knowledge in comparison to that on the posttest. The output group’s performance on delayed posttest was significantly better than that on pretest on
both measures. This group proved to retain their outperformance on both measures of implicit and explicit knowledge. The results may help language teachers design more effective activities for the learners considering the institutional constraints.

**Lexical transfer in L3 German: Typology or L3 proficiency as a determining factor for the transfer source?**

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In studies on lexical transfer in L3 learning the role of typology has been discussed and many studies have found that the more typological close an L1 or an L2 is to the L3, the more likely that language is to be transferred into the L3. Interestingly it has also been reported that the transfer source may differ with L3 development. For instance, Bardel and Lindqvist (2007) found that at a low proficiency level in the L3, the source language for transfer was both from a high and a low proficient L2 whereas at a higher proficiency level in the L3, the source language for transfer was almost exclusively from a high proficient L2. In this longitudinal study we follow two learners of German as an L3. The learners both have high proficiency levels of Romance languages and English as L2s (Swedish L1), a condition which makes it possible to evaluate the role of typology for the source language for transfer and also evaluate how the transfer pattern differs with increasing proficiency. The preliminary results show that at a low proficiency of German, transfer stem from both a low proficient L2, cf. (1):

**Learner 1:** Ich wohne en Gärdet. ('en' is Spanish for on)  
I live on Gärdet.

as well as from L1 and a higher proficient L2. However, the majority of lexical transfer stem from the L2 with the lowest proficiency level (as in the example above).

**References**

The co-construction of Grammar in multilingual learners

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Completions are coherent grammatical structures completed sequentially across two or more speakers in a conversation. This phenomenon is a fundamental example of how grammatical structures can be co-constructed in interaction. In this study, we present original data collected in an English as a foreign language secondary school classroom in Luxembourg. We show that even learners of English use completions as a tool to structure conversation, thus performing a joint action that involves online but implicit imitation of the other speaker’s utterance.

Pickering and Garrod (in press) propose a model for language processing that involves covert imitation as a tool for accurate prediction for language in interaction. Importantly, the listener or perceiver of another’s utterance is actually covertly imitating the utterance in order to predict what comes next, which in turn allows her to be “ahead of the game.” In this model, grammatical completions occur naturally since the second speaker has the structure of the utterance readily available and can complete it without much hesitation. The authors also suggest that covert imitation in language could be used as an aid in comprehension.

In our data, the splits in utterances occur in five different types grammatical structures. We compare these structures to those previously found in other languages. For example, we do not find compound clause completions of the sort presented in Lerner (1991) (e.g. IF X - THEN Y).

This study highlights the importance of resources such as completions that could aid or reveal mechanisms involved in learning a foreign language. Our analysis supports a model of conversation that includes on-line processing of another person’s utterance as it is produced (Pickering and Garrod, in press). We show that multilingual speakers are capable of doing this complicated structure in conversation even in an additional language.
Traditionally, the topic is considered to be what a speaker is talking about. This seems to hold both for first (L1) and second language (L2) written or monologal productions. However, little is known about topic in L2 conversational data. In this light, the notion itself needs to be revisited at least in two respects. First, studies on social interactions highlighted how conversational themes are collectively introduced and carried out on a turn-by-turn basis through participants’ ongoing mutual adjustments (see e.g. Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Button & Casey, 1984; Mondada, 2003). Second, these studies have moved the analytical focus from the contents of talk to the procedures participants deploy for managing topics: how they introduce, shift and close them, or go back to a prior one.

This paper presents a qualitative study based on a database of 50 hours of regularly recorded dinner-table conversations between au-pair girls and boys and their host families. The adolescents spend 6 to 9 months in the French-speaking part of Switzerland and attend weekly 2 hours of French course in a language school. Drawing on Conversation Analysis, I focus on a specific interactional micro-activity (Fasel Lauzon et al. 2009): topic introduction in conversation. This paper will present results in relation to two specific aspects:

1) the sequential context where a new topic is introduced (e.g. after a prior sequence has been explicitly closed or after a long interruption in talk) and

2) the linguistic means exploited to introduce and link (or not) the conversational topic (e.g. left dislocation and discourse markers).

This analytic procedure permits, I argue, to evidence the actional level of L2 use in everyday life. Moreover, these results feed into the debate about a re-conceptualization of the notion of L2 competence and the traceability of its development over time.
Cognition and Affectivity in an upper-primary CLIL classroom

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The objectives of CLIL go far beyond teaching school subjects in a foreign language (e.g. Coyle, Hood, Marsh, 2010). When properly implemented, CLIL methodology based on constructivism, revolves around the use of CALP to foster creative thinking and problem solving skills. In its theoretical part the paper discusses cognitive mechanisms involved in CLIL learning, such as patterning, the brain’s natural ability to organize and integrate vast amounts of incoming information to boost learning. However, it also emphasises that CLIL tasks may lead to negative affectivity by placing high-level cognitive and linguistic demands on learners. Having to deal with content both conceptually and linguistically new sometimes results in cognitive overload, and consequently, a sense of threat and helplessness. These, in turn, may activate downshifting: automatic, simple responses blocking higher order cognitive skills crucial for problem solving and creative thinking (Hart, 1983, Caine et al., 2009). Additionally, anxiety adversely affects the efficiency of two major memory systems – working and long-term memory vital for learning (Payne et al., 2002, Sirianni, 2004).

In the empirical part, the paper focuses on research carried out in an elite private school in Poland, where CLIL is introduced as a ‘current trend’ to 10-year-olds. It presents the results of a survey involving over seventy children, which concerned their emotions and attitudes towards their CLIL lessons of mathematics and science. The children’s utterances gathered in the form of structured written interviews helped identify clear signs of downshifting and related negative affective reactions, especially in the case of the younger children.

The paper discusses what classroom factors may lead to negative affectivity and stresses that CLIL educators need to carefully consider a range of cognitive and affective processes (patterning, psychological stress, downshifting), linguistic problems (BICS/CALP) and individual learner differences (age, proficiency, cognitive style), which come into play in CLIL.

References

Examining the contribution of L2 vocabulary size to segmental perception in EFL learning

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Recent research in second language (L2) speech acquisition has looked into the effects of linguistic experience and vocabulary size in the target language (TL) in an attempt to characterize late learners’ perception of L2 sounds (e.g., Bundgaard-Nielsen et al., 2011a; Strange, 2011). Findings to date indicate learners’ more accurate discrimination of L2 sounds along with a larger L2 vocabulary size (e.g., Bundgaard-Nielsen et al., 2011b). Additionally, the suggested relationship between lexical knowledge and L2 sound perception concerns late learners in immersion settings, whereas in formal learning contexts the link between vocabulary size and the ability to discriminate TL sounds accurately is still inconclusive (e.g., Moya-Galé & Mora, 2011).

The present study aimed to explore the role of L2 vocabulary size in the perception of L2 sounds by learners of English as a foreign language (FL) in an instructional learning context. Forty-three Catalan/ Spanish bilinguals studying English at university, all with a minimum of 10 years of formal instruction and with a mean age of L2 learning (AOL) of 9.3 years, participated in this study. They carried out a receptive vocabulary size test (X_Lex and Y_Lex, Meara & Miralpeix 2006) and a categorial discrimination task that comprised nine English vowel contrasts (Flege & MacKay, 2004). Results showed that some vowel contrasts were more difficult to discriminate than others (A’ scores ranging from .72 to .96) and that the participants’ amount of receptive vocabulary accounted for a significant better discernment of one vowel contrast. Findings of this study further suggest that L2 lexical knowledge might contribute to more accurate perception of certain L2 sounds only, although other variables such as the quality of input learners received might exert a stronger influence on more native-like sound perception in a formal learning context (Muñoz, 2008).
References

Prosodic Transfer Effects in adult L2 English: Evidence from Turkish-English and Spanish-English bilinguals

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Second language acquisition of the English article system has been the focus of much recent research. L2 learners’ non-target use of the English article system has been explained by a variety of accounts including semantic (Ionin et. al, 2004), syntactic (Trenkić, 2007) and prosody-based accounts (Snape and Kupish, 2010). This study evaluates the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis by comparing article use in Spanish and Turkish L1 adults. The PTH (Goad and White, 2004) predicts that Turkish-speakers, whose L1 lacks a definite article will make considerably more omission errors and tend to stress articles as if they were demonstratives as compared to Spanish-speakers whose L1 makes use of definite and indefinite articles. A total of 20 university students, 10 for each group, between the ages of 21 and 28 with a valid IELTS score form the participant group for the study. All participants complete a language dominance questionnaire, a version of LEAP-Q adapted for Australian English, provide spontaneous speech data and participate in storytelling and story reading tasks. The data from 8 subjects (so far) have been analysed for correct use, errors of omission and commission, and acoustically analysed using Praat (Boersma and Weenink, 2006) to examine the duration of the articles. The data support the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis with one caveat. As predicted, the Turkish English bilinguals exhibit more errors of omission and over-stressing than the Spanish English bilinguals. However, substitution
errors remained fairly equal across both groups and speakers of both groups substituted demonstratives in place of the definite article.

References

Combining learner English and World Englishes perspectives: The case of embedded inversion

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The current spread of English as the global language of communication challenges the traditional SLA-based view of English as a foreign language learnt in classroom settings. Consequently, the study of learner English from an SLA perspective should be brought into closer contact with the study of other non-native Englishes, especially indigenized L2 varieties of English (commonly referred to as World Englishes). Despite obvious shared interests between these research fields, attempts to combine their perspectives have not been made until very recently (see, e.g., [1]).

This paper aims at showing how SLA could benefit from expanding its boundaries so as to include concepts and findings from the fields of variationist and contact linguistics. One such concept is that of Angloversals, that is, commonalities or universals of L2 Englishes, which has become one of the most topical questions in the study of World Englishes [2-3], but has not yet been properly applied to learner English. Starting from the observation that embedded inversion (EI), i.e. the inversion of SV word order in indirect questions, is a widespread phenomenon in World Englishes [4-5], this paper examines to what extent EI is found in learner English and if its uses parallel those
found in World Englishes. Among the investigated variables are the learners’ L1 and the medium of communication (written vs. spoken language).

The results, based on data from ICLE [6] and LINDSEI [7], show that EI occurs in learner English, though in smaller proportions than in World Englishes. The use of EI also appears to be governed by similar principles in different types of Englishes (cf. the influence of the L1/substrate language or the role of repeated chunks). This study demonstrates that the theories and findings from variationist and contact linguistics can help gain insight into learner English and open new horizons for SLA.

References

Do all roads lead to Rome? Attention, awareness and the ‘noticing’ construct

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Attention and awareness have been claimed to jointly operate in SLA in a process called ‘noticing’ (e.g. Robinson, 2003; Schmidt, 2001). Schmidt’s Noticing Hypothesis states
that noticing linguistic forms is necessary for these forms to be represented in memory (Schmidt, 1990).

Most empirical studies to date have investigated noticing by measuring either awareness or attention, the tacit assumption being that the presence of one process also implies the presence of the other. In this project, I examine that assumption more closely by triangulating data on both attention (distilled from an eye-movement record) and awareness (from retrospective verbal reports) with learning data (vocabulary post-tests). This presentation will focus on the awareness data.

The eye movements of 29 advanced EFL learners were recorded while they read 20 short English texts. Twelve paragraphs contained one novel word each, which served as targets for incidental learning. After completion of an unannounced vocabulary post-test, each participant was prompted to recall what she had been thinking when she encountered the novel words in the reading task. Based on her ability, or lack thereof, to consciously recall her processing of each of the target words, the participant was then classified as ‘aware’ or ‘unaware’ of a given target. By comparing the awareness data with a) the vocabulary post-test scores and b) the eye-tracking data, I hope to elucidate the relationship between awareness and learning and between awareness and attention. Following previous research which showed attention to be a significant predictor of knowledge gains ([authors’ names removed], in press), the research hypothesis in this study is that there is a positive association between awareness and post-test performance as well. However, contrary to the prevailing view about attention and awareness in SLA (e.g. Schmidt, 1995, 2001), I predict that the relationship between attention and awareness is not one-to-one, or isomorphic.

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Over/generalization in the production of English weak vowels:
Evidence for L2 sound learning in progress

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In second language acquisition, those processes by which the learner is able to transfer what s/he has learnt to other settings where the linguistic rule applies (generalization) or where the rule does not apply (overgeneralization) are taken as evidence of language learning in progress. More specifically, context, lexical and speaker variability has led phonetic training studies to look at performance in environments other than those used in the training in order to test acquisition robustness (Rochet, 1995; Bradlow et al., 1997). Additionally, transfer to contexts where the L2 phonological process does not apply may be evidence of the activation of interlanguage phonological rules (Major, 1987). The present study analysed the production of weak and strong vowels in unstressed syllables by Spanish learners of English. The items were presented in minimal syllable (sherbet-alphabet) and word pairs (Upton-upturn) to two experimental groups who received specific training on vowel reduction by means of either perception or production tasks. Improvement in the production skills in both experimental groups transferred to two generalization contexts: embedding sentences and novel words. Furthermore, a significant deterioration of full vowel performance in unstressed syllables in the post-test was observed. Results will be discussed in terms of over/generalization evidence in the acquisition process and the need to further explore learning robustness in aspects such as retention over time and level of attainment.

References


NP agreement in Italian: The role of the availability and reliability of the language input

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This study investigates the acquisition of agreement within the Italian NP as reflected by morphological features such as gender and number. The theoretical framework is based on a functional approach stressing the importance of form function mappings, cues, frequency and the statistical properties of the language input. The Competition Model is adopted and by using the Italian oral corpus LIP, calculations are made that measure the validity, availability and reliability of the Italian noun endings as cues to a particular number and gender. The data is longitudinal and consists of transcribed interviews with 15 learners of Italian at a fairly high level of proficiency and is thus different from previous studies on the acquisition of Italian noun morphology, conducted mainly on learners at early stages of acquisition.

A 2-way repeated-measures ANOVA with the independent variables time (longitudinal development) and reliability of the noun ending (high or low), and degree of agreement accuracy as the dependent variable, show a significant positive effect of time with increasing accuracy rates for adjective agreements. There is also a significant effect of reliability of the noun ending showing higher accuracy-rates for high-validity noun endings as compared to low-validity noun endings. A significant interaction effect between the two variables is noted according to which agreements with low validity noun endings show a higher increase in accuracy rates than high validity noun endings over time. This could be explained by the power law of practice, i.e. agreements with high reliability noun endings soon reach a very high level of accuracy from which it is difficult to make further progress. Even though earlier studies have noted the importance of the Italian noun-endings in agreement, this study offers a method based on the Competition Model by which that effect could be explained.

References


Young instructed foreign (and native) grammars’ learners

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L2 researchers depend on a variety of tools to better understand a non-native’s L2 knowledge at different developmental levels, and how it differs from that of native speakers. In this talk, we use receptive and productive tasks to consider the extent to which the linguistic knowledge of young native and instructed non-native speakers of Spanish is represented implicitly or explicitly. Current L2 assessment literature (e.g., Ellis, 2005, 2006; Ellis et al., 2009), suggests that timed grammaticality judgment tasks are a better measure of implicit knowledge than written production tasks, which tap into explicit as well as implicit knowledge.

Our participants consisted of 137 English adolescents of L2 Spanish and 50 native Spanish speakers, matched for age, socio-economic and schooling background. We compared results from a picture-based, timed interpretation grammaticality judgment task to an untimed, sentence-level picture description task. For the former, participants matched sentences recorded on a CD and read at 4-second intervals to a picture on a six point scale; for the latter, participants were given a picture with a noun and a verb and had to write a sentence with no time constraints. The underlined grammatical features in both tasks were all multifaceted uses of clitic se in Spanish (Zagona, 1996, 2002). The results showed that the non-native, instructed learners made overgeneralization errors with se on both tasks that were inconsistent with the input and explicit instruction to which they had been exposed, but which reflected a sensitivity to the underlying semantic properties of the verbs accompanying se. Although the native speakers made no such errors, their greater competence with the se was manifest in higher means and lower standard deviations than the non-natives, and greater use of se as an aspectual marker on the production task. We will look at group and some individual data to address what these data tell us in reference to current SLA debates on competence assessment.
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**German sentence structure in first and child second language acquisition**

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Successive child L2 acquisition with an age of onset of 4 or more seems to differ considerably from L2 acquisition of children with an age of onset below 4. The L2 development of the latter group exhibits significant analogies to the L1 development of the target language and has thus been qualified as 2L1 development (cf. e.g. Meisel (2009)). In contrast, the interlanguages of child L2 learners with an age of onset of four or more contain phenomena well known from adult L2 learners (cf. Chilla 2008). For instance, cross-linguistic influences gain in importance sometimes leading to structures which need an additional effort to be overcome.

In our contribution, we present results from a comparative study of 3 children learning L1 German and 6 children learning L2 German with an age of onset between 6;6 and 8;10, with L1 Turkish, Russian and Polish. The longitudinal data are analyzed with respect to verb inflection and verb placement in main and subordinate clauses. In certain domains and depending on the learners’ L1, we can indeed retrace the additional effort mentioned above: L1 entrenchment can thus be qualified as an instance of “the age factor” which we conceive of as a combination of different components of influence, including, among others, age-related input, cognitive maturity, motivation, propensity to imitation (cf. Dimroth 2008, Pagonis 2009). However, even those children whose mastering of a certain L2 feature is delayed in comparison to that of their peers can be judged as highly successful learners with respect to learning rate. All child L2 learners, irrespective of their L1, master verb inflection and verb placement much faster or at least as fast as the L1 learners.
Effects of early English learning in a minimal input situation on phonemic perception

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Some studies (e.g. Larson-Hall, 2008) reported perceivable age effects of English language learning in a minimal input situation on phonemic perception, whereas others (e.g. Lin et al., 2004) found no effects of early English learning in such a context on the perception of phonemes but they found that only under noise condition did early English learning better affect the discrimination. This study investigated whether or not receiving minimal English input in a foreign language environment at an early age results in any benefits for the perception of English phonemes with and without the presence of noise. Ten native speakers of American English, 10 university students who started studying English in Japan for a few hours a week between ages of three and eight (early learners), and 10 Japanese university students who began to study in junior high school at the age of twelve or thirteen (late learners) participated in a phonemic discrimination test. The selected target phonemes were tense vs. lax vowels ([i, ɪ], [u, ʊ]) and word-initial approximants ([l, r, w]). Three monosyllabic words were selected for each phoneme (e.g., beat, bit). Each pair of words was tested as six different tri-word trials (e.g. AAB, ABA) with and without the presence of a white noise. The participants were asked to choose the odd out in each trial. Results showed that although the early and late learners did not significantly differ across the phonemes in the discrimination test given without any noise, the former outperformed the latter under noise condition (p < .05). The findings support the hypothesis that early learners are likely to establish more robust phonemic categories than late learners, and may imply the early starters’ acquisition of “efficient high-level processing” of L2 sounds (Mayo and Florentine, 1997).
Bilingual cross-modal readers: A miscue analysis of the reading process in deaf students using sign language

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An increasing number of schools for the deaf in Germany include sign language as a means of communication. However, only a minority of deaf children attend bilingual programs, where German Sign Language (DGS) and written/spoken German have equal value. They have the unique experience of a cross-modal bilingual language acquisition, which is fundamentally built on the signed modality of L1 (DGS) and the written modality of L2 (German). The spoken modality of L2 plays a role for some of the students, but a majority of them have only very limited access to spoken language. Since there is no common written form of DGS, written L1 literacy cannot serve as basis for instruction in written L2.

The paper focuses on literacy in a bilingual class of deaf students (n=9). In this pilot project several studies have been conducted, presenting longitudinal data and proving the success of these students compared to deaf peers in monolingual spoken language programs. The study provides additional knowledge about their reading process. Data from the third grade are analyzed. The students were asked to read a text. Because they still used sign language and fingerspelling during the reading process, their reactions could be video-taped and transcribed. Based on the idea of miscue analysis introduced by Goodman (1969) that already has been adopted for deaf readers (Ewoldt 1978; Chaleff & Ritter 2001) reading strategies have been isolated. The reading process of these students is based on semantic clues, grapheme pattern and morpheme structures rather than on phonemic clues, even in those students with residual hearing and with better spoken language skills. Different strategies used by individual students are identified and the results are compared to the available data on their overall achievements. Chances and risks of a reading instruction with sign language in deaf education are discussed.

References

Using theories of self-construal to explain gender differences in language learning motivation

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Over the past 50 years gender has been a repeatedly studied variable in L2 motivation research, with studies consistently revealing higher scores for females on affective dimensions. Explanations for gender-divergent attitudes have been few and those that have been advanced often emphasize societal perceptions of language learning as a ‘girls’ subject’. As a result of the paradigm shift in L2 motivation from a social psychological approach based on the study of attitudes, to a self-based approach centring on the individual’s conception of her/himself as a future L2 speaker/user (a form of possible self) (Dörnyei, 2009), explanations that have a greater conceptual resonance are needed. Drawing on theories of gender divergences in the construal of the self (Cross & Madson, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and the application of these theories to possible selves (Knox, 2006), a hypothesis that explains gender differences in the affective dimension of L2 motivation on the basis of divergent self-construals was formulated. The sample investigated comprised 271 9th grade students learning English as an instructed L2 and French/German/Spanish as an instructed L3 at six schools in a single location in the west of Sweden. While for L2 English gender differences on affective measures were not found, for L3 French/German/Spanish gender differences did emerge. Using confirmatory factor analysis the hypothesis was tested for L3 French/German/Spanish and support was found. The findings are discussed and, drawing further on allied theories of gender role congruity (Diekman & Eagly, 2008) and Identity Based Motivation theory (Oyserman, 2007), proposals are made for a comprehensive model that can explain the impact of gender on possible language-speaking/using selves at a number of contextual levels.

References

Perception and production of nominal morphology: The early stages of the acquisition of Polish by child and adult native speakers of German

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Research in second/foreign language (L2) acquisition has shown that learners use processing mechanisms and knowledge stores to analyze the L2 input to which they are exposed. However, the specific details of how these mechanisms function are still under investigation. One area of particular interest is the acquisition of inflectional marking in the early stages of L2 acquisition by adults and children. Extensive research investigating adult L2 oral production reveals the existence of a basic variety that shows no functional inflectional morphology (Klein & Perdue 1997). No such variety has been found for children, leading to the assumption that children are more sensitive to inflectional marking than adults. Systematic comparisons between these two age groups are still needed, however. We also know very little about learners’ perception and analysis of inflectional marking present in the L2 input.

In this talk, we present the very first results from a large European project (VILLA) interested in comparisons between the processes of perception, comprehension and production in children and adults acquiring a novel L2. The project examines the instructed L2 acquisition of Polish by French, German, English, Dutch and Italian native speakers under controlled input conditions.

We present the results of two experiments conducted to investigate the processing and production of nominal morphological marking in two groups of German native speakers (10-year-old children and adults) after 4 hours and again after 10 hours of Polish instruction. Noun targets were manipulated with respect to transparency and the frequency in the input to which learners were exposed. The instructor provided no
explicit grammar explanation and used Polish only. The results shed light on some important questions in L2 acquisition, such as when and why child and adult learners pay attention to morphological marking and when and under what conditions they begin to generalize L2 inflectional rules.

Reference

Individual differences in the L2 processing of morphosyntax

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Research on L2 sentence processing shows that adult L2ers often fail to integrate morphosyntax in incremental processing. Many approaches interpret this finding as a general property of late L2 acquisition that reflects fundamental differences between L1 and L2 processing (Clahsen & Felser, 2006; Jiang, 2007; Ullman, 2005). This study tests whether problems with morphosyntax are affected by individual differences in proficiency, working memory, lexical decoding skill, automaticity of information integration and reading efficiency. In an eyetracking study, 75 L1 German advanced late L2 learners of English were tested on their relative use of subcategorization, plausibility and morphosyntactic information in processing temporary object-subject ambiguities as in (1).

(1) When the girl was playing the piano made some funny noises.

Readers get garden-pathed into analyzing the postverbal noun (the piano) as the object of the embedded verb, and they show costly reanalysis in the main clause verb (made). Reanalysis cost is modulated by the transitivity of the embedded verb (praying vs playing), the plausibility (the boy vs the piano) and the case marking (he vs it) of the following noun.

In a mixed regression analysis, second-pass eyetracking measures indexing sentence reanalysis were significantly associated with differences in the automaticity of grammatical information integration, measured in a word monitoring task (Kilborn, 1992). L2ers with low grammatical integration automaticity robustly relied on
plausibility differences (the girl vs the piano), yet made no use of (unambiguous nominative) case marking (he vs the boy) for reanalysis. Conversely, L2ers with high grammatical integration automaticity readers exploited morphosyntactic, yet not plausibility information. These differences suggest that, similar to native processing (Ferreira & Patson, 2007), two different routes exist within L2 processing and that L2 processing does not generally differ from native processing. The implications of individual differences for theories of L2 acquisition and grammatical processing are discussed.

Tracking changes in the role of inherent lexical aspect in tense-aspect development in the advanced learner. A longitudinal study of L2 French

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This presentation focuses on the role of the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen 1991) in the advanced learner’s tense-aspect system. While the Hypothesis asserts a role for inherent lexical aspect in the initial emergence of L2 aspectu-temporal morphology, that role has been seen to be enhanced with increasing L2 proficiency reflecting a distributional bias in the native speaker input (see in particular Salaberry 2001, 2011). While such increasing idiosyncratic patterns of aspectu-temporal marking have been generally investigated through cross-sectional studies, this paper aims to further explore the issue through a longitudinal analysis of past time marking by advanced university learners of French. The results are compared with a native speaker comparison group. The study tracks how the learners overcome the effect for such a factor over a two-year period during which they had extensive naturalistic exposure in the target language community, followed by further instruction in the foreign language classroom. As such, a further issue in the study design concerns the role of such differential exposure conditions in facilitating the learners’ quest to increasingly engage in the non-prototypical combinations of verb predicate type and morphological marker which are seen as constituting a particular difficulty for the advanced learner. By taking account of the interaction between inherent lexical aspect and grammatical aspectual marking in context, the study explores how particular verbs which were originally marked with one past time marker go on to be marked with an alternative marker over time, reflecting the learners’ ability to productively engage in grammatical aspectual marking with all verb predicate types. While the findings reflect a distributional bias which is also present in the native speaker data, the results assert a role for the Aspect Hypothesis in the
advanced learner variety, whereby the learners evidence considerable difficulty in marking non-prototypical combinations.

References


An empirical approach to the logical problem of first and second language acquisition

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A fundamental issue in SLA concerns the human language learning capacity (Bley-Vroman, 1990). Another issue concerns the explanation of non-trivial differences between L2 learners in SLA outcomes (Dabrowska, 2012). The present study, linking SLA with L1 acquisition, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics in an interdisciplinary fashion, examines to what extent native speakers (NSs) of Dutch, differing in age and level of education (LoE), are able to process and interpret simple speech. The study was designed as a first attempt to test the following reasoning: (1) A theory of language acquisition must minimally account for the language acquired by all NSs; (2) The smaller or simpler the knowledge shared by all NSs is, the fewer demands have to be posed on the human Language Acquisition Device; (3) If the shared knowledge of NSs is relatively small or simple, the NS norm for SLA may become less demanding than often asserted; (4) The size/complexity matter may have crucial implications for the critical-period question, because the simpler NS knowledge is, the lower the criterion of attaining the NS norm in SLA must be set. Participants in the study were 245 adult NSs of Dutch, divided into four groups of equal size along the dimensions of Age (19-40 vs 56-82 years old) and LoE (low vs high). Subjects performed three tasks which required speech processing at successively more inclusive linguistic levels: (i) segmenting speech fragments into words, (ii) judging whether spoken word strings can take
sentence initial position, and (iii) judging the semantic/pragmatic appropriateness of responses to propositions. The stimuli contained lexically and grammatically simple language. Despite the simplicity of the input, significant but small effects of Age and Level of Education were obtained in most tasks, both in terms of response accuracy and response speed. We discuss the findings with respect to the learnability issue.

The structural model of language learning motivation in a Polish context

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Motivation has been considered to be one of the most important factors that influence language learning (Dörnyei, 2005). Consequently, it has been extensively examined in a number of contexts (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Kormos & Csizér, 2007; Yashima, 2009; Al-Shehri, 2009; Kormos, Kiddle & Csizér, 2011). Despite the fact that English is a compulsory subject in the majority of Polish schools, there has been a dearth of research looking at language learning motivation of Polish pupils.

In the present study, 599 Polish pupils from southern Poland, aged 15-16 and enrolled in compulsory education in one of 10 schools from rural and urban areas, filled in a motivational questionnaire. The questionnaire aimed to measured concepts frequently used in motivational research in applied linguistics such as Dörnyei’s 2005 ideal L2 self, motivated behaviour, instrumentality, international orientation and knowledge orientation. The questionnaire also contained scales developed based on theories from general and educational psychology; namely, the L2 self, self-efficacy beliefs, intrinsic motivation and self-regulation.

The data was analysed using SPSS and AMOS software. Whereas a number of factors emerged (ideal L2 self, the L2 self, self-efficacy beliefs, and intrinsic motivation), the factor analysis of language learning goals revealed that the international orientation variable cannot be distinguished from knowledge orientation. Furthermore, structural equation modelling has been applied to investigate the latent structure of language learning motivation. The subsequent model confirms the important role of the intrinsic motivation variable and the ideal L2 self in a Polish context.
What is going on when L2 speakers pause: Pausing and L2 proficiency

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One of the most noticeable differences between L1 and L2 speech lies in fluency (Kormos, 2006). Previous studies have shown that L2 speech demonstrates considerably lower speech rate and the mean length of runs than L1 speech does (Munro & Derwing, 1998; Trofimovich & Baker, 2006; Wiese, 1984). L2 speech seems to be also different from L1 in terms of the frequency, length, and location of pauses (Tavakoli, 2011). Kormos (2006) argues that the differences in L1 and L2 fluency can be explained by the degree of automaticity. Whereas L1 speech production requires attention only to speech planning and monitoring, in L2 speech syntactic and phonological encoding may not be fully automatized, slowing speech down. However, there is still little empirical research evidence which demonstrates in what respects and why L1 and L2 fluency is different (Tavakoli, 2011). The current study tries to address these issues by investigating pausing phenomena in L1 and L2 speech through both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Native English speakers, intermediate and advanced Korean learners of English participated in the study. In order to understand three groups’ pausing phenomena, the frequency, length, and location of filled and unfilled pauses were identified and compared. In addition, to better understand the cognitive processes involved in dysfluency, stimulated recall was conducted right after the speaking task. The results
showed that advanced L2 learners’ pausing patterns were more similar to native English speakers’ than intermediate learners’ in terms of frequency and location of pauses. Intermediate learners utilized mid-clause pauses more often than advanced learners did. Participants’ responses to stimulated recall revealed complex relationships between L2 proficiency and the processes involved in pausing.

Effects of L1 gender marking on pronoun use in a second language

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L1-English speakers produce less singular pronouns after two same-gender than two different-gender referents (Arnold/Griffin'07). We investigated gender-sensitivity in L2-production (cf.Fukumura/Hyona'11). Does L1 influence prominence of gender information in L2? We compared L1 ARABIC, with pervasive gender-marking (on (pro)nouns, verbs, etc), to L1 MANDARIN CHINESE, with virtually no gender-marking ('he/she' pronounced the same; written differently).

We tested pronoun-production in (i) L1-English (n=16), (ii) L1-Arabic/L2-English (n=16), and (iii) L1-Mandarin Chinese/L2-English speakers (n=16). Participants wrote continuations to ENGLISH sentence-fragments with two same-gender/different-gender referents (ex.1). We analyzed (i) 'he/she' and (ii) 'they' in participants' continuations (ex.2).

(1)Laura hit {Phillip/Kate} at the car wash, and then…
(2a)they started to argue.
(2b)he got really mad.

If gender is MORE salient for ARABIC speakers, we may see fewer singular pronouns in same-gender contexts than with L1-English controls. If gender is LESS salient for CHINESE speakers, we expect to see less differences in singular-pronoun frequency between same-gender and different-gender conditions. Furthermore, because use of 'they' indicates referents are conceptualized as alike/similar (cf.Koh/Clifton'02), we expect Chinese speakers to have SIMILAR 'they'-rates in same-gender and different-gender, whereas English and Arabic speakers should have MORE 'they' in same-gender conditions.

All groups produced more SINGULAR PRONOUNS in different-gender conditions (p's<0.5). However, Chinese speakers produced overall FEWER singular pronouns
(p's < .05) than English and Arabic speakers, and showed less asymmetry between conditions (p's < .05) -- less gender-sensitivity. English and Arabic speakers did not differ.

English and Arabic speakers produced more PLURAL 'THEY' in same-gender than different-gender conditions (gender-sensitivity). Chinese speakers produced 'they' at equally high rates in both conditions (28.9%/28.1%), suggesting gender-differences are less prominent.

While the (near-)absence of an L1 gender-distinction influences L2 gender-sensitivity (Chinese), pervasive L1-gender-marking (Arabic) does not cause enhanced gender-sensitivity, relative to L1-controls. (We also show this CANNOT be derived from PROFICIENCY or name-familiarity). We also explore potential non-linguistic/culture-based interpretations.

References

Perceived and actual similarity in closely related languages
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Trying to decipher a text in an unknown language (L2) we first resort to our first language (L1) (Ringbom & Jarvis 2009: 106). With a closely related L2 it is possible to base assumptions about words and grammatical relations on the L1. The usefulness of the outcome is determined by the relationship of the words and structures in L1 and L2. In addition to “true and false friends”, some forms may not seem related even if they actually are, if similarity is defined as a symmetric systematic relationship between structures of two languages (Ringbom 2007: 7). To shed light on the psycholinguistics of this process, this study focuses on the relationship of the actual and perceived similarity (Ringbom & Jarvis 2009: 106–108) of morphological forms of Estonian and Finnish, two closely related and morphologically rich languages.
Based on a previous study (Author 1 2004), a test was constructed, containing 60 pairs of inflected noun forms of Finnish and Estonian. 50 Finnish and 50 Estonian L1 speakers, with no knowledge of the L2, were asked to decide which pairs are similar and which are different (perceived similarity). The pairs where chosen to represent a continuum from obvious similarity to pairs with little surface resemblance. The participants were also asked to write reasons for their choices.

The results are discussed

1) in terms of one-to-one and many-to-one relationships, and

2) in terms of the inflectional devices (suffixes, stem changes).

The two issues were chosen on the basis of previous studies on crosslinguistic influence between Estonian and Finnish (Author 1 2004, Nissilä 2011). The results show that only the test pairs with maximum convergence between L1 and L2 are perceived similar. In other test pairs the results are less clear and depend mainly on different L1 and L2 configurations.

References

The nature and direction of Phonological Cross-language Transfer in a multilingual setting

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It has now been well-established that the traditional conceptualization of transfer is not sufficient to explain all the complexities underlying cross-linguistic influence (CLI) in multilingual settings. Recent work on multilingualism has examined CLI with respect to the influence of non-native languages known to the learner (e.g. Cenoz, 2001; De Angelis & Selinker, 2001). Among others, some factors affecting non-native language influence concern language proximity, proficiency, recency of use and the order of acquisition (e.g. Cenoz, 2001, 2003; De Angelis, 2005; Dewaele, 1998; Iverson, 2010; Falk & Bardel, 2011).

Our aim in this study is to examine the phenomenon of CLT in a multilingual platform, with an emphasis on the notion of proficiency. Based on data from 45 L1 Turkish, L2 English, L3 Spanish and L2 Italian multilingual learners, we investigate the nature and direction of CLI from a phonological perspective. More specifically, we attempt to (a) determine which language will be utilized more in L4 Italian. Is it English, the most frequently used foreign language, or Spanish, the typologically similar language?, and (b) to investigate the activation of the Spanish phonological system at three different proficiency levels, 'beginner, intermediate, advanced'.

The multilingual learners (aged 18-25) read 20 infrequently-used Italian words, which bear more typological similarity to their L3 Spanish compared to their L1 Turkish or L2 English. The results of the regression analysis present counterevidence for previous work which underscored the kind of phonological interference for low proficiency foreign language (FL) learners (Major, 1986; Schmidt, 1987). We suggest that ‘proficiency’ may not necessarily lead to a clear-cut and linear decline in cross-language transfer. Rather, it may result in an inverted U-shape that illustrates the highest degree of transfer between the third and fourth languages at the intermediate level, positing almost the same lowest levels at the beginner and advanced levels.
From emergence to native-like use in Italian and Japanese: Cross-linguistic studies on the acquisition of passive constructions

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This paper presents cross-linguistic evidence of the L2 acquisitional path from emergence of a structure to native-like use within a Processability Theory framework (Pienemann 1998). We focus on the oral production of passives in Italian L2 and Japanese L2, a structure located at the pragmatic-syntax interface. The Lexical Mapping Hypothesis (Pienemann, Di Biase and Kawaguchi 2005) accounts for the ‘emergence’ of passive structures, but the trajectory towards native-like production after emergence is unexplained. According to the Hypothesis canonical mapping, where agent and patient are mapped onto subject and object respectively, is acquired earlier than passives which map, instead, the patient onto the subject position. Such mapping is regarded as non-canonical in Japanese, Italian and many other languages, and it is acquired later than canonical order.

We report here on two studies looking at language production skills in a time-constrained task, consisting of a short video-clip (fish film) (Tomlin, 1995), with learners of Japanese L2 (23 learners in Australia) and Italian L2 (15 learners in Italy and Australia) as well as native controls (Kawaguchi and Di Biase in press; Di Biase and Nuzzo, in preparation). Despite the typological distance results show an interesting range of similar outcomes. Whenever the agent fish is cued informants behave in a similar and uniform way: in most cases the primed agent appears as the subject and the non-primed patient as the object of active transitive sentences. On the other hand, whenever the cued fish is the patient referent, an interestingly varied picture emerges both in and between the two languages groups. While these groups followed language specific strategies (i.e., active/passive alternation was predominant in the Japanese group while other structures were also used among the Italian group), performance in both reflected their developmental stages.

References

Acquisition of non-canonical mapping in second language: Cross-linguistic studies in English L2 and Japanese L2

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This cross-linguistic study investigates the acquisition of non-canonical mapping between thematic roles (e.g., Agent, Patient) and grammatical functions (e.g., Subject, Object) in second language (L2), which is commonly held to be problematic for L2 learners. Non-canonical mapping may be triggered structurally (e.g., causatives, passives) or lexically (e.g. unaccusatives, psych verbs). The informants are two groups of learners on opposite English-Japanese constellations i.e., English L1 learning Japanese (N=13) and Japanese L1 learning English (N =14). The metrics used for measuring development is Processability Theory (PT) (Pienemann, Di Biase & Kawaguchi 2005). This study looks at:

1) the acquisition of particular types of verb requiring non-canonical mapping (e.g., unaccusative, psych verb, passive) and

2) the relationship between learner’s ability to create non-canonical mapping and (a) their vocabulary size (Nation & Belgar 2007) and; (b) their syntactic development.

Under the assumption that the lexicon drives grammar (Bresnan 2001), the learner’s lexical size may be a broad indicator of comprehension of the L2. However, given the rich qualitative range of the verb lexical category, a broadly defined lexical size may not predict the ability to produce the appropriate grammatical construction with verbs that behave non-canonically. Elicitation tasks comprised a lexical size test; an oral profiling task and a translation task involving canonical (transitive) verbs and four different types of non-canonical verbs. Preliminary results indicate that despite the typological distance between the two languages results show similar outcomes for both groups: non-canonical mapping is acquired later than canonical mapping. However, while structural
non-canonical mapping relates to developmental stages, only high vocabulary size is compatible with the grammatical skill necessary to produce non-canonical mapping. Both low and middle lexical size groups showed problems with non-canonical mapping.

References


MTLD, vocd-D, and HD-D: Are they valid measures of assessing the productive lexicons of L2 learners?

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The purpose of this study is to examine the validation of MTLD, vocd-D, and HD-D as lexical diversity measures of ESL learners. McCarthy and Jarvis (2010) conducted a validation study of these measures, but they used two corpora which contain texts basically written by native English speakers. Their study lacks developmental insight into the mental lexicons of L2 learners. To address this gap, the present study employed 120 essays written by Japanese learners of English, and compared the scores of the three lexical diversity measures derived from their texts with independent measures of vocabulary as well as the TOEIC scores of the learners. The results indicated that MTLD was independent of the text length studied (120-630 words), whereas the values of vocd-D and HD-D tended to increase as the text length increased. On the contrary, vocd-D and HD-D were more stable than MTLD in texts of equal length, and the text length needed to attain a reliability of .70 was estimated to be 343 words for vocd-D, 443 words for HD-D, and 541 words for MTLD. When the scores of these three measures were compared with the scores of a productive vocabulary test (Laufer & Nation, 1999), they were found to be correlated moderately but significantly, while vocd-D and HD-D yielded slightly better results than MTLD did. However, when the learners were divided into two different proficiency groups on the basis of their TOEIC scores (Lower: 390-650, Upper: 700-940), none of these measures could successfully discriminate between the two levels of learners. These findings suggest that MTLD is not always a more valid measure of lexical diversity than vocd-D and HD-D. They also
indicate the limitations of lexical diversity measures, which do not take into account the difficulty of words used in the texts, as developmental measures of L2 learners.

Recovery from L1-transfer effects in Child L2-Acquisition

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This paper presents findings on the acquisition of generic reference in child L2 French. The role of L1-transfer and its recovery are examined in developmental L2 data.

Genericity is typically expressed by bare nouns in English:

1) Tigers are dangerous.

The equivalents in Romance languages use plurals with a definite article (henceforth "definite plurals"); (subject) bare nouns (2b) are ungrammatical:

2) a. Les tigres sont dangereux.
   b. *∅ Tigres sont dangereux.

Definite plurals (2a) are hence ambiguous [+generic] in Romance but not in English [–generic]. This constitutes a learning problem for child L2 learners (L2ers) of French with L1 English since they have to learn that bare nouns are ungrammatical and that definite plurals which have non-generic reference in English are used even if not exclusively to express genericity in French (e.g., Ionin & Montrul 2010, Kupisch & Pierantozzi 2010, Serratrice et al. 2009).

It is hypothesized that L2ers initially transfer L1 distributions and interpretations of bare nouns and definite plurals, and subsequently recover from L1 transfer effects. These predictions are in line with the Full Transfer/Full Access theory by Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) and with Lardiere’s theory on feature (re)assembly (2000, 2009).

My data come from native English speakers learning French in a full language immersion program (N = 20). These L2ers were divided into two proficiency groups based on their cloze test and SOPA (Student Oral Proficiency Assessment) scores. The tasks are a truth-value judgment task and an elicitation task on generics.
My data suggests recovery from L1-transfer effects with rising proficiency. While beginner L2ers use ungrammatical bare nouns, hardly produce generic definite plurals and show a non-generic preference in the interpretation of definite plurals, advanced L2ers perform significantly more target-like. Thus, the mapping of semantic universals led to initial L1 effects which were overcome by feature reassembly.

References

Linguistic landscape and the use, perceptions and preferences of second language speakers

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The study of the linguistic landscape, in the sense of all written information in public space, has gradually gained worldwide interest, as is demonstrated in numerous publications (Gorter et al, 2012; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009; Shohamy et al., 2010).

People continuously process the visual information from language signs in the public space. The languages displayed on signs can be an additional source of input in second language acquisition (Cenoz & Gorter, 2008). The linguistic landscape can also influence the perception of languages and affect the use of their first or second language.

In our study we explore a new direction for researching the linguistic landscape.
Our focus is on the relationships between the languages as displayed on signs, the perceptions of languages and the actual language use of bilingual speakers. We have set up an experiment in which we investigate the effects of the visibility and salience of the languages on commercial and public signs.

The subjects were 90 students in the Department of English studies of the University of the Basque Country. These students have Basque or Spanish as a first or second language and a reasonable command of English. All students took part in an experiment where they reacted to stimuli of signs taken from the linguistic landscape which aimed to measure their linguistic preferences and language use. They also completed a questionnaire on language acquisition, proficiency and use.

Our results suggest that the linguistic landscape has an influence on the use of the second language of these bilingual Basque-Spanish speakers. We found a general preference for multilingual signs as well as a favourable attitude towards the use of both Basque and Spanish in written communication.

We conclude our paper with a discussion about further investigations of the linguistic landscape along these lines.

References

How can physics help us measure fluency in Second Language?

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Fluency is a common used indicator of foreign language proficiency. There are however many definitions of this term and many ways of measuring it. Fluency is often understood as a smooth and rapid text production. In order to measure it a variety of means has been used, like the number of words, clauses or T-units, the number of words
per clause or the number of words written per minute (Wolfe-Quintero et al. 1998, Chenoweth & Hayes 2001). It is also pointed out that other factors like the number of pauses, false-starts and deletions have to be taken into account by measuring fluency.

The paper will include results from a longitudinal study of 18 polish L3-learners of Swedish. The subjects were followed during their first 3 years of learning Swedish. They were asked to write texts in equal intervals. In the experiments the tool ScriptLog was used. The application registers not only the final text but also every writing activity as pauses, deletions or mouse movements which enables to follow the whole text production.

In the first part of the presentation the writing fluency will be shown when the common measures where used. In the next part the fluency will be measured using a physical formula where fluency is understood as average velocity. This view on fluency helps to see it not only as the rapidity of text production but also as a process of changes. The results show that the measurement of fluency using the formula of velocity is more valid then previously applied measures.

References

Child L2 acquisition of accusative clitic placement in Italian

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This study investigates child L2 acquisition of accusative clitic placement in Italian, testing one of the predictions of the original Interface Hypothesis, according to which narrow syntactic properties are fully acquirable in the L2 (Sorace & Filiaci 2006). The phenomenon is considered a purely syntactic one given that Italian object clitics occupy different verb-adjacent positions depending on clause type: in finite clauses they appear to the left of the highest finite verb, while in non-finite clauses they occur to the right of the infinitive; in restructuring constructions they can either precede the finite verb (“clitic climbing”) or follow the infinitive, and in causative constructions they must climb to the finite verb.
Two groups of children aged 13-14 participated in the study, native speakers and highly proficient (possibly near-native) child L2 learners of Italian. The learners’ L1, Croatian, has second-position clitics, so no transfer effects were expected. The participants judged the acceptability of object clitics placed before, within and after the predicate in finite, restructuring and causative constructions in a self-paced and a speeded version of an acceptability judgement task. The analysis of the self-paced judgements, elicited by means of Magnitude Estimation, and the accuracy scores in the speeded task revealed non-target-like behaviour of the learners in causative constructions, where they accepted clitics both before the finite verb and after the infinitive, and in past-tense finite clauses, where they had problems distinguishing licit and illicit clitic positions. Treating clitic climbing as optional in causative constructions is consistent with the results of a parallel study involving Croatian-speaking adult L2 learners of Italian. The findings suggest that some aspects of Italian accusative clitic placement may not be acquired even at very high (possibly the highest) proficiency levels in L2 acquisition, which is not in line with the version of the Interface Hypothesis tested.

References

Assessing written performance: Features of linguistic complexity and communicative adequacy that raters consider to be crucial

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Global ratings of written L2 performance have often been used in language teaching and testing. The relationship between different aspects of performance (i.e. linguistic complexity, accuracy and functional adequacy) to overall judgments of proficiency by raters, however, is still an issue. Some pending questions are: Which features of L2 performance do raters at varying levels of L2 proficiency take into account when judging L2 production? Do differences between raters and differences in task type affect rating outcomes? To what extent do SLA-based developmental stages and rater’s assessment correlate?
The present study investigates the way in which raters decide which proficiency level can be assigned to a text written by an L2 learner and on which features raters focus during the rating process. Participants in the study are 32 learners of Dutch L2, 39 learners of Italian L2, and 23 learners of Spanish L2, who were submitted to two written tasks, consisting of a short argumentative essay. These writing tasks were subjectively rated by experienced raters of each language on both communicative adequacy and linguistic complexity by using a 6-point Likert scale based on the Common European Framework of Reference.

In the study we focus on the raters’ perception of L2 learners’ proficiency, in order to shed more light on the process of rating and the decisions taken by the raters. The following issues will be raised: 1) What are the linguistic and/or communicative features that raters consider to be crucial in their assignment? 2) Which features do raters associate with a particular rating level? 3) Do raters use different strategies when rating low versus high proficient learners? 4) What do raters do when judging texts of L2 learners versus those written by native speakers?

The implicit vs. explicit instruction techniques in teaching aspects of casual speech

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The challenge casual speech poses to the non-native speakers of English has been long noted: “those aiming at native-speaker competence should observe the rules concerning weak forms [...] be aware of the English assimilatory tendencies [...] be aware of the types of assimilation and elision [...] otherwise, they will find it difficult to understand much of ordinary colloquial English [...] because a second language is often learned on a basis of isolated word forms; in the speech of the native, however, the outline of these words will frequently be modified” (Cruttenden 2008: 308).

The talk reports the results of a study in pronunciation pedagogy, investigating the effects of two instruction techniques on the acquisition of casual speech by Polish learners of English. In particular, the study compares the production and perception of the learners taught by means of an implicit technique of instruction (i.e. Negotiation of Form, Long 1991) with the results obtained by those who received an explicit instruction. Following Abe (2010), the aspects of casual speech considered in the study include rhythm, assimilation and elision. In order to evaluate the effects of the two types of instructions, a classic pretest-posttest design was used.
With regard to the pretest’s results, production and perception of casual speech was poor. This necessitates a shift in teaching from isolated forms to casual speech in pronunciation pedagogy. Moreover, aspect-specific differences revealed that assimilation was the easiest aspect of casual speech.

As for the posttests, not only did the implicit instruction improve performance of casual speech, but also exerted lasting effects. The progress was steady between the two posttests for the formal instruction group which, whereas a slight decrease in performance was observed for the explicit instruction group. Given the disadvantages of the implicit instruction, however, an integrated approach is proposed.

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Perception and production of English peripheral mid vowels by Tashlhiyt Berber speakers

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This paper reports on four experiments conducted on the perception and production of the English peripheral mid vowels [e, ɔ:] by L1 speakers of Tashlhiyt Berber who are also fluent L2 Moroccan Arabic (MA) speakers. Tashlhiyt like MA has a three-vowel inventory [i, a, u] although the mid vowels [e, o] also occur as allophones in emphatic environments.
Two production tasks involving a word-chain game and a reading task (sentences and short text) were conducted. For perception an AX discrimination task and an identification task involving filling in a blank in a C_C context were conducted. Participants also had to provide an example rhyming word in the latter task. The participants were 21 Tashlhiyt L1 native speakers, all students between 19-25 years at the University of Agadir who had been learning English for 4-6 yrs. The results reveal that both English front and back mid vowels are produced as tokens of their corresponding front and back high vowels at significance. Perception of the target vowels was significantly better than production although the subjects performed less well on the identification task.

Acoustically the L2 vowels though within the high vowel range are consistently distinct from Tashlhiyt and MA high vowels as reflected by the three competing formant structures from the three languages. There is however no significant difference between the participants production and perception (in identification) of i/e and o/u so that the two vowels are acoustically and perceptually assimilated into composite vowels that differ both from the L1 i/u, and English i/e and o/u, respectively. The greatest shift both from the L1 and English is seen in the F2 values shrinking the acoustic space inwards by decreasing F2 but not sufficiently increasing the F1 to create a mid-vowel.

The paper will also aim to model bilingual perception in order to access the role of Moroccan Arabic. Boersma’s (2009) Bi-phon model will be evaluated in this respect with the proposal that a dual grammar input is required for L2 perception and therefore that Boersma’s cue constraints that straddle the interface between phonetics and phonology can potentially be informed by multiple grammars.

Do L2 learners attend to aspects of motion events in narratives that are specific of their target language or remain influenced by their L1 preferences?

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This study investigates the expression of motion events in a film retelling task by French learners of English and English learners of French in the light of native speakers of both languages. Analysis focuses on the relations between linguistic differences in the distribution of semantic spatial components of motion events in the verb (manner in
English vs direction in French) and satellites (cf. Talmy 1985) and particular cognitive processes in the selection and organization of information.

Prior extensive studies (Slobin, Hickmann, Stutterheim) have shown that these differences are reflected in speakers’ predisposition to direct attention to the particular domains grammaticized in their language. According to Slobin, the psycholinguistic ease of packaging semantic components shape memories engendering a ‘narrative habit’, which is exceptionally resistant to restructuring in adult second language acquisition.

To test this claim we examine how both L2s reorganize different aspects of their conceptualization of motion events. We also test the aspects of learners’ conceptualization that are successfully reorganized by comparing intermediate and advanced stages of English L2 development.

The data base includes the oral narratives of 20 native speakers per language group and from 10 to 20 per learner groups. It is elicited by a silent film Reksio featuring a dog and his master where displacements play a key role.

Investigated variables are (a) spatial information expressed in verbs and post verbal structures (manner of motion, direction avancer/towards, trajectory (ground based around along; ground + entity based cross/traverser), location, goal to, goal reached into entrer, (b) perspective taking (holistic vs segmentation into phases) and (c) density of spatial information in a clause.

Results show source language influence limited to information expressed in adjuncts, perspective taking and density of spatial information. But learners display mixed patterns reflecting sensitivity to certain aspects of target language options which correlate with L2 development and source-target language combination.

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How do Polish, German and English learners of French select and link events in oral narrative discourse?

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This study is part of a project focusing on language-specific influences on discourse organization in second language. We compare native speakers of French (target language) and advanced learners’ selection and temporal organisation of events in an oral narrative task. The question is whether learners follow similar organization patterns, given that the temporal resources of their source languages differ.

Our database consists of retellings of a silent Polish cartoon (Reksio) by advanced adult English, Polish and German learners of French and French adult native speakers.

Our choice of languages was determined by typological differences in the temporal domain: Polish and English have temporal / aspectual means whereas German and French are restricted to tense when narratives are grounded in the present, which is the case for native speakers of all languages.

Our comparison of the ways learners construct the timeline and foreground or background of selected events is based on the following variables: (a) event selection (+/- bounded), (b) tense and aspect marking, (c) linking.

Preliminary results show that contrary to French native speakers, learners of all languages tend to anchor their retelling in the past, which influences the type of events selected and their discursive status. Differences in L2 aspectual marking between the three groups of advanced learners suggest an influence of L1 properties: English and German speakers tend to use perfective aspect (passé composé), whereas Polish speakers frequently use imperfective (imparfait).

References

Learning and un-learning Object Drop in generic and referential contexts in L2 English

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Previous studies in SLA (Yuan 1997) suggest L1 transfer problems for Chinese learners of L2 English who may have difficulties in acquiring English object (e.g. Mary’s bike has been broken. I am going to repair *(it) for her). English generally requires an object in a referential context whereas Chinese allows object drop when there is an antecedent. Chinese object-drop is argued (Huang 2009: 249) to be due to Topic Deletion, operating at discourse level to delete the topic of a sentence identified with a topic in a preceding sentence. In a generic context, however, English allows a null object e as in Mary reads e every night whereas Chinese requires a pronounced arbitrary object (read-book) (Yip and Matthews 2007).

The above contrast raises the questions: (1) To what extent would Chinese use null objects as in Mary reads every night? (2) Would Chinese have difficulties determining where null objects can or cannot occur in generic and referential contexts as in Grandad likes reading comic books in public libraries. He doesn’t read e at home? Would Chinese accept the null object, and how do they understand it: read any written materials or comic books? (3) Does learning to use null objects in generic contexts in L2 present a problem for Chinese corresponding to the problem of un-learning null objects in referential contexts?

This study tested 85 adult Chinese learners in Hong Kong, with 22 native English speaker controls. Research instruments included an oral production task and an acceptability judgment test; five target verbs included draw(-picture), drink(-alcohol), drive(-car), read(-book), iron(-clothes). The findings demonstrate that individual learners at both low intermediate and advanced level had difficulties in learning null objects. The results of this study have implications for syntax-discourse interface accounts of L2 null object acquisition.
The CEF-ESTIM grid: Aligning reading and listening tasks to CEFR levels in the language classroom

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This paper presents the application of a new tool designed for teachers, materials writers and researchers of English and French as a foreign language to align their tasks prepared for classroom use to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels. The tool kit for reading and listening tasks was developed by the author as a member of an international team within the frameworks of a two-year Council of Europe project. The paper reports the grid and its application in a Hungarian context with teacher trainees and in-service teachers of English as a foreign language.

The free downloadable on-line CEF-ESTIM grid is an off-spring of the Dutch grid developed by Charles Alderson and his colleagues for language assessment purposes, but with its wider perspective of assessing the level of not only texts but also complete classroom tasks it addresses a wider audience as well. Defining the notion of level in a flexible manner, the CEF-ESTIM grid is a great help in estimating the level of courses, classroom materials and tests in the A2-B2 range for the receptive skills, enables users to create a task bank and facilitates cooperation among teachers. The beautifully designed flower-shaped grid is composed of thee major petals for estimation levels: text, activities (reception, production, mediation, interaction) and competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic) involved in a task.

In a questionnaire study the practices and opinions on preparing classroom materials of two groups of Hungarian teacher trainees and in-service teachers were examined prior to introducing them to the CEF-ESTIM grid. Then some sample tasks were estimated by both groups in order to examine the reliability and validity of the tool. The preliminary findings are promising, however, the process needs to be extended to a larger sample of materials and participants in the future.
The role of Attention Control in L2 oral performance of tasks with different levels of cognitive complexity

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Throughout the last two decades task complexity has been extensively researched both at the theoretical and at the empirical levels. Based on the theories forwarded by P. Skehan (1996) and P. Robinson (2001), a series of experiments on L2 performance in different languages showed a significant influence of cognitive complexity on L2 production. At the same time, it has also been suggested that L2 learners’ individual differences may contribute to the inter-subject variation in L2 performance of task with different levels of cognitive load (Robinson, 2002). Several further studies have been undergone to investigate the role of working memory capacity in L2 oral production; however, it has not been found significantly influential. Nonetheless, other individual differences, such as attention control, which is considered essential for task performance based on cognitive complexity, still remain under researched. Therefore, the present study aims to explore the role of attention control in L2 oral performance on tasks, which cognitive complexity is manipulated. The participants (N=24) of this study were Catalan/Spanish EFL learners (intermediate level of proficiency) whose L2 production was assessed through two types of oral tasks (cognitively simple and cognitively complex) manipulated along +/- spatial reasoning. The participants’ attention control, operationalized as an individual’s ability to shift focus of attention among different linguistic tasks, was measured by means of the adapted attention-shift task (Segalowitz & Frenkiel-Fishman, 2005) based on Rogers and Monsell’s (1995) task-switching paradigm. The oral outputs were transcribed and analyzed by means of the CAF measures and statistically compared with the results of the attention-shift task. The results of the study are discussed in the light of the P. Robinson cognition hypothesis and previous studies on attention control.
Prosodic moderation of L2 comprehension of English plural and agreement morphology

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Second language (L2) production of morphology has long been known to be non-target-like, with L2 speakers omitting obligatory morphemes at a far higher rate than native speakers (see White (2003) for examples). While the cause of such errors had long been placed in the syntax (e.g. Hawkins & Chan 1997, Prévost & White 2000), a series of studies by Goad, White and colleagues (Goad, White & Steele 2003; Goad & White 2004 et seq.) advanced a new approach, the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis (PTH), that places some of the burden for L2 omissions on the phonology. Assuming a Selkirk-style (1996) prosodic hierarchy, the PTH predicts L2 speakers transfer over prosodic structures from their L1, and will omit morphology when the transferred structures cannot accommodate morphology in the new language. For example, Mandarin, which only has internal clitics, struggle to acquire English tense, an affixal clitic, showing an asymmetric pattern of errors suggesting impaired prosodic structures (Goad & White, 2006).

The PTH, however, has thus far only been tested regarding production. However, as the hypothesis implicates a grammatical deficit to explain the production errors, under the assumption that since the same grammar is used both for production and comprehension, the PTH should apply to comprehension as well. I here report on a study of 20 Spanish and 20 French intermediate learners of English, along with native English controls, on English plural and agreement morphology. I examine production via an elicited production task, and comprehension using a forced choice task to look at the participant’s ultimate interpretation of a sentence, and a lexical decision task to examine whether processing is moderated by the available prosodic structures. Preliminary results support the hypothesis that both production and comprehension are prosodified using the available prosodic structures, and thus accurate L2 comprehension cannot be taken for granted.
Cognate facilitation in trilinguals – sentence context matters (?)

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One of the fundamental questions in the psycholinguistic domain of SLA research is whether lexical access to the mental lexicon is language selective or not. An important finding which has been interpreted in favour of the language non-selective view is the cognate facilitation effect, i.e. the observation that cognates (words sharing form and meaning across languages) are responded to faster than matched controls (see e.g. Dijkstra et al. 1999; Dijkstra 2003; Lemhøefer et. al 2004; Yoga and Grainger 2007; Brenders, et al. 2011). In the vast majority of studies with cognates participants were asked to respond to words presented in isolation which is very unnatural compared to the everyday, non-laboratory language use. Only a relatively small number of studies involved cognates embedded in sentence context (e.g. Van Hell 2005; Schwartz and Kroll 2006; Duyck et al. 2007; Van Hell and De Groot 2008; Van Assche et al. 2009; Titone et al. 2011; Van Assche et al. 2011). Even though the results of these experiments are equivocal in some respects, the general observation is that cognate facilitation in bilinguals seems to be context-sensitive. The present study attempts at going beyond bilingualism by investigating whether sentence context affects cognate facilitation exhibited by learners of a third language. In the experiment Polish learners of English and German were asked to perform a lexical decision task with L1-L2-L3 cognates and matched controls. The target words were embedded in English sentences presented visually under three context constraints – high context constraint, low context constraint and in isolation (no context). Participants’ RTs were recorded and their performance was analysed in order to investigate how context modulates cognate processing by trilinguals.
Acquiring distributional patterns of prefield constituents in closely related Germanic languages – a study of Dutch-L1 learners of Swedish

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In Germanic Verb-second languages such as Dutch, Swedish and German, different types of constituents can be placed clause-initially, in the prefield. However, these languages differ in how the prefield is used for structuring information in discourse. Bohnacker & Rosén (2008) found significant differences between native Swedish and German for distributional patterns of prefield constituents. Clause-initial subjects, particularly expletives, were more frequent in Swedish, whereas more adverbials and fronted objects were found in German prefields. Swedish-L1 learners of German had problems mastering these differences. Similar problems were found for learners of the reverse language combination. However, whilst German-speaking learners of Swedish initially transferred their L1 patterns to the L2, their use of the prefield became more targetlike after long-time immersion in a Swedish environment (Bohnacker 2010).

This paper investigates another combination of closely-related Germanic languages, Swedish and Dutch. Expanding an earlier small-scale explorative study (Lindgren 2010), production data from 17 native speakers of Swedish and 17 adult Dutch-L1 intermediate learners of Swedish was collected in an oral picture description task and a written personal narrative task. The learners performed the tasks in both L1 Dutch and L2 Swedish. In the oral data, few differences were found between native Dutch and native Swedish; two thirds subject-initial clauses and one third adverb-initial clauses (percentages of other constituents were very low). In the written data though, Dutch showed a stronger adverbial-initial pattern than Swedish. The L2ers as a group were not far off the Swedish norms, but there were also diverging areas, some of which patterned similarly to Dutch, regarding the distribution of subtypes of prefield constituents (such as place adverbials, subject pronouns, subject NP’s. Substantial individual variation was found in all three language varieties. We will discuss these findings in terms of transfer of language-specific distributional patterns contra individual preferences.

References

Some studies on vocabulary acquisition have shown that it is possible for the L2 learner to attain a native-like level, at least as far as certain specific aspects of the lexicon are concerned. Advanced learners of English, for example, have proved to produce within the native speaker range on vocabulary size (Mizrahi & Laufer 2010, Hellman 2011). Similarly, research has shown that advanced learners approach native speakers as regards lexical richness (Ovtcharov et al. 2006, Lindqvist et al. 2011). However, both vocabulary size and lexical richness concern the quantitative dimensions of vocabulary knowledge and do not reveal any contextual aspects of word knowledge, such as the use of collocations or the use of words in more than one sense (polysemy). In this study, we investigate the context words appear in, by looking closer at collocations used by Swedish advanced learners in their oral production in French and Italian L2. The data stem from interviews in the two target languages. Measures of lexical richness of these learners indicate that they approach native levels, in the sense that they produce similar proportions of sophisticated words as native controls. We further conduct a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of their use of sophisticated words by taking into account the context in which they appear and focusing on the use of collocations. Previous research has shown that learners rarely reach a native-like level as regards the quantity of collocations (Forsberg Lundell & Lindqvist in press). The main research question of the present study is: are there any qualitative differences between advanced learners and native speakers when it comes to their use of collocations?

**References**


Beliefs, language anxiety, and motivation in learning Catalan as a third language

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Considering that Catalan is a minority language officially spoken in Europe, it is relevant to point out the interest students abroad are showing to learn this language. For the past twenty years, departments in different universities around the world have offered programs on the study of Catalan. Nowadays, Catalan is taught in nearly 140 different universities. The fact that Spanish is one of the most popular languages and many students want to travel to Spain might explain part of this phenomenon.

In this study, participants were learners of Catalan as a third language (L3) since they all knew other second languages (L2) besides English, their native language (L1). For many of them, knowledge of other Romance languages was a common trend. Despite the increase in number of studies on L3 (Cenoz, Huféisen, & Jessner, 2001), few of them have dealt with the role of affect in L3 acquisition.

The present study examines three affective variables: beliefs toward learning Catalan, language anxiety, and motivation. Participants (N= 30) in the study were multilingual college students (Hammarberg, 2001) from an American university who completed three questionnaires on the above mentioned affective variables (Horwitz, 1986; Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986; and Gardner, 1985). Furthermore, a background questionnaire was administered and course grades were also collected to examine course achievement. Results show that previous L2 learning positively influenced learners’ beliefs and motivation toward the acquisition of the L3. A medium level of anxiety was found among most participants, which did not prove having negative effects on L3 acquisition. Future pedagogical implications will be shared in this paper.
Does Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) play a role in the acquisition of morphosyntax?

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Several studies have revealed that CLIL learners outperform NON-CLIL learners in general proficiency (Lasagabaster, 2008; Navés & Victorri, 2010). One limitation of these studies is the lack of a match in the number of hours of exposure to the L2 between CLIL and NON-CLIL groups. Some studies have tackled this limitation by comparing CLIL learners to older NON-CLIL learners (Navés and Victorri, 2010) with respect to general proficiency. Another shortcoming is the lack of studies investigating the acquisition of formal features by CLIL and NON-CLIL learners. This is crucial since it has been revealed that not all language areas are favourably affected by CLIL (Martínez-Adrián & Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2009; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Villareal-Olaizola & García Mayo, 2010).

This paper aims to fill this gap by comparing (i) the general proficiency and (ii) specific morphosyntactic features (null subjects, null objects, null verbs, null prepositions, null determiners, null infinitives, null auxiliaries and null inflection) of a CLIL group of 14 year-old Basque-Spanish bilingual learners of L3 English (n=16) to (i) a matching NON-CLIL I group (n=19) and to (ii) a NON-CLIL II group (n=12) two grades ahead.

Results indicate that the CLIL group performed significantly better than the NON-CLIL I group but was equal to the NON-CLIL II group in general proficiency. Regarding the formal features examined, no significant differences were found between the CLIL and the NON-CLIL counterparts, except for inflection, where the NON-CLIL II group performed significantly better. This supports previous research in the acquisition of general proficiency (Lasagabaster 2008; Navés and Victorri, 2010) and formal features (Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010) in CLIL settings, as well as the claim made that functional morphology is the bottleneck of L2 acquisition (Slabakova, 2009). An increased attention to form should be drawn in CLIL programmes (Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe 2010; Lyster 2001).

References

Integrated priming tasks and ESL learners’ subsequent production

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Previous classroom-based studies have demonstrated that second language (L2) learners benefit from carrying out collaborative tasks because learners provide each other with interactional feedback, produce modified output, and attend to language form (e.g., Fujii & Mackey, 2009; Pica, Kang & Sauro, 2006). Recently, researchers have also suggested that collaborative tasks might be useful for L2 learning because interaction creates opportunities for priming (McDonough & Trofimovich, 2008). However, few studies have explored the effectiveness of collaborative priming activities carried out with peers, as opposed to trained interlocutors (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2010). Furthermore, no studies have examined whether collaborative tasks can elicit different types of priming simultaneously.

The current study examines the impact of collaborative priming tasks that elicit both auditory and structural priming on ESL learners’ subsequent production. ESL learners...
in an academic English program (n = 50) carried out three oral tests and eight collaborative activities over a 13-week semester. Learners in the experimental class carried out collaborative activities that contained primes and prompts to elicit passive and relative clause constructions (structural priming) and word stress patterns (auditory priming). Learners in the control class carried out collaborative activities with prompts only. All of the activities complemented the content focus of the learners’ ESL course.

Audio recordings of the learners’ task performance were analyzed for evidence of both types of priming. The learners’ production of the target forms on the oral tests was compared to determine whether the collaborative priming activities influenced their subsequent production. Overall, priming occurred during the collaborative tasks, but its impact on subsequent production varied by target form, which is likely due to the relative difficulty of each construction/stress pattern and to differences in the learners’ prior knowledge of constructions/stress patterns. Implications for the design of collaborative tasks to elicit different kinds of priming are discussed.

Corrective feedback in oral interaction: A comparison of an EFL and a CLIL classroom

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A great deal of research has been carried out to investigate the role of corrective feedback (CF) in second language (L2) learning (Sheen, 2011). Although there is a consensus as to its positive contribution, there are still open debates about the effectiveness of specific CF types (Yang & Lyster, 2010) and the role of learners’ individual differences (Sheen, 2011) or instructional context (Lyster & Mori, 2006). It is precisely the issue of CF and instructional context that this paper addresses. The present study explores CF in two different learning contexts: a traditional form-oriented English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom and a meaning-oriented Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classroom (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). The oral interaction of an intact class of thirty Spanish intermediate-level high-school students and two teachers (EFL and CLIL) was recorded during seven classroom sessions (6 hours and 17 minutes). Classroom activity was reflected following the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) observation scheme (Spada and Fröhlich, 1995) and corrective feedback episodes (CFE; Lyster, 1994) were used as the unit of analysis. The findings of the study indicate that there are differences in the type, quantity and manner of CF episodes between the two learning contexts: the CF moves were more varied and of a more explicit nature in the EFL classroom than in the CLIL classroom, where they
were mainly recasts. However, no significant difference in the proportion of learners’ uptake was found between the EFL and CLIL contexts. A qualitative analysis of the data indicated that the teachers’ attitude toward CF influenced subsequent learner uptake. These findings will be considered in light of previous literature on CF and instructional context, specifically Lyster and Mori’s Counterbalance Hypothesis (Lyster & Mori, 2006) and implications for further research on the issue of CF, learner uptake and instructional context will be suggested.

References

Intermediate traces and intermediate learners: Evidence for structural representations in L2 sentence processing

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It has been argued that the representations computed in real time during L2 sentence processing lack syntactic detail, with learners exhibiting greater reliance on nonstructural information (e.g., Clahsen & Felser, 2006).

The present study investigated evidence of trace reactivation at clause edge in the computation of indirect object cleft sentences in L2 French. Because classroom learners are accustomed to written input, a segmented forced-paced reading task was used. To facilitate lexical retrieval, French-English cognate animal names (e.g., lion) were used as antecedents.
Low- (n = 24) and high-intermediate (n = 16) learner and NS (n = 10) participants read sentences as in (1) aloud and classified picture probes appearing at clause edge (*) or in an earlier control position (**) as ±alive. Probes matched the antecedent or depicted some unrelated inanimate object.

(1) C’est/au lion/à qui/Christine/a supposé/lundi/**/matin/que/***l’on/avait donné/le beau/chapeau/dans le jardin.

“It’s to the lion that Christine supposed Monday morning that someone had given the nice hat in the garden.”

The computation of an intermediate trace at clause edge should reactivate the antecedent, yielding faster reaction times (RTs) in classifying antecedent-matching versus unrelated probes at clause edge and matching probes in clause-edge versus control position.

An ANOVA revealed significant effects of position, F(1, 45) = 6.416, p < .05, probe, F(1, 45) = 13.364, p < .005, and participant group, F(2, 45) = 3.495, p < .05. Paired-samples t-tests revealed that even the low-intermediate learners exhibited faster RTs to matching probes at clause edge compared with unrelated probes at clause edge, 490 ms vs. 519 ms, t(23) = 3.011, p < .01, and with matching probes in control position, 490 ms vs. 511 ms, t(23) = 2.698, p < .05. These results suggest that structural representations involving abstract elements such as intermediate traces can be computed during L2 sentence processing.

References

Enhancing L2 vowel perception: A study on vowel manipulation and neutralization learning effects

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Perceiving L2 sounds in a native-like manner entails being able to bestow the appropriate salience or “weight” to the phonetic cue(s) that native speakers (NS) use when assigning them to long-term memory representations during L2 speech processing.
Previous research has shown that Spanish-Catalan learners of English (NNSs), unlike NSs, (over)rely on temporal rather than spectral cues when exposed to the vowel contrast /i:/-/[2, 3], and that neutralizing duration does not necessarily enhance reliance on spectral cues [4].

This study investigated the combined effects of modifying vowel duration and providing feedback on phonetic cue-weighting in the perception of L2 vowels. NNSs were randomly assigned to two groups. One group was given visual feedback when performing a forced-choice identification task, containing duration-natural and duration-manipulated /i:/-/[ minimal pairs, and a categorical AXB discrimination task, containing duration-natural and duration-neutralized stimuli. The other group performed the same tasks, but no feedback was provided. The effect of feedback on participants’ ability to direct their attentional focus on the relevant spectral cues during the completion of the task was evaluated by comparing the learning curves achieved by the two groups. In addition, we assessed the impact of individual differences in cognitive ability (phonological memory, PM) and L2 proficiency level (vocabulary size, VS) on their performance in the perception tasks and on their perceptual learning curves.

Preliminary results revealed the existence of training effects when visual feedback was provided (and effects of PM capacity on neutralized discrimination trials), suggesting that phonetic cue re-weighting occurred during task performance enhancing learners’ L2 perceptual skills. Participants who demonstrated more categorical vowel discrimination abilities performed similarly when exposed to natural and neutralized stimuli, indicating more native-like perception of /i:/ and //[ when given explicit feedback. We discuss the implications of these findings for phonetic training and L2 speech learning.

References


L2 English effects on interpretation of L1 Japanese among Japanese Learners of English

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Recent studies on bilingual research show bidirectional influence between L1 and L2 (Jarvis & Pavlenko 2008). For example, bidirectional transfer is found between L1 Russian and L2 English among Russian L2 users of English in their narratives in word usage and expressions (Pavlenko & Jarvis 2002). Another study reports strong influence of L1 Japanese on L2 English and subtle influence of L2 English on L1 Japanese among Japanese learners of English (JLEs) in expressions of Path (Brown & Gullberg 2011).

The present study explores how JLEs interpret single/plural nouns in Japanese. Two experiments were conducted. Experiment 1 examined how they would understand generic expressions in Japanese, such as Birds fly and Lions are ferocious. Japanese nouns do not take the plural form, while English nouns are most likely to do. The results of the experiment showed that JLEs with higher proficiency in English tended to interpret generic nouns in more expected ways as generic.

Experiment 2 examined how they would interpret Japanese nouns in the plural form with –tachi, which indicates plurality. Grammatically, only animate countable nouns are considered to take the plural form in Japanese, but inanimate nouns in their plural form, such as enpitsu-tachi (pencil + plural), are often used as a rhetorical device these days. JLEs at different proficiency levels in English did not differ in terms of their grammatical acceptability. JLEs with higher English proficiency, however, revealed more sensitivity in understanding the –tachi form and interpreted it in quite different ways from those with lower English proficiency. Further investigation is necessary to confirm L2 English effects on L1 Japanese in interpreting and in using the –tachi form of inanimate nouns, but this study can be a first step toward it.

References
The younger the better? A comparison of 5, 7 and 11 year olds learning French in the classroom in the UK

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The role played by age in foreign language learning remains unclear (see e.g. Nikolov & Djigunovic 2006). On the one hand it has been argued that young children are more likely to achieve native speaker like levels of ultimate attainment, especially in areas such as pronunciation. On the other hand, it has been shown repeatedly that older learners are more efficient and make more rapid progress at least in the short term, presumably because of their ability to draw on a wider range of cognitive strategies.

This paper reports on a study comparing how children ages 5, 7 and 11 learn French in the classroom in the UK. Each group received 40 hours of instruction, taught by the same teacher following similar instruction. Children's progress in learning French was assessed at intervals on a number of dimensions including vocabulary and morphosyntactic development. Their working memory and literacy skills were also assessed, as was their motivation and attitude towards learning French. All lessons were captured on video and transcribed, thus providing a complete record of target language input and children's engagement.

The data was analysed for the development of vocabulary and grammar, the role of gestures in facilitating language learning, the attitudes, motivation and learning strategies used by the children, as well as links between different aspects of linguistic development and working memory and literacy.

- The paper compares attainment of all three groups on the various linguistic dimensions studied. The main findings of the study can be summarised as follows:
  - Receptive vocabulary: there is little difference between the groups, although how recently a word has been heard plays a more important role for the younger children. Frequency in the input is the single most important factor for vocabulary learning.
  - Morphosyntax: older children have a clear advantage
  - Both working memory and literacy support classroom language learning
- The older children make use of a wider range of cognitive strategies to aid learning
- The younger children are very enthusiastic and intrinsically motivated (learning French is fun)

The paper then seeks to explain differences in terms of age-related variables such as learner styles of engagement with classroom input, literacy skills, learner motivation and cognitive maturity. Conclusions are drawn regarding the relevance of age to initial success in language learning in an instructed foreign language environment.

**Construction of mental representation and robustness of False Memory in L1 and L2 reading**

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This study examined the differences between L1 and L2 reading in the construction of mental representations. Many L1 reading researchers have indicated that fluent readers elaborate text information and instantiate the semantically related associates that represent the entire meaning of a text (e.g., Anderson et al, 1976; Gumenik, 1979; Higham & Tam, 2005). In L2 reading, the author's past study showed the possibility that instantiation also occurs in L2 reading, and this affected the verbatim memory of words contained in sentences. The study, however, used paper-based L1 and L2 recognition tasks and was less able to detect the instantiation processes and the strengths of instantiated representations.

The participants in the present study were intermediate Japanese EFL learners. Both L1 and L2 sentences were created for a reader to instantiate a certain object (e.g., dog) based on the information of the entire sentence (e.g., I don’t like that animal because it barked at me and bit me when I was a child.). Online L1 and L2 primed lexical decision tasks were used. Each sentence was divided into clauses and displayed on a computer screen. Then one of the three types of target words appeared for lexical decision: (a) a word presented (e.g., animal), (b) an instantiated word (e.g., dog), or (c) an unrelated word (e.g., tulip). Participants were required to decide whether the target had appeared in the sentence, as rapidly and accurately as possible.

Participants’ performances on the lexical decision task were compared focusing on the reaction times and the rates of false alarm (Yes-responses to instantiated and unrelated
words). In addition, a paper-based multiple choice task was conducted in order to examine the robustness of false memory generated during reading. The results showed some differences between L1 and L2 reading, especially in the activation strengths of instantiated representations.

References

Effects of expanding and equal spacing on second language vocabulary learning: Do the amount of spacing and retention interval make a difference?

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The present study compared the effects of expanding and equal spacing on L2 vocabulary learning. In expanding spacing, the intervals between encounters of a given item are gradually increased, whereas in equal spacing, the intervals between encounters are held constant. Empirical studies have yielded mixed results regarding the effects of the two types of spacing. While some studies failed to find any advantage of expanding over equal spacing (e.g., Karpicke & Bauernschmidt, 2011; Pyc & Rawson, 2007), other studies suggest that expanding spacing may be more effective when (a) the treatment involves a large amount of spacing (Maddox, Balota, Coane, & Duchek, 2011), (b) the retention interval (i.e., interval between the treatment and posttest) is shorter than 24 hours (e.g., Karpicke & Roediger, 2007; Landauer & Bjork, 1978), or (c) the task difficulty is high (e.g., Storm, Bjork, & Storm, 2010).

The purpose of the present study was to investigate under what conditions expanding spacing may enhance L2 vocabulary learning. Specifically, it examined whether the amount of spacing and retention interval may influence the effects of expanding spacing. In this study, 140 Japanese college students studied 20 English-Japanese word pairs using flashcard software. The type of spacing (expanding and equal) as well as the amount of spacing (massed, short, medium, and long) were manipulated. Posttests were
administered immediately and 1 week after the treatment. Results suggested that the type of spacing may have little effect on learning regardless of the amount of spacing or retention interval. The main effect of the amount of spacing, however, was significant. Multiple comparisons showed that short, medium, and long spacing significantly outperformed massed learning, and medium to large effect sizes were observed. Pedagogically, the findings imply that introducing a large amount of spacing between encounters may be more important than gradually increasing spacing.

References


The potential usefulness of Coh-Metrix for investigating EFL syntactic writing profiles

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Most research on English as a Second Language (ESL) writing has used a wide range of syntactic complexity metrics following the seminal work by Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998). Most recently, two monographs on Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency (CAF) published in Applied Linguistics 2009 and in Tesol Quarterly 2011 have devoted a lot of attention to syntactic complexity. (See, for example, Norris & Ortega, 2009 and Housen, 2009). Most CAF measures have been criticized on the grounds that components such as coherence and cohesion are not taken into account and because the
measures are more suitable for language development in ESL rather than for English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Coh-Metrix (McNamara et al., 2002) was originally designed to evaluate readability, i.e. text difficulty in L1 English texts. It calculates text coherence using a wide range of measures. Recently it has also been used to assess L2 learners’ writing development (Kormos, 2011). No study has yet used Coh-Metrix to assess EFL learners’ writing, and a recent study of foreign language learners’ writing profiles (Manchón & Author, forthcoming) deals with monolingual but not with bilingual learners.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how syntactic complexity measurements using Coh-Metrix discriminate between two groups of Catalan–Spanish bilingual university level EFL learners (N=342) two years apart and to examine the syntactic profiles of the best and worst EFL writers. The Hamp-Lyons (1991) 9-band scale was used to assess writing ability holistically.

Inferential statistics found that only one out of nine types of connectives, one out of five constituents, and two out of five ‘sentence syntax similarity indices’ (SSSI) turn out to significantly change over time and mean sentence length significantly improved over time. The syntactic writing profiles will be discussed in the light of Jarvis et al. (2003).

Cognitive variables as predictors of second and foreign language reading and writing: Two populations compared

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In EUROSLA 2011 we presented a paper examining the cognitive bases of reading and writing in a foreign language by Finnish speaking 4th grade (9-10 year olds) learners of English. The results indicated that in the beginning learners of English the cognitive variables predicted the variance in reading and especially writing in L2 more than they did in L1.

In this paper, we extend that earlier study to compare the results of the cognitive variables measured among the 4th grade learners of English (N = 210) with Russian-speaking primary school pupils (age 9-12) learning Finnish (N=186). The cognitive variables we examine include working memory, phonological processing, and the ability to process non-words and we compare the two groups in terms of the ability of
the cognitive and psycholinguistic measures to predict informants reading and writing in a second and foreign language.

This study explores the diagnostic potential of a range of cognitive and psycholinguistic measures as used for detecting L1 dyslexia. These were delivered in informants' first and second languages, in order to examine their applicability for L2 diagnosis. We also included measures of L2 vocabulary, motivation and background information on the informants, and we examine the relationship of all variables to measures of second and foreign language reading and writing abilities. The results have major implications for the development of a theory of second language reading and writing development and diagnosis.

The role of Noun Countability: Accounting for the variability in L2 article choices

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There has been extensive research on L2 acquisition of English articles. While the role of semantic contexts (i.e., definiteness, specificity, etc.) is commonly suggested to account for L2 learners’ variability in article choices (Ionin, Ko, & Wexler, 2004), some studies point out influence from noun types that follow an article (Snape, 2008; White, 2009) and the learner’s misanalysis to treat articles as nominal modifiers (Trenkic, 2008). In particular, Trenkic (2008) indicates that L2 learners may rely on objective identifiability of an NP when determining an article, reporting that imaginable entities (e.g., letter) could be more likely to incorrectly receive the definite article in indefinite context than non-imaginable entities (e.g., disaster).

This paper addresses the issue of how L2 learners’ article use varies by noun types. A forced-choice task on English articles (the, a, ø) is conducted to Japanese-speaking learners of English at three different proficiency levels. The task involves the following noun types in different contextual settings based on definiteness and specificity: count nouns, mass nouns, and dual nouns, which are interpreted equally well as count and mass. The nouns are presented in count singular form, count plural form, and noncount (mass) form accordingly.

Results show that L2 learners are less sensitive to semantics of the context where mass nouns and plural nouns are involved. This suggests that the fluctuation between definiteness and specificity that has been found in the previous research interacts with countability and form of nouns that appear with articles. The implication of this finding
for understanding the variability in L2 article choices will be considered in relation to L2 input and acquisition of the mass-count distinction.

Bibliography

How does collaborative work function in classes of different English proficiency levels?

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Studies in educational psychology have shown that collaborative learning is an effective learning tool in the classroom (Arvaja, Hakkinen, Rasku-Puttonen and Etelapelto 2002; Azmitia 1988; Schmitz and Winskel 2008). In the SLA context, in order to optimize the collaborative learning experience for learners in a group, it would be necessary to understand how English proficiency levels influence collaborative work. This study investigated the effect of learners' English proficiency levels on group motivation, enjoyment of group work, and the learning outcome.

The participants comprised 500 students in group work oriented TBLT classes with 6 teachers using the same textbook in one Japanese university. The students were divided into 21 classes according to their entrance examination scores (Group A: 5 upper-intermediate, Group B: 10 intermediate and Group C: 6 beginners’ classes). Their response to collaborative work was collected in a form of questionnaire at the end of each semester. To investigate the learning outcome, they took the Versant speaking test before and after the course work.

The findings show that all groups show the similar ratio of motivated learners in class, but more students in Group C stated that they were influenced by other motivated students. Regarding the reason for enjoyment of the group work, Group C students were influenced most by the extrinsic motivation rather than intrinsic motivation. In contrast, when asked about their learning outcome of group work, students in the Group A stated
knowledge of English much more than those in the Group C in particular in the second semester. The language proficiency levels may divide the source of the enjoyment of group work and the learning experience there. Finally, although the speaking test results did not show a significant improvement across the proficiency levels, they tended to show some improvement in vocabulary, which students pointed out in the questionnaire.

References

The acquisition of English Relative Constructions by Japanese learners in Written Language

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This present study investigates the production of English relative constructions by Japanese learners in terms of semantic and discoursal properties. English relative constructions of Japanese learners (JLs) and of native speakers (NSs) of English were extracted from a written corpus: the Nagoya Interlanguage Corpus of English (Sugiura, 2008). This study examined the data according to the levels of the learners’ English proficiency and investigated the information status (New, Given, and Identifiable) (Chafe, 1974) and animacy status (Animate, Concrete Inanimate, and Abstract inanimate) (Ming & Chen) of the head noun phrases of relative clauses. The study also considered the head types (intransitive subject, transitive subject, object, oblique, and predicate noun phrase heads).

The results showed that both JLs and NSs produced New heads, but that the JLs tended to produce Animate heads, while the NSs tended to produce Abstract Inanimate heads more frequently. As for the head types, the Low-Intermediate and Advanced learners produced predicate noun phrase heads, the Higher-Intermediate learners produced intransitive subject heads the most frequently, while the NSs produced oblique heads the most frequently. The results exhibited three major findings: (1) different patterns of
relative constructions between JLs and NSs of English; different patterns were also found depending on the learners’ proficiency; (2) the NSs tended to produce relative constructions when the heads were New in terms of Preferred Argument Structure (Du Bois, 2003); and (3) the JLs tended to produce relative constructions when they modified human referents due to their limited proficiency and the NSs tend to produce them when they modify abstract referents, which is typical in written English (Chafe, 1984a, 1984b). This study revealed that the semantic information and discoursal properties affect the mechanisms and motivations for the L2 acquisition of relative constructions in written language.

References


Using brain imaging to explore L2 speech sound acquisition: Links between vowel production, perception and the mismatch response/MMNm

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This study examined how L2 speakers learn a non-native phoneme by investigating how L2 vowel perception and production are linked with the MEG mismatch response/MMNm. The subjects were 9 English native controls and 13 French L1/English L2 speakers who had lived in the UK for a varying amount of time. They performed an array of behavioural tasks designed to target vowel perception (auditory discrimination, word identification and category discrimination) and vowel production
(reading of a short story). Additionally, the MMNm to different phonemes was elicited, using an oddball paradigm in which subjects were presented with a standard /bit/, a within-category deviant D1 (acoustically deviant /bit/) and two between-category deviants (D2 /bt/ and D3 /but/). The results demonstrated that language background had an influence on perception and production, in that L2 speakers performed at a lower level than L1 speakers in all behavioural tasks. Results for the MEG experiment (using source space reconstructions) showed a left-hemispheric mismatch response. Each stimulus-type in the MEG experiment elicited a differentiated mismatch response. Perception and production were only mildly correlated for the L2 speakers, indicating that separate underlying abilities are necessary in order to learn an L2 vowel category. Surprisingly, there were no overall differences in the MMNm for the two language groups, possibly owing to the fact that many L2 speakers were relatively highly proficient. However, individual differences in the MMNm were correlated to behavioral measures of /i/-/ɪ/ category discrimination, and were less related to identification or production. This suggests that the MMNm may be more strongly linked pre-categorical phonetic processing than to phonological representations.

References

Change and stability in adult L1 and L2 development: A longitudinal pilot case study

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The study of adult migrants' language development often confines itself to studying either the acquisition of the language of the host country, or the attrition of migrants' L1.
Moreover, the common choice of cross-sectional research designs imposes limits on the adequate description of language development. This has led to an incomplete picture of the processes experienced by adult migrants as they strive to become proficient in the language of the host country, while simultaneously being faced with the task of maintaining their L1. It has long been argued that bilinguals may be viewed as multi-competent language users, and language systems as dynamic/complex systems. This perspective requires a holistic view of the language system of language learners, with a particular need to find ways to trace their linguistic development over time.

This paper reports on a longitudinal pilot case study of changes in the L1 and L2 proficiency of an adult migrant (AOA = 31 years), a German female who moved to an English-speaking country having accepted a job posting for three years. She was tested at three points during her residence abroad (LOR = 1.5 months, 20 months and 34 months) on a comprehensive battery of parallel German- and English-language tasks as well as a linguistic aptitude test. She also responded to an in-depth sociolinguistic questionnaire eliciting qualitative and quantitative data on biographical variables, language learning history, language use, language attitudes and changes in language proficiency. The paper presents the proficiency data from the three data points and charts the development of this individual's language proficiencies in German and English. The findings are discussed from a dynamic systems perspective, with particular emphasis on the complex interrelationships between various traditional predictor variables.

Path to a goal: Expressions of manner and path in motion descriptions by Polish L2 users of English

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Although Polish and English are both satellite-framed languages (Talmy 1985), they both possess a number of path verbs (e.g. arrive, enter, exit). In addition, English, contrary to Polish, has some frequently used verbs, which are not specified for manner or path, i.e. go and get, while Polish has numerous path-manner conflated verbs, e.g. wejść (‘walk into’), wyjść (‘walk out’), dojść (‘walk up to’). Previous research (Czechowska & Ewert 2011) has shown that proficient Polish L2 users of English pay more attention to path in a non-verbal task than monolinguals or less proficient L2 learners. The present study aims to tease out whether these changed perceptions of L2 users are an effect of the L2 or an effect of bilingualism.
27 new bilingual participants were recruited from the same pool of participants as in the previous study and their narratives compared to those of monolingual participants. Motion descriptions were elicited with the use of video clips showing a person moving towards a clearly visible goal. The results show that the English monolinguals and the bilinguals retelling the events in English used fewer manner verbs than Polish monolinguals. However, while the monolingual groups did not differ in their frequency of use of path verbs, the bilinguals used path verbs significantly more often in their L2 retellings than the monolinguals. Additionally, the total number of manner and path expressions used by each group was compared. This analysis shows that the bilinguals in English and the English monolinguals used fewer manner expressions per clause than the Polish monolinguals, but no differences have been found between groups in the number of path expressions. These results point to a native-like pattern in the L2 motion descriptions with a tendency to overemphasize the path of motion.

References


Culture, personality and SLA. The influence of personality traits and immersion in a foreign culture on self-perceived L2 proficiency

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The importance of expanding discipline boundaries has already been advocated by some researchers (Dewaele, 2000, 2009; Matsumoto 2006) and it was agreed that researching the field from different perspectives and using different approaches might shed some more light on the given topic. When it comes to L2 use there aren’t many studies trying to link it with the personality traits (Dewaele, 2011a, 2011b; Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2011; Wilson, 2008) as well as cultural differences/similarities (Moore, Romney, Hsia & Rush, 1999). At the same time psychologists, anthropologists and linguists stress the importance of successful cross-cultural communication. In our globalized multicultural/multilingual world people need to adapt to the constant shift in communities and find their own place in the speech community which they currently inhabit. Knowledge of grammatical and structural elements of the L2 is only a part of
The skills and competencies which are necessary for this process of adaptation; sociolinguistic and sociocultural competences are equally important (Regan, Howard & Lemée, 2009: 3). This paper is trying to link the cultural differences between Polish, English and Irish culture with the personality traits and self-perceived L2 proficiency. The informants of the study were 102 Polish-English bilinguals and Polish L2 users of English living in England and Ireland. Qualitative and quantitative analyses suggest that the relationship between personality, L2 use and willingness to adapt in the new culture as well as the awareness of the cultural differences might in fact be reciprocal.

The Critical Period and Parameter Setting in five cases of Delayed Language Acquisition

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In 1974, Susan Ervin-Tripp posed the question, “Is second language learning like the first?” The issue has been examined and re-examined ever since, generally with a focus on the development of L2 proficiency and often within the context of the critical period hypothesis. Over time, the issue has also been recast in new and original ways with increasing attention to the role of UG in both early and later L2 acquisition; examples would include the “no-parameter-resetting” hypothesis of Tsimpli and Roussou (1991) and Schmid’s (2009) investigation of the first language attrition of L2 learners as a means of demonstrating qualitative rather than merely quantitative differences between child L1 acquisition and adult L2 acquisition.

This paper, in effect, proposes to investigate the late acquisition of a first language in order to shed light on the very same issue, by examining the published language samples from three well-known cases of extreme linguistic isolation during childhood (Isabelle, Genie, and Chelsea, as reported in Mason, 1942, Curtiss, 1976 and 1988, and elsewhere) and two recent cases from the neurological literature on hemispherectomy (BL and Alex, as reported in Vanlancker-Sidtis, 2004, and Vargha-Khadem et al., 1997). In all five situations, subjects underwent delayed L1 acquisition (with L1 onset ranging from 5 to 31 years); “end-state” utterances provided in the reports are analyzed for evidence concerning subjects’ control of the Head Position, Null Subject, and WH parameters. Protocols established by Radford (2004) for determining whether parameters have or haven’t been set are followed. Findings suggest that the younger cases set parameters more successfully, and that performance declines markedly with increasing age, further suggesting that pre- and post-critical period language learning do involve qualitatively different processes.
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The use of grammar learning strategies in text-manipulation activities:

Insights from quantitative and qualitative data

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The use of grammar learning strategies (GLS), understood as deliberate thoughts and actions students employ for learning and getting better control over the use of grammar structures (Cohen and Pinilla-Herrera 2009), remains a largely uncharted territory in urgent need of research (cf. Anderson 2005; Oxford and Rang Lee 2007; Cohen 2011; Oxford 2011). The paper contributes to the scant empirical evidence in this area by reporting the findings of a study which investigated patterns of GLS use by 60 advanced English majors in an institution of higher education as they were performing a text-manipulation activity (Ellis 1997), thereby adopting a micro perspective on strategy use. In particular, the research project aimed to determine the frequency of GLS use, the categories of strategies applied most frequently, the effect of GLS use on linguistic accuracy, and the impact of the participants’ proficiency in these areas. Four data collection instruments were employed: (1) audio-recordings of 10-minute interactions between the subjects as they were working in pairs on transformation and sentence-translation exercises, (2) a questionnaire containing Likert-scale items administered immediately after the task, (3) a survey consisting of open-ended questions, also administered after the task, and (4) the written products of the activity. A combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, which involved reliance on both
psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives, revealed that the students mainly drew on cognitive strategies, most of which involved reference to rules, followed by memory, metacognitive, social and affective strategies. Moreover, the language related episodes (LREs) which appeared in the transcribed data typically resulted in the correct solutions of the problems encountered, although this depended on the level of the students in each pair and opportunities for interaction in the zone of proximal development. The paper closes with guidelines for further research into GLS and tentative recommendations regarding their training.

Exploring the effects of repetition and time of posttest administration on EFL learners’ form recall of single words and collocations

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This study examines how form recall of target lexical items by EFL learners is affected 1) by the number of occurrences (1, 3 or 5 times), 2) by the type of target item (single words versus collocations), and 3) by the time of post-test administration (immediately or one week after the treatment). Whereas previous research has tended to focus on frequency effects during reading (Chen & Truscott, 2010; Waring & Takaki, 2003; Webb, 2007), the present study examined frequency during explicit, vocabulary-focused instruction. Unlike previous studies, the present study explored form recall and not meaning recall/ recognition (Laufer & Rozovski-Roitblat, 2011). In addition, the focus was on both single words and collocations. The effect of frequency on collocations has not been studied yet. The learning treatment consisted of non-communicative, (partly) decontextualized activities, in which the target items (12 single words and 12 collocations) occurred once, three or five times. In all activities, participants had to supply the target items’ form. Data were collected in a classroom setting in two groups differing only in the time of test administration. In group 1, participants took two unannounced post-tests, one test immediately after the experimental treatment and the second one two weeks later, whereas participants in group 2 took their first unannounced post-test only one week after the experimental treatment and the second test two weeks after the treatment. The findings showed a large, positive and durable effect of frequency that was independent of the time of post-test administration. The difference in recall scores of items occurring once or five times appeared to be crucial in both groups and for both single words and collocations. Moreover, the results indicated that collocations were more difficult to learn than single words. The findings are interpreted in light of processing theories and instructed SLA theories.
In this study, we tested the predictions of the Revised Hierarchical Model (RHM, Kroll & Stewart, 1994; see also recent discussions by Brysbaert & Duyck, 2010 and Kroll, Van Hell, Tokowicz, & Green, 2010) to examine the way that words are mapped to concepts during early stages of L2 learning. The RHM predicts that in the initial stages of L2 learning, L2 learners access the meaning of L2 words indirectly via the L1 translation equivalent (word association). To test this prediction, Dutch beginning L2 learners of English (N = 34, mean age = 11;1), who had just started English classes at school, performed an L2-L1 translation recognition task. The results showed significantly slower reaction times and lower accuracies in the semantically-related condition than in the unrelated condition. This indicates that even beginning L2 learners can exploit conceptual information during translation. These findings provide further evidence for the suggestion that already in the early stages of L2 learning, learners are able to map L2 word forms to concepts. As these children learned L2 words in contexts enriched by pictures, real-life problems, and listening and speaking exercises, this study adds to accumulating evidence that the manner of L2 instruction may have a major impact on activation of lexical and conceptual information during translation. This evidence may be used to supplement the predictions by the RHM to account for a changed emphasis in L2 instruction nowadays (cf. Kroll et al., 2010).
Implicit language learning in young and elderly adults

Tünde Éva Polonyi, Kálmán Abari, Márk Gnanndt, Judit Sántha and Anikó Nagy

Debrecen University

The aim of our study was to examine the implicit aspects of learning a foreign language in young and elderly adults. We used digitized cartoon drawings of 20 animals performing 10 different picturable actions in dyadic pairs. The animals and actions could be combined freely to create a large number of different scenes corresponding to independent clauses of the type “The dog hugs the lion”. In the present experiment, twenty-five young and elderly adult participants learned novel names for these animals and their actions, as well as two morphosyntactic rules (object marking vs. grammatical gender marking) embedded in the new language. Unsupervised learning was accomplished by viewing scenes with accompanying sentences like “Garomi poh+a tunuke+r”. Thus, both lexicon and grammar were learned simultaneously. Elderly participants had difficulties in learning the artificial language. Passive vocabulary developed fast, but syntactical learning was more difficult than lexical learning in all participants. An additional metalinguistic task showed that more young adults became aware of the native-like morphosyntactic rule than the gender-marking rule. Overall conclusion of the study is that implicit memory for a foreign language is more efficient in both young and elderly adults than explicit memory.

The early phase of learning a foreign language at Finnish and Hungarian young adults

Tünde Éva Polonyi, Kálmán Abari, Judit Sántha, Márk Gnanndt and Anikó Nagy

Debrecen University

The aim of our study was to examine the implicit aspects of learning a foreign language. We used digitized cartoon drawings of 20 animals performing 10 different picturable actions in dyadic pairs. The animals and actions could be combined freely to create a large number of different scenes corresponding to independent clauses of the type “The dog hugs the lion”. In the present experiment, twenty Finnish and twenty-five Hungarian students learned novel names for these animals and their actions, as well as two morphosyntactic rules (object marking vs. grammatical gender marking) embedded
in the new language. Unsupervised learning was accomplished by viewing scenes with accompanying sentences like “Garomi poh+a tunuke+r”. Thus, both lexicon and grammar were learned simultaneously. Passive vocabulary developed fast, but syntactical learning was more difficult than lexical learning. An additional metalinguistic task showed that more participants became aware of the native-like morphosyntactic rule than the gender-marking rule. Finn participants performed better on all the tasks. This study attests to the efficacy of the language learning system in adults: limited exposure to novel items is sufficient for lexical learning and acquisition of some embedded regularities, while explicit metalinguistic knowledge of the regularities develops not until later.

Interpretation of English wh-questions by L1 German-L2 English learners

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Due to the V2 properties of German, certain main-clause wh-questions are ambiguous between a subject and an object reading (1).

(1) Was jagt die Katze?

= What chases the cat?

= What does the cat chase?

Grüter (2005/2006) showed that L1 English learners of L2 German at the initial state do not detect this ambiguity and process such questions with their L1 syntactic representation, assigning only a subject interpretation. This supports the Full Transfer/Full Access model of the initial state (Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, 1996). The research reported in the present paper adopts Grüter’s picture interpretation task to investigate the learnability implications of the mirror-image acquisition setting. Upper-intermediate L1 German learners of English (n=20) and English native speakers (n=12) completed a picture interpretation task requiring them to provide answers to different question forms.

While English simple-tense subject questions are syntactically parsable with a German grammatical representation, this will give rise to non-target ambiguous interpretation in contexts without overt case marking (2).
(2) WhatSUBJ chases the catOBJ?

WhatOBJ chases the catSUBJ?

If evidence from syntactic cues such as do-support in the input is effective and learners reset the V2 parameter, the object interpretation will be lost. If not, learners may continue to process subject wh-questions with a V2 representation and thus assign to them an ambiguous semantic interpretation. Non-target object interpretations of simple-tense subject questions confirmed that the learners still parse questions with a V2 syntactic representation. This finding shows that L1 transfer persists in isolated structures after learners have established target clause-structure for English in other contexts. This provides support for a model of acquisition which allows multiple different grammatical representations (e.g. Roeper 1999, Yang 2002). It implies also that structural cues available in the English input do not lead to across-the-board restructuring of grammatical representations.

References

Vocabulary growth in an academic reading course: The effect of reading, form focused instruction and intentional learning

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Research into L2 vocabulary growth, including the optimal learning conditions which lead to it, has been of interest to the language acquisition field and of practical importance to language instruction. Previous studies of instructed vocabulary learning focus on a relatively small number of words, and assess their retention after a relatively
short period since first exposure (Qian, 1996; Paribakht & Wesche, 1997; Groot, 2000; Laufer, 2003; Kim, 2008; Folse, 2006; Webb, 2007).

The present study was carried out with 117 intermediate EFL learners over 39 weeks and targeted 300 new words. It investigated the effect of three learning conditions on vocabulary gain and reading comprehension improvement. In all three conditions, learners performed reading and comprehension activities. In condition one, they received additional vocabulary focused instruction, and periodic tests which were announced in advance. The condition had the components: + FFI (form-focused instruction) + intentional learning. In condition two, learners were asked to memorize the target words independently, out-of-class for periodic tests (-FFI + intention). In condition three learners received neither FFI, nor periodic tests (-FFI - intention). All learners received the Vocabulary Levels Tests (VLT) at the beginning and the end of the study. Similarly, as the 300 target words were taught in one semester, i.e. 13 weeks, students received a pre-test of 300 words at the beginning of the semester. We compared the three conditions on progress scores on the two tests (VLT and the target words). We relate our results to several issues in instructed language learning: form focused instruction, incidental learning, intentionality and discuss the relative contribution of each factor to vocabulary improvement.

Pragmatics of Suprasegmental Phonology: Intersection of Applied Linguistics and TESOL Research

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Advanced-level students (D and E-levels in an A-E-level IEP) took pre and post intervention surveys to ascertain perceptual awareness of intonation and contrastive stress, and conceptual awareness of their pragmatic functions. Intervention consisted of classroom and language laboratory instruction utilizing a popular pronunciation textbook. Pre-and post-instruction metacognitive surveys revealed that students notice native speaker use of stress and intonation. However, no significant gains were made in student awareness of pragmatic functions of stress and intonation. Students were also unsuccessful using contrastive stress to make inferences. Despite students' eventual successful imitation of target stress and rise-fall contours in controlled language laboratory recordings, post-instruction interviews revealed robust rejection of adoption of these patterns. Students claimed they felt "silly" and the exaggerated patterns sounded "ridiculous." Semester-end interviews revealed that elective class instructors, prior to gaining access to the student surveys, believed their instruction had been
effective, based on students' successful production of target patterns. The importance of non-standard stress and intonation in conveying speaker intent, the illocutionary force of an utterance, is intuitive for native speakers, who realize that intonation "has the power to reinforce, mitigate, or even undermine the words spoken" (Wichmann, 2005). Evidence from this study is that even following instruction, students maintained that the sole mechanism for conveying meaning is through the locution, the words of the utterance. They expressly rejected a role for intonation in over-riding lexical information. This study suggests that a narrow focus on production in suprasegmental instruction may lead teachers to falsely assume that students have "learned" intonation and contrastive stress, when students may actually be unwilling to use these patterns in their own speech and unable to rely on them as listeners for the information they convey. Therefore, production-focused instruction, without an overtly metacognitive approach, masks the gap in teachers’ and students' knowledge.

Measuring cognitive task demands: A step forward in task complexity research

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The field of instructed SLA has seen an increasing interest in the construct of task complexity in recent years. Most of the existing empirical research has been inspired by Robinson's (2001) Cognition and Skehan's (2009) Trade-Off Hypotheses. Although much progress has been made in investigating the outcome or dependent variables invoked in these models (e.g., linguistic complexity), little empirical research has directly examined the explanatory or independent variables (e.g., task complexity) and the causal processes posited in the frameworks (e.g., attentional allocation). This study intends to start filling this gap by exploring ways of independently measuring task complexity and tapping attentional processes during task-based performance.

The participants were 24 native speakers of English, and 24 Spanish and 24 German learners of English at B1-B2 levels. They all carried out a simple and a complex version of three oral task types – a narrative, a direction-giving task, and a problem-solving task. To assess changes in cognitive load resulting from task complexity manipulations, we gathered three types of evidence: (1) subjective self-ratings of perceived mental effort, (b) subjective estimations of the length of time taken to perform a given task, and (c) performance data using secondary task methodology. The secondary task required responding as fast as possible to a visual stimulus, and quality of performance was
measured in terms of reaction times and accuracy. A subset of the participants also
described their thought processes as part of a stimulated recall protocol.

A series of repeated measures ANOVAs will be conducted to analyse the quantitative
data, and the stimulated recall comments will be analysed qualitatively. In the
presentation we will consider the theoretical and practical implications of our findings,
and offer suggestions for how to address the link between task complexity and L2
processes in future empirical research.

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Phonetic and phonological mode in second-language speech: VOT imitation

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The Automatic Selective Perception (ASP) model (Strange 2011) characterises two
modes of perception in second-language speech: phonological and phonetic. In a
phonological mode L2 learners are predicted to ignore detailed phonetic variations and
access their abstract representations of words. In a phonetic mode L2 learners are
attuned to detailed phonetic variability of perceived forms. It is hypothesised that
learners will be more sensitive to acoustic details in L2 speech in when in a phonetic
rather than phonological mode. Although the opposition between the two modes in the
ASP model has been proposed for perception in second-language speech, it can be
tested using the methodology for speech production.

In the current study we recruited Polish learners of English to investigate how the
phonetic and phonological mode of L2 speech processing would affect VOT values in
their productions in English. Polish learners have been repeatedly observed to fail to
produce sufficiently long VOT values for English /p, t, k/ due to the fact that Polish uses
voicing lead and short-lag values for voiced and voiceless stops. It was assumed that in
the phonetic mode Polish speakers would produce more native-like VOT values owing to increased sensitivity to fine-grained phonetic parameters induced by this mode.

Twenty-four Polish learners of English were recruited to participate. The experiment consisted of three block: (1) baseline recordings of words presented orthographically, (2) instantaneous imitation of words after a recorded model (phonetic mode), (3) delayed imitation with concentration distraction (phonological mode). The statistical analysis revealed that, as predicted by the ASR, VOT values produced by Polish learners were more English-like in the phonetic rather than phonological mode.

References

From vP to TP: Accounting for the L2 English development of inflectional properties

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In this talk I present a new account and novel data relevant to a longstanding debate in L2 development: L2 learner access to functional I(nflection) (null subjects, feature strength) via the L1 and UG. Two competing theories at the centre of this debate, namely Full Transfer/Full Access (FT/FA) (Schwartz & Sprouse, 2007) and Organic Grammar (OG) (Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 2011) were empirically tested. Monolingual French (n=14) and Spanish (n=16) adult instructed learners of English, ranging from pre-intermediate to advanced, completed three production tests and a GJT on two I-properties: weak feature strength (copula/V-adverb order), and obligatory overt preverbal finite subjects. Both L1s, like English, require copula-adverb order, though unlike English, require lexical V-adverb order (English weak features license V in-situ). Moreover, only French, like English, requires obligatory overt subjects (Spanish also allows pro). Under FT/FA, syntactic properties transfer in toto, predicting the L1 groups to show similar patterns of development for feature strength but not overt subjects (only Spanish differs from English). OG, instead, predicts no transfer of I-properties from the L1 and development to proceed from an FP stage (underspecified I), in which both properties are optional, to an IP stage in which I-properties are categorically acquired.
The distribution of subjects was consistent with FT/FA’s prediction insofar as they differed by L1: null subjects were rarely used by the French (6% maximum). Contra both theories, paths of copula merge/move and the V in-situ property differed by L1. The study, therefore, shows that while subject properties transfer, feature strength does not. Assuming rich T features license verb-raising but rich agreement (ϕ) features license pro (Biberauer & Roberts, 2010), I argue that, in early ILs, the L1’s ϕ transfer and copulas merge/move to the highest UG-defined projection available (vP), but that advanced ILs comprise target-like T features and are largely transfer-free.

References


Subject Verb Agreement in different acquisition settings: Comparing monolingual SLI children to bilingual unimpaired and language-impaired German-speaking children

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The study of bilingual children without and with SLI raises a number of theoretical and practical issues. Does bilingual language development in children differ from monolingual development? Does bilingual language development affect language impairments and if so, how? How reliable are the linguistic characteristics and markers of monolingual SLI for simultaneous or successive bilingual SLI? Whether bilingual language acquisition exacerbates SLI, or does not, is a still open question; cf. Paradis (2010).

The present study compares a group of early successive bilingual children with SLI acquiring German, with Turkish as L1, to a closely matched group of monolingual German-speaking children with SLI, asking whether the two groups of children exhibit
the same or different grammatical difficulties in their German. Furthermore, the study contrasts the results of the SLI groups to data of unimpaired Turkish-German children.

The data come from six unimpaired early successive bilingual children, seven early successive bilingual children with SLI, and seven monolingual children with SLI (age 4;6 to about 8 for the SLI groups; age 3;3 to 6 for the unimpaired group). The data sets were MLU-matched. The age of onset of German was between age 2;9 to 4;4 in the bilingual groups. The linguistic analysis focussed on subject-verb agreement marking in the children’s German, which has been argued to represent a grammatical marker of SLI in German for monolingual children (Clahsen et al. 1997), and for bilingual children (Rothweiler et al. 2012).

The results show that the unimpaired children master the SVA paradigm early and very similar to what has been found for monolingual German children. The findings also confirm (subject-verb) agreement as a clinical of SLI in German, for both monolingual and bilingual children, and show that acquiring German as a second language does not exacerbate SLI.

References


Grammatical gender in L1 and child L2 acquisition of German
- the role of morphophonological patterns

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Studies on the acquisition of Romance languages indicate that phonological cues play a crucial role in L1 acquisition. Children pass an initial stage in which gender errors occur as the result of overgeneralizations of such gender cues (Karmiloff-Smith 1978). In a later stage children tend to ignore such gender cues and set a default value instead if a noun's gender is unknown. These findings lead Hawkins and Franceschina (2004) to
assume that in the initial stage gender agreement takes place at the vocabulary level whereas a default strategy indicates that gender concord takes place on a syntactic level.

In German, several morphological and phonological cues have been described on a probabilistic basis (Köpcke & Zubin 1983) but only few of these cues are unambiguously linked with a certain gender. Thus an interesting question is, whether children apply such cues in gender assignment in German.

The present study presents elicited production data of 16 monolingual children (age 3;0 to 5;0) and 26 early sequential bilinguals (12 to 30 months of exposure) with Turkish, Russian or Polish as their L1. Definite articles were elicited for 13 high frequency nouns and 5 pseudo nouns containing a morphophonological gender cue.

The children produced significantly more gender errors with nouns, whose gender is not predictable by a morphophonological cue than with nouns, whose gender is predictable by a morphophonological cue. This result indicates that the children are sensitive to such cues. But gender errors cannot simply be interpreted in terms of an overgeneralization of morphophonological cues. An individual analysis shows that the children overapply one article form (masculine or feminine or neuter) regardless of the morphophonological shape of a noun. This error type is interpreted as a default strategy and indicates that gender concord takes place on a syntactic level.

Working memory capacity and its relation to foreign language aptitude

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In cognitive science the construct of working memory (WM) has enjoyed a lot of research focus for at least four decades now. The traditional model of memory by Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968), emphasizing the short- and long-term distinction was replaced by a more dynamic concept of WM stressing both processing and storage functions. Viewed as such, WM is understood as a trade-off between storage and processing, with the two competing for the same limited resources, i.e., WM capacity. The fact that individuals differ with respect to this cognitive ability has proved a powerful individual difference dimension constraining learning processes, including the learning of first and second languages. WM was found an important cognitive ability underlying, among others, FL learning faculty, i.e., language aptitude.
The paper reports a study in which a relationship is sought between working memory and various aptitude components in the understanding of the classical four-component model of aptitude by Carroll and Sapon (1959). Specifically, following a suggestion implicit in many a professional literature that the construct of WM might prove to be a sole and strongest predictor of L2 success, stronger than FL aptitude, the main aim of the study is to see if, and to what extent, working memory is implicated in the various aptitudonal constructs operationalised in the tasks of the MLAT (Modern Language Aptitude Test) / PLAB (Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery) type. To this effect various measures of WM obtained from a battery of WM tests (reading span, operation span and counting span tests) and measures of FL aptitude operationalised in TUNJO (Polish adaptation of MLAT) were factor analyzed for potential relationships.

Acoustic Memory in L2 Vowel Perception

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The perception and production of L2 sounds by adult L2 learners is severely limited by learners’ previous perceptual attunement to the phonetic properties of L1 sounds [1,2]. This often leads to large inter-subject variation in L2 speech learning, which calls for research on several cognitive skills that may facilitate L2 speech perception. The present study explores the relationship between acoustic memory (AM), operationalized as an individual’s memory storage for the pre-phonological acoustic properties of speech stimuli, and learners’ accuracy in L2 vowel perception. Catalan/Spanish (N=53) EFL learners’ AM capacity was assessed through a serial nonword recognition task based on unintelligible spectrally rotated vowel stimuli. Learners’ L2 perceptual competence was measured through an AXB categorial discrimination task testing their ability to use target-like cue-weighting in the discrimination of English /iː/-/ɪ/ in natural and duration-neutralized stimuli [3]. The results were consistent with previous research, demonstrating Spanish/Catalan EFL learners’ over-reliance on duration when perceiving the target vowel contrast [4,5]. The participants’ AM scores were significantly correlated with percentage of correctly discriminated natural and duration-neutralized stimuli (r=.499, p<.001 and r=.441, p=.001), indicating that participants’ storage capacity for the acoustic information of the speech signal was related to their vowel discrimination ability. Participants were then assigned to Low-AM (N=23) and High-AM (N=30) groups which were found to differ significantly in discrimination accuracy for both natural (t(51)=2.76, p=.008) and duration-manipulated (t(51)=2.23, p=.03) trials, demonstrating that individuals with greater AM capacity were better able to rely on spectral rather than temporal cues in the perception of the English /iː/-/ɪ/
contrast. Regression analyses indicated that AM accounted for 18.7% of the unique variance in L2 vowel discrimination accuracy (once the effects of age of onset, proficiency and percentage of L2 use were factored out), thus contributing significantly to the re-weighting of phonetic cues in L2 speech learning.

References


Representing aspectual contrasts associated with animacy and agency in Spanish and English

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English native speakers have difficulty understanding the subtle nuances of meaning of Spanish Preterite and Imperfect in contextually complex situations. In this paper I assess Slobin’s (1996) “thinking-for-speaking” proposal to analyze the effect of agency and animacy of external arguments on the selection of past tense markers in Spanish.

Several researchers have argued that agency and animacy have an effect on the use of Spanish past tense markers. For instance, Doiz-Bienzobas (1995) proposes that the subject (the letter) in sentence (1) is perceived as uttering the words of how much he loved the speaker; thus the Preterite is not pragmatically feasible.

(1) La carta decía/*dijo lo mucho que me quería.
The letter said-IMP/*PRET how much he loved me.

When the Imperfect is used, however, the predicate does not designate an actual occurrence or a past activity and, consequently, the subject does not take an agentive role. However, a minimal lexical variation of the predicate used in the example above is grammatical with the Preterite (2):

(2) La carta estipuló/describió lo mucho que me quería.
The letter stated/described-PRET how much he loved me.

Similarly, Slabakova and Montrul (2007) argue that the use of the Preterite is dependent on the animacy of the subject:

(3) *El río corrió (PRET) / Roberto corrió (PRET) por la montaña.
*The river ran / Roberto ran through the mountain.

However, this is not necessarily the case if adequate contextual support is given. Thus, if we assumed that the bed of a river had been dry and the gates of a dam were open to let the river run again, it is perfectly acceptable to use the Preterite:

(5) El río corrió (PRET) por la montaña.
The river ran through the mountain.

The analysis of examples such as the one described above show that animacy and agency do not necessarily determine the grammaticality of the Preterite. Thus, I will argue that previous proposals have been only half-right given that the Preterite is only unacceptable in specific contextual conditions. Even though most likely contextual conditions favor the Imperfect, native speakers accept the use of the Preterite given the relevant context. The reason why non-native speakers tend to rely on probabilities (i.e., likely contextual conditions), and not on aspectual conditions can be directly traced to Slobin’s “thinking-for-speaking” proposal: the child “learns to attend to particular aspects of experience and to relate them verbally in ways that are characteristic of that language.”

References
The effects of L2 and L3 proficiency on Crosslinguistic Influence in Third Language Acquisition: Defining and operationalizing constructs

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Current research on crosslinguistic influence (henceforth, CLI) addresses the impact of an L2 on the acquisition of an L3. In this literature, a key factor signalled as the driving force behind the occurrence of CLI from the L2 is proficiency (Bardel and Lindqvist, 2007; Hammarberg, 2009; Jaensch, 2008; Montrul, Dias and Santos, 2011; Rast, 2011). Notwithstanding, the role of proficiency both in the L2 and the L3 is still far from clear. The study reported here contributes to this line of investigation, and it inquires into the responsibility of proficiency level in L2 German and L3 English in the CLI of SOV orders from the L2 to the L3 in Spanish/Catalan bilingual learners. To this aim, and using a picture-based story telling task, data were gathered from 519 learners. For the present purposes, L2 proficiency was defined as the extent of L2 acquisition of syntactic properties related to V2. In turn, the measurement of L3 proficiency was two-fold, and defined in terms of overall proficiency (using a Cloze Test) and as a contingency between the emergence of inflectional morphology and the acquisition of verb placement. The results of L2 proficiency showed a number of shortcomings in the acquisition of V2 in this language. These shortcomings had a significant effect on CLI, particularly obvious when they affected verb final (p= .004) and subject-verb inversion (p=.000). As for L3 proficiency, an inverse relationship was found between overall performance and CLI (F= 18.61, p=.000), especially at low and intermediate groups. In particular, low proficiency was found to push CLI, whereas high levels inhibited it. On the other hand, the Cramer’s V statistic that measured the contingency between accuracy in the use of inflectional morphology and verb placement yielded an association of high strength (.60, p=.000), with SOV orders inaccurately inflected for the most part (96%). These findings corroborate and expand results in previous studies (Bardel and Falk, 2011 or Rothman and Cabrelli, 2010).
Do WM and Proficiency compel Grammatical Development? An exploratory study on L2 English instructed acquisition by adult learners

Laura Sanchez and Roger Gilabert

University of Barcelona

The study reported here was guided by two research questions. The first one asked whether working memory (WM) affects the development of L2 English grammatical abilities in Spanish/Catalan university learners (n= 61). The second question inquired into the likelihood that the effects of WM are mediated by proficiency. To answer them, a film retelling (Chaplin’s Modern Times) and an essay (Service and Kohonen, 1995) where learners had to write about their life (present and past) and future expectations were used. WM was measured using a Reading Span Task, and the OPT assessed proficiency in the L2. The analysis of L2 production focused on accuracy in the use of inflectional morphology and verb tenses (O’Brien et al., 2006). Negative correlations were obtained in both tasks between WM and the third person singular morpheme (r: -345, p=.042, r: -331, p=.009 in the narrative and essay, respectively). Milder correlations were found in the use of irregular past participles (r: 434, p=.016 in the narrative; r: 631, p=.000 in the essay) and also in to-infinitives (r: -396, p=.033 and r: -303, p=.019 in each task). When splitting the sample into high and low proficiency, task effects were observed in the narrative. Specifically, whereas no correlations were found in low proficiency learners, statistically significant correlations were obtained between WM and the copula, imperative, present perfect, going to, and past participle. Moreover, the range of tenses referring to past events in this task (past simple, past continuous, present perfect and past perfect) also turned out to correlate with WM (r: .485, p=.006). In turn, the use of present tenses in the essay (present simple and present continuous) correlated with WM as well (r: -346, p=.050), irrespective of proficiency level. These results are discussed in light of ongoing research on the association of structural complexity and WM capacity (Gilabert and Muñoz, 2010; Hummel, 2009; Kormos and Sáfár, 2008).
Creating a comprehensive measure of guessing from context

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Guessing from context plays a critical role in second language (L2) vocabulary learning, because guessing from context is one of the most frequently used strategies for dealing with unknown words, and the skill of guessing from context may be teachable (e.g., Baumann et al., 2002; Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000). However, few attempts have been made to create a standardised guessing-from-context test that is effective for practical use. In the present research, a guessing-from-context test was designed to measure multiple aspects of the skill of guessing based on previous studies on the guessing from context strategy (Bruton & Samuda, 1981; Clarke & Nation, 1980; Williams, 1985). The test consisted of the following three sections: identifying the part of speech of an unknown word, finding the contextual clue that helps guess its meaning, and deriving the unknown word’s meaning. Measuring multiple aspects of the skill of guessing is of great practical value because the test can provide learners with diagnostic information on their weaknesses. For example, a learner who got a low score on the part of speech section might be able to improve his or her guessing by learning to identify the part of speech of unknown words and using this information to derive the meaning of unknown words. The test is also expected to be useful in investigating the effects of teaching on the skill of guessing. The test was validated using a Rasch analysis through data from 428 Japanese learners of English. This paper reports on the procedure for developing a standardised guessing-from-context test and discusses directions for future research.

References

The L2 impact on acquiring Dutch as a L3: the L2 distance effect

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Our previous study reported that the linguistic distance between the mother tongue (L1) and Dutch has a substantial and systematic impact on acquiring Dutch as a second language, besides other factors related to the individual learner and to characteristics of his/her country of origin. Apparently, the high diversity across mother tongues leads to varying degrees of success in the acquisition of Dutch. This impact seems systematic and linguistic distance between Dutch and the L1 (The L1 distance effect) seems to play a crucial role. The relation was tested by analyzing a large-scale longitudinal state database of immigrant Dutch test scores using multilevel models. The database contains language proficiency scores from over 100,000 individuals, speaking over 100 different mother tongues and additional languages. Assessment scores of speaking, writing, listening, and reading are available.

For the present study, we used this data to investigate the impact of additional language background (L2) before acquiring Dutch (L3). Multilevel models enable the decomposition of learner differences (variance) into partially crossed random effects for the mother tongue, additional language background (L2), and the country of birth. This way of structuring our data enabled an estimation of separate as well as combinatorial effects between the random effects. We hypothesized that the L2 variance would follow a pattern similar to the L1 distance effect. Our results suggest indeed a similar distance effect, although weaker than the distance effect of the L1. We will discuss in detail whether specific interaction effects between the L1 and L2 may exist, meaning that particular combinations are more supportive or prohibitive in learning L3 Dutch. The models resulting from our analyses give new insights in linguistic factors that play a role in successive language acquisition.
Maturational constraints or crosslinguistic transfer: A comparison of L1 attrition and L2 acquisition

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A controversial topic in research on second language acquisition is whether residual variability and optionality in high-proficiency L2 learners is merely the outcome of crosslinguistic transfer, or whether, in addition, late learners have some form of underlying representational deficit, due to maturational constraints on bilingual development.

It has recently been proposed (e.g. Hopp & Schmid in press; Schmid, forthc.) that insight into this question can be gained by comparing advanced late L2 learners with speakers who are also late bilinguals, but who grew up with the language under investigation as their L1, prior to emigrating to another country. The latter group, who use the L2 (environmental language) more frequently in their daily lives, typically exhibit increased optionality in their native language as a result of crosslinguistic transfer and, consequently, L1 attrition. They do not, however, have a representational deficit in their L1, having acquired it monolingually during childhood. Such a comparison thus has the potential of flagging up areas of grammar which may be more difficult for L2 learners than can be accounted for purely on the basis of crosslinguistic influence and other effects of bilingualism.

I will present a comparison of 22 long-term attritors with English L2 and 22 highly advanced immersed learners of German with English L1 and 22 predominantly monolingual controls on a range of lexical and grammatical tasks (verbal fluency task, offline grammaticality judgment task, nonce word inflection, self-ratings) as well as two free speech tasks. The bilingual populations are matched for overall proficiency on a C-Test score.

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Traces of L1-patterns in the event construal of Czech advanced speakers of L2-English and L2-German

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Findings from previous experimental linguistic studies, which included, eye-tracking, speech onset time, and memory data, showed that Czech speakers focus on completion (a holistic perspective) when construing goal-oriented motion events and events with resultant state in their native language (L1). Interestingly, in terms of perspective taken, Czech clusters with German and not with other Slavic languages such as Russian or Polish, in which speakers prefer a phasal perspective. The patterns found are further supported by data from very advanced L2-speakers: Linguistic comparisons with eye-tracking data and memory data produced by Czech and Russian L2-speakers of German demonstrated that Russian speakers rely on different conceptual strategies than Czech speakers when construing goal-oriented motion and events with resultant state in L2 German. The “Czech pattern” in L2 German is very similar to that found in verbalizations of German native speakers. These findings have been explained in terms of language contact with German, which affected the Czech aspectual system, in particular the perfective form. The present paper presents the results of two elicitation studies comprising linguistic data produced by Czech advanced L2-speakers of English and German (30 L2-speakers in each group). The focus of the paper is on the investigation of the role of the underlying L1-perspective in the construal of goal-oriented motion and events with resultant state in the target language. Given the fact that L1-English unlike L1-Czech prefers taking a phasal perspective on the construal of motion events the question is whether advanced Czech speakers of L2 English have mastered the target-like perspective and to what extent can the L1-pattern be “traced down” in the event construal in the L2. Since previous studies demonstrated that Czech speakers of L2 German verbalize and conceptualize events like native speakers of German, this paper will focus on the analyses of other parts of motion (e.g., expression of path, ground, and source point) to investigate the scope and restrictions of conceptual restructuring in advanced L2-speakers. The data presented and discussed in this paper illustrate the importance of comparing actual usage preferences across languages, in addition to cross-linguistic categorizations based on the linguistic system. The paper will also address the question of ultimate attainment. It will be argued that even for highly proficient L2 speakers, conceptual restructuring into the direction of the L2 is limited.
Thinking and Speaking in Two Languages: Insights from language production of very advanced Czech and Polish L2-speakers of German

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Cross-linguistic comparisons of Germanic, Romance, and Slavic languages have shown that language-specific grammatical features affect the way L1-speakers organize information when construing events. Recent experimental studies, which included eye-tracking measurements, linguistic as well as memory data have shown that typologically similar languages, like L1-Czech and L1-Russian, use different preferences when conceptualizing, verbalizing and remembering events. Interestingly, L1-Czech clusters together with L1-German. These patterns are further supported by the L2-data: Russian L1-speakers rely on different conceptual strategies than Czech L1-speakers when construing goal-oriented motion in L2 German. The “Czech pattern” in L2 German is very similar to that found in verbalizations of German native speakers.

The present study examines verbalizations of motion events and events with resultant state in another West-Slavic language, L1-Polish. Results from a pilot study investigating event construal in L1-German and L1-Polish suggest that Polish speakers rely on a different strategy than German speakers when speaking about events. Taken all together, when it comes to construing events L1-Polish and L1-Russian rely on different conceptual preferences than L1-Czech and L1-German.

The aim of our talk is twofold: (1) To show that L1-Polish and L1-Czech use different ways for construing events; (2) To examine verbalizations of advanced L2-speakers of German with L1-Czech and L1-Polish and to investigate to what extent can the L1-pattern be “traced down” in the event construal in the L2.

The data presented and discussed in this talk illustrate the importance of comparing actual usage preferences across languages, in addition to cross-linguistic categorizations based on the linguistic system. The paper will also address the question of ultimate attainment. It will be argued that even for highly proficient L2 speakers, conceptual restructuring into the direction of the L2 is limited.
Word Recognition Strategies during First Exposure

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A primary goal of speech processing lies in the mapping of the incoming acoustic signal onto existing lexical representations. The current study examines how learners at first exposure, i.e. during the first hours of exposure to a second language (L2), manage to recognize lexical forms in the acoustic signal. Second language research has demonstrated evidence of myriad processing strategies employed by L2 listeners including allophonic variation (Ito and Strange, 2009), phonotactics (Weber & Cutler 2006), and prosodic structure (Golato 2002). The majority of L2 processing models, however, fail to predict which cues listeners exploit before L2 lexical and phonological forms have been acquired.

In this study, eighteen native speakers of French with no previous exposure to Polish were tested on their ability to extract words from Polish sentences at two time intervals (T1: 0h00 of exposure and T2: 6h30 of exposure) during a Polish language course. We focus here on one particular strategy that is available to the learner from the outset of learning, that of phonological transparency (phonological similarity between the lexical forms in the L2 and the L1, e.g. Polish TURYSTA vs. French TOURISTE, ‘tourist’).

Before exposure to Polish (T1), highly transparent words (e.g., PROFESOR ‘professor’, PROFESSEUR in French) were extracted from the signal significantly better than non-transparent words (e.g., LODOWKA ‘refrigerator’, FRIGO in French), indicating that learners are initially highly dependent on L1 phonological patterns when parsing the L2 input. Crucially, however, while recognition of highly transparent words did not show significant improvement from T1 (88% accuracy) to T2 (93% accuracy), recognition of non-transparent words improved significantly (T1: 64% accuracy and T2: 82% accuracy). We discuss here what factors account for improved recognition to non-transparent words, including increased sensitivity to the L2 phonemic inventory and phonotactic constraints.
The acquisition of English tense and aspect by 4 Japanese returnees

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This study reports the findings on tense and aspect of 4 Japanese returnees. The returnees are four girls: the youngest is currently aged 12, the eldest is aged 20 and two are aged 16. The returnees spent around 6 years in the U.S. and returned to Japan over 1 year ago. Testing began after their 1 year return to Japan where a number of linguistic tasks were given to them to complete. One of the tasks was an Acceptability Judgment Task on tense and aspect, based on Al-Hamad et al. (2002). The written task has 19 sentence types with 52 items. Each item on the task consisted of an opening context followed by two sentences, as in example (1):

(1) Type A: (Activity, Present, ongoing) √-ing *simple

Bob can’t contact Mary at the moment. Apparently, …

□ She is running on the beach.

□ She runs on the beach.

Four basic verb classes proposed by Vendler (1967) were included in the task (activity, achievement, state, and accomplishment). As well as the 4 returnees we tested 20 low intermediate, 20 upper intermediate, and 10 advanced Japanese speakers and 16 native English controls. Our results show the 4 returnees perform more like the native controls on all verb classes apart from the stative progressive as they overaccepted the progressive –ing form:

(2) Type K: (Stative, Past) √simple *-ing

By the time John returned from travelling around the world

□ his brother Roger owned most of the land.

□ his brother Roger was owning most of the land.

Japanese has only a few stative verbs (aru, iru, dekiru and wakaru) and the majority are change-of-state verbs, thus there are still some L1 effects. Overall, our findings suggest
that even after 1 year the 4 returnees have retained their knowledge of L2 syntax-semantics mappings.

Inflectional rules in successive child language acquisition: Evidence from German past participles

Aldona Sopata

Adam Mickiewicz University

One of the important issues in second language (L2) acquisition research is the effect of age at which learners are first exposed to their L2. It is still very much an open question up to which age L1 strategies remain accessible to young successive learners and in which grammatical areas the age of onset of acquisition influences the course of language development (Schwartz 2004, Rothweiler 2006, Meisel 2008, 2011).

The specific grammatical phenomenon investigated in the paper is the acquisition of past participles in German. Since L1 and adult L2 acquisition of past participles in German differ with respect to the developmental course and error types, their usage can be a criterion discriminating between the acquisition types and, therefore, it can be used to assess whether young successive learners differ from L1 (Clahsen/Rothweiler 1993, Sterner 2010).

Two opposing views exist for the usage of the regular and irregular inflection. According to the first, all inflected forms are stored in the lexicon (Seidenberg & Joanisse 2005). The opposing view holds that regular forms are inflected by the application of morphological rules (Pinker/Ullman 2002). In the present study I will investigate also the predictions of both models in the child L2.

Longitudinal data from five children are examined. They were first exposed to German at the ages of 2;6, 3;8, 4;0, 4;7 and 9;1. The variable of the age of onset is the main differentiating variable. In other respects, they constitute quite a homogeneous group as the L1 of all the children is Polish and their input situation is qualitatively and quantitatively very similar. Their language development was investigated over a period of one year.

The results show that the children acquiring their L2 after the age of three use patterns in the studied area which differ from L1.
The acquisition of gender and number in L2 Italian: An eye-tracking study

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Michigan State University

Recent research has examined the role that grammatical features such as gender and number play in the acquisition of second languages (e.g., Lardiere, 2009). In this eye-tracking study we contribute to this work by examining the L2 acquisition of gender and number in Italian by speakers of English. Specifically, we examine differences in the learners’ eye movements while they mark adjective agreement with singular and plural nouns under various conditions: masculine/feminine, transparent/opaque, and familiar/novel.

Results of a recent eye-tracking study of singular nouns (Authors, in press) demonstrated that although the gender of the noun did not affect learner behavior, the transparency of the noun ending and the familiarity of the word did. These results were as predicted; opaque nouns provide no information about gender and force the learner to examine other cues, which takes longer. Novel nouns take longer because learners must
search their lexicons for a match; additionally, they are unable to employ previous knowledge of the noun’s gender and must compute gender on-line.

In this paper, plural nouns from the same study are examined, and some interesting differences from the singular results are revealed. Two findings stand out. First, the gender of the noun was an important variable: learners spent significantly more time looking at nouns and articles when the noun was feminine. Second, familiarity was not; that is, learners did not appear to distinguish between known and novel nouns in the plural condition. We argue that the homophony/homography of the feminine plural ending with the singular opaque noun ending (–e) may lead early learners of Italian to fail to parse it as a plural marker, parsing it instead as a singular word marker. Similar results have been found for English-speaking learners of Swahili (Author, 2009). Implications for the L2 acquisition of gender and number are discussed.

References

Syntactic complexity in the spontaneous speech of L1 attriters / L2 learners: Age of onset vs. continued L1 exposure

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While maturational accounts argue that language development is constrained by the age at which languages are learned (age of onset, AoO), alternative accounts suggest that language development is primarily driven by the amount of exposure to a language (e.g., Pallier et al., 2003). To disentangle the impact of these two factors, a population would be needed that varies along both dimensions, AoO (pre- vs. post-puberty) vs. exposure (no vs. some continued L1 exposure). Such a population can be found in German Jews who emigrated as children from Germany to English-speaking countries before the outbreak of WW II (see Schmid, 2012). They differ in their age of migration (7 to 17 years) as well as their context of migration (alone, i.e. as international adoptees,
or accompanied by their families). These variables translate to the AoO of the L2 (English), and a break or continuation of exposure to the L1 (German), respectively.

To assess the L1 German and L2 English proficiency of this population of L1 attriters and L2 learners, we are analyzing autobiographical narrative interviews with German Jewish emigrants for linguistic Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF) (Housen & Kuiken, 2009). In our presentation, we will focus on syntactic complexity. Upon choosing the AS-unit as unit of analysis (Foster, Tonkyn, & Wigglesworth, 2006) to account for the structure of natural speech and to be able to include sub-clausal units, the challenge was in finding sensitive and non-overlapping measures for assessing syntactic complexity, given the nature of the data (spontaneous, natural speech) and the high levels of L1 and L2 proficiency. We therefore concentrated on subordination and phrasal complexification measures as these are argued to capture the proficiency of highly advanced language users better than coordination measures.

Our talk will report first results and discuss the methodological challenges of measuring syntactic complexity in the spontaneous speech of L1 attriters and L2 learners.

References:


**Adult L2 and early child L2 acquisition of German past participles**

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The paper focuses on the acquisition of participle inflection by adults and children acquiring German as a second language. Two issues are addressed: the status of regular and irregular inflection, and the relevance of age of onset (AoO).
The acquisition of past tense in English and past participles in German is well-known as showing patterns like overgeneralizations (e.g. goed) and asymmetry between errors of regular and irregular verbs (Marcus et al. 1992, Plunkett & Marchmann 1993). Whether these errors are best accounted for with a dual or single mechanism model has been an ongoing debate (cf. Penke 2006).

L1 acquisition and adult L2 acquisition show qualitative differences for which the age factor seems to be most relevant. Processing studies show that adult L2 speakers process regular participle inflection differently from L1 speakers (Neubauer & Clahsen 2009). Studies about successive language acquisition show that the faculty of language already changes between age 3 and 4 (Meisel 2009).

My study reports results based on longitudinal data from two Italian adult L2 learners and from seven successive-bilingual Turkish children acquiring German (AoO about 3).

The main findings confirm that these adults acquire participle inflection unlike monolinguals: they overgeneralize the regular suffix –t and the irregular suffix –n to the same extent. However, the successive bilingual children behave like monolinguals regarding (i) the rates of overt participle markings, (ii) the correctness scores, (iii) the error types and frequencies, and (iv) the significantly higher rate of overgeneralization of the regular suffix –t than of the irregular suffix –n. This asymmetry supports the different representational status of these two inflections, which strengthens the dual mechanism account. Surprisingly, however, the omission rates of the prefix ge- in the adults and in the successive bilinguals are significantly lower than in the monolinguals reported in Clahsen & Rothweiler (1993).

What neurolinguistic studies can contribute to the debate on age
effects in SLA

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Early foreign language learning is becoming more popular in Europe (Eurydice Network, Eurostat, & Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2008), and Education Councils in individual member states have begun recommending an earlier introduction of the foreign language in the curriculum (Onderwijsraad, 2008). The move to start teaching foreign language to children at increasingly young ages, is in part motivated by the Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967), and studies finding age-related effects in second language learning situations (e.g., Johnson & Newport, 1989). The role of age of onset however, is often confounded with other variables –such
as input – that exert influence over language development (Muñoz, 2008, 2011; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Rothman & Guijarro-Fuentes, 2010). To further complicate the issue, research evaluating the effectiveness of early foreign language learning in instructed context remains rare, and does not unequivocally favour an earlier start (García Mayo & García Lecumberri, 2003; Muñoz, 2006, 2011; Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2006).

This paper aims to “expand discipline boundaries” by showing the role that neuroimaging evidence may play in these debates. Even though recent neuroimaging studies have falsified the Critical Period Hypothesis for second language acquisition on the neural level (Bloch et al., 2009), they still seem to sustain the idea that early language learning is more brain efficient as far as neural localization is concerned (Abutalebi, 2008). Experimental psycholinguistic studies have also shown that early bilingual adults perform better on cognitive control tasks (Luk et al., 2011). This paper will further discuss the interaction between age effects and different manners of acquisition (e.g., simultaneous acquisition, implicit and explicit learning) as well as different language levels (cf. Morgan-Short et al., 2010).

Findings from simultaneous bilingual language acquisition, and naturalistic second language learning are not necessarily applicable to foreign language learning in a classroom context. This paper aims to demonstrate how neurobiological perspectives can improve our understanding of the role of age-effects for different manners of language acquisition.

References
Digital gaming and L2 English among Swedish youths

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This paper is based on a study focusing on Swedish youths (N=205, 9th grade, aged 15-16), their engagement in playing digital games, and possible correlations between digital game play and L2 English vocabulary proficiency. Data were collected during one school year and consist of a questionnaire, two written vocabulary tests (adapted versions of the Productive Levels Test and the Vocabulary Levels Test; Laufer and Nation 1999; Nation 2001), and the informants’ final grades in English and other school subjects. In addition to providing data regarding the informants’ use of computers in general and involvement in digital gaming in particular (amount of play as well as types of digital games played), the questionnaire also asks about language background, attitudes towards speaking in English, self-assessed ability in English, and whether the informants think they have mainly learned English formally in school or informally outside of school. All data are analyzed quantitatively (on-going) and the results should contribute to deepened knowledge of (a) the relationship between L2 English learners’ digital game playing habits and vocabulary proficiency as well as (b) the relationship between L2 English learners’ digital gaming and the other questionnaire variables. In my presentation, focus will be on the results that relate to digital gaming, the lexicon (i.e., the two vocabulary tests), and the question whether English has mainly been learned inside or outside of school. The findings will be discussed in light of previous research, for example Miller and Hegelheimer (2006), Kinzie and Joseph (2008),

References

The effectiveness of input enhancement and input enrichment in the acquisition of formulaic sequences by EFL learners

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Input enhancement can be defined as “pedagogical techniques designed to draw L2 learners’ attention to formal features in the L2 input” (Kim 2006: 345). So far, most of the research on these issues (e.g., Doughty and Williams 1998; Leow 2009) has focused on grammatical features ignoring other aspects of second language learners’ competence. Vocabulary is one of those aspects. As recent research demonstrates (e.g., Wray 2002, Schmitt 2004), vocabulary is composed of not only individual words but also a large number of lexical and lexico-grammatical patterns called formulaic sequences. Sinclair (1991) suggests that as users of language we frequently operate on the idiom principle, which implies that each speaker has at their disposal pre-constructed sequences processed as whole chunks. Unfortunately, second language learners experience difficulty in the use of formulaic sequences and consequently formal instruction is needed to remedy the situation.
The study examines the effects of two types of treatment (enriched input vs. enhanced input) on the acquisition of collocations by 41 Polish learners of English. These two treatments were introduced to two groups of learners: Group One read texts with an increased number of occurrences of target collocations (enriched input); whereas Group Two read the same texts but the target collocations were additionally underlined, the aim of which was to raise students’ awareness of the target collocations. Two types of collocations were selected for the study: verb-noun collocations of delexical verbs and adjective-noun collocations. Learners’ collocational knowledge was assessed through five tests at different levels of lexical competence. Results of the study provided a mixed picture. Input enhancement seems to result in more gains than input enrichment and the effect of the type of collocations appears to depend on which aspect of vocabulary knowledge is investigated.

The presentation concludes with implications for SLA research and practice.

References


Are English listeners 'deaf' to L2 stress?

Becky Taylor and Sam Hellmuth

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Word accent, realised in English as stress, plays an important role in word recognition cross-linguistically (Cutler et al., 1997). However, English speakers have difficulty acquiring word accent in a second language (L2): Japanese word accent is difficult for English speakers to acquire (Taylor, 2011) and English learners of Polish perform only slightly better than French learners in a stress identification task (Kijak, 2009). English
listeners thus appear to be ‘stress deaf’, to adopt the term coined in influential research by Dupoux and Peperkamp (DP) on the word-accent perception of French listeners (Dupoux et al., 2001, 2008).

DP attribute stress deafness to the degree of predictability in the word-accent system (Peperkamp et al., 2010): if word accent is predictable in the first language (L1), it is not encoded in lexical representations in the L1, nor, crucially, when learning an L2. If this is correct, English learners should not be stress deaf. However, the primary cue to word accent used by English speakers in lexical recall is the vowel quality difference between stressed/unstressed vowels (Cooper et al., 2002) and, as Kijak (2009) points out, the phonetic correlates of word accent in the L1 may affect its perception in an L2.

In this paper we present the results of a study (currently in progress) which replicates DP’s robust testing paradigm to investigate whether English listeners are stress deaf in an L2. To determine which phonetic correlates affect word-accent perception, naïve English listeners hear nonsense words spoken by speakers of: Japanese (melodic cues only); Spanish (melodic/dynamic cues); and Dutch (melodic/dynamic cues and vowel reduction). We hypothesise that English listeners are stress deaf in Japanese/Spanish but not Dutch; i.e. that word accent is encoded in lexical representations (as DP predict), but that only phonetic cues used in L1 lexical recall (vowel quality differences) are encoded.

L2 acquisition of Japanese word accent by English speakers

Becky Taylor

University of York

Word accent (hereafter 'accent'), realised in English as stress and in Japanese as pitch accent, is used for word recognition in both languages (Cutler et al., 1997; Sekiguchi & Nakajima, 1999). However, it is not clear how Japanese accent is acquired by English speakers. This paper shows that English learners of Japanese have difficulty acquiring accent word-by-word. This results in a poor match with Japanese, where accent is largely lexically determined. Instead, the learners create their own accentual system: each learner varies accent with syllable number, lexical class and speech environment in their own way.

This paper draws on both new analysis and previous analysis reported in Taylor (2011). Data for each analysis comes from a study in which phonetically trained Japanese native speakers identified the accent type (initial, medial, unaccented etc) of words read aloud by 13 less-experienced and 8 more-experienced English learners of Japanese. 180
Japanese words were used, varying in syllable number, lexical class, and speech environment.

Taylor (2011), adding to the observation of Kuno (1998) that different learners favour different accent types, showed that the way in which accent type varies with the above three factors (syllable number, lexical class and speech environment) also depends on the learner. In this paper an extended version of these results is presented, illustrating more clearly how accent type varies systematically - in each learner's individual way - with these three factors. In addition, data are reported showing that English learners of Japanese have difficulty learning accent word-by-word; difficulty which is both common across learners and persists with experience.

These results are interpreted to mean that each learner attempts (presumably unconsciously) to predict which word takes which accent from the input. However, because Japanese accent cannot be predicted by rule, this results in each learner creating their own accentual system.

**Esperanto as a ‘starter language’ for child L2 learning in the classroom**

**Angela Tellier and Karen Roehr**

*University of Essex*

Drawing on recent theoretical work on explicit vs. implicit second language (L2) learning (DeKeyser, 2003, 2005; Dörnyei, 2009; Ellis, 2006), we discuss the potential advantages of teaching and learning Esperanto, a highly regular and transparent language, prior to teaching and learning a natural L2. Specifically, we argue that children’s budding capacity for explicit L2 learning may be boosted with the help of Esperanto, since the characteristics of this language should facilitate the development of language-analytic ability and metalinguistic awareness. Enhanced explicit L2 learning capacity would be particularly advantageous in the minimal-input setting of the average foreign language classroom, which typically offers greater benefits to the cognitively more mature, older child/adolescent than the cognitively less mature, younger child (e.g. Cenoz, 2003; Larson-Hall, 2008; Muñoz, 2009).

Following our theoretical argument, we present the findings of an empirical study which investigated whether the teaching and learning of Esperanto, compared with the teaching and learning of natural L2s, would have any long-term effects on learners’ metalinguistic awareness. Working with a sample of children aged 11-12 (N=203) who, in the preceding four school years, had been exposed to either Esperanto plus a natural
L2 (Group 1) or various combinations of natural L2s (Groups 2-6), we found no significant differences in overall level of metalinguistic awareness as measured by a dedicated test. We did find, however, that the Esperanto children significantly outperformed the other groups taken together on one of the eleven metalinguistic tasks included in the test. Moreover, unlike children from several of the comparison groups, the Esperanto group showed no gender differences, with girls and boys displaying a more homogeneous performance on the test of metalinguistic awareness as a whole. We discuss these findings in light of the theoretical argument formulated previously, and we conclude by putting forward suggestions for further research.

References


How does L2-English in advertising affect attention, comprehension, memory and consumer attitudes? An eye-tracking approach

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Advertisements in many non-native English speaking countries make frequent use of English-language elements although research has shown that this practice deteriorates message and product comprehension (Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2010; Piller, 2001). Research into the effects of L2 advertising on attitudes of unbalanced bilingual consumers is inconclusive reporting both appreciation and annoyance (Hornikx, van Meurs, & de Boer, 2010; Micu & Taylor, 1994). One theoretical justification for advertising professionals’ persistent use of English in non-native English speaking...
markets may be the intention to raise attention, which is the most fundamental variable in models of consumer behavior (Homburg, Kuester, & Krohmer, 2009). So far, possible effects of L2 elements on attention have been tested only indirectly via memory variables (Ahn & La Ferle, 2008).

In an eye-tracking experiment, we directly measured consumers’ attention for L2-English elements in an L1-German context. Thirty-three intermediate to advanced adult L2ers viewed print advertisements in a within-participants design for twelve low-involvement products with German (L1) or English (L2) text and otherwise equivalent pictorial elements. We presented each ad for a given time, and we tracked how long participants looked at text or picture elements, respectively, to assess attention differences. We controlled for L1 and L2 text comprehension and general L2 proficiency, tested recognition performance and surveyed attitudes.

Results showed significantly more attention to English as compared to German ad text, while recognition as well as attitudes towards the ads and brands did not differ across languages. Comprehension, by contrast, was better for German ad texts. The data suggest that a comparatively stronger interaction between comprehension and recognition performance in the L2 offsets the initial attention advantage of L2-English in low involvement contexts. Based on these findings, we discuss possible linguistic implications for advertising to unbalanced bilingual consumers.

The L2-acquisition of strategies for linking information in narrative discourse

Naoko Tomita

University of Heidelberg

The study deals with strategies for linking information in film-retellings. The data, elicited from L1Japanese, L1German, and advanced German L2Japanese speakers (20 participants for each group) by using a video clip (“The Finite Story”: Dimroth 2006), was analyzed with respect to the following two aspects: (1) Which conceptual domain (ENTITY or TIME) provides the preferred ‘base’ for contrastive/additive linkage of information concerning the topic entities of the story? For instance, in a sentence pair like “At the first occasion, John did not jump out. At the second occasion, however, he jumped out”, the contrastive linking is based on the shift in TIME (“at the first occasion” to “at the second occasion”), maintaining the topic entity. In a sentence pair such as “Peter jumped out and John also jumped out” in contrast, the additive linking is related to the shift in ENTITY (Peter to John). (2) Which conceptual category...
(CAUSALITY/CONCESSIVENES or SHIFT-in-TIME) is preferably integrated for linking background information (f.i. “There was fire in John's place”) with foreground information (f.i. “John jumped out”)?

Results are as follows: (a) The L1German speakers prefer the shift in TIME as a basis for linking information, maintaining the topic entity and marking the temporal shift with temporal adverbs. In contrast, the information linkage in L1Japanese retellings is based on the shift in ENTITY, whereby the causal/concessive relation is marked considerably more frequently than the temporal shift. (b) The L2 speakers tend to maintain the strategies of their source language. However, they mark the shift in ENTITY more frequently than L1German speakers for the contexts where the additive linking with the particle -mo ‘also’ constitutes an option.

I will discuss the results in respect to the implications of the categories expressing a particular perspective, such as scope particles, for L1 and L2 speakers in information organization.

Stimulus:

Errorless learning advantage in second language vocabulary learning

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In foreign language learning contexts the meaning of new words can be given to learners in advance or the learners could be encouraged to guess the meaning from the context with corrective feedback (trial and error). The latter is often considered as more progressive and learner-centred. However, the literature on learning and memory suggests that the traditional model may have some advantage over the guessing-from-the-context approach.

Learning via trial and error methods often lead to the creation of errors during encoding (hence, errorful learning), which may lead to interference and strengthening of incorrect associations. Methods that reduce the possibility of making errors during encoding (errorless learning; Terrace, 1963) often result in increased memory performance. Recent work with adults and children revealed a significant advantage of the errorless
over errorful learning for novel words (Warmington & Hitch, submitted; Warmington, Hitch, & Gathercole, in prep).

This study aimed to adapt errorless learning to learning new words in L1 Chinese/L2 English speakers. Participants learnt novel labels for familiar concepts on the pretext of learning words in a new language (however, all items obeyed the phonotactics of English); half of the stimuli were presented in the errorless and the other half in the errorful learning condition. In the former, participants were introduced to the new label and immediately given its meaning:

(1) Garry’s eating his favourite fruit. It’s a lunaf. A lunaf is a kiwi. Can you say lunaf?

In the latter, participants had to guess the meaning before given corrective feedback:

(2) Garry’s eating his favourite fruit. It’s a lunaf. Can you guess what it is? ... A lunaf is a kiwi. Can you say lunaf?

Results suggest that L1 Chinese/L2 English speakers benefit more from learning new words via errorless than errorful methods and that this benefit facilitates long-term retention of new vocabulary.

References
Competition between articles and plurals in L2 production, when the L1 has neither

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Previous research has established that second language learners (L2ers) show systematic variability in English article production if their L1s lack these items. Several competing explanations have been proposed. One of them holds that the cause of this variability is L2ers analysing articles as an optional element of the noun phrase (Trenkic, 2008). For example, when referring to a uniquely identifiable cat, the grammar of these learners allows both "the cat" (Art+NP; L2-licensed) and "cat" (bare NP; L1-licensed). The capacity-limited working-memory system involved in language processing then determines which form is produced: the more demanding the task, the more likely that the simpler and more established pattern will be selected ("cat").

Here we explored whether this explanation has a broader coverage. Specifically, we looked into whether the complexity of the noun phrase could have an effect on the suppliance of plurals as well as articles, when the L1 lacks both categories. Our predictions were as follows:

(1) articles will be supplied at a higher rate in definite singular noun phrases ("the cat") than in definite plural noun phrases ("the cats"); and

(2) plurals will be supplied at a higher rate in bare plural noun phrases ("cats") than in definite plural noun phrases ("the cats").

English L2ers with L1 Thai (no obligatory definiteness or plural marking) participated in the experiment. The hypotheses were tested on a combined story-recall plus elicited-imitation task, with target NPs dispersed through the materials in counterbalanced fashion.

The results were in line with the predictions, supporting the view that L1 Thai / L2 English speakers treat both articles and plural marking as optional elements of the noun phrase, and more generally that competition between L1- and L2-licensed forms leads to variability in the production of L2 functional morphology, with L1-licensed forms selected more often in more demanding contexts.
References

L2 pronominal subject use and interpretation: Evidence from English subordinate and coordinate clauses
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We present results on subject pronoun use and interpretation in the L2 grammar of Greek learners of English. Null and overt subject pronouns are examined in English subordinate and coordinate clauses. Greek being a null-subject language allows null pronominal subjects in embedded clauses in topic-continuity (TC) but not in topic-shift (TS) contexts where overt pronouns are obligatory (Tsimpli et al. 2003; 2004). English requires overt pronouns irrespective of interpretation. In English sentential coordination however, subject omission is possible (Haegeman 1997).

A Cloze Test (CT) and a Sentence Completion Task (SCT) tested two learner groups (35 intermediate, 37 advanced) and a control group of 25 natives. (1-2) exemplify CT and SCT items respectively.

(1) a. They hold one’s interest because ..they..are carefully written. (TC- subordinate)
   b. Hunters sell their skin because …it…is very expensive (TS-subordinate)
   c. With no delay he picked up his books and.. he/-…..left (TC-coordinate)

(2) a. He was found three days later because [die /alone] (TC- subordinate)
   b. Jane had studied hard and [pass /exam] (TC-coordinate)

We found that in both structures learner performance was target-deviant. In English subordinate clauses advanced learners accept/produce more null pronominal subjects than the controls. Moreover, Greek learners but not native speakers produce more null pronouns in TC than in TS contexts. We argue that the L1 parameterized option of null pronominal subjects is transferred in advanced L2 grammars and learners exploit it to encode interpretative effects in L2 as in L1: null pronouns for TC, overt for TS. Finally, in coordinate clauses learners produce more overt pronominal subjects than the controls. We suggest that this reflects a learner overcorrection strategy also attested in other
bilingual populations which further supports the claim about the optional use of overt pronominal subjects in English L2.

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Incidental learning from listening: A dimensions approach

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Recent studies on incidental vocabulary acquisition from L2 reading (e.g. Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; Waring & Takaki, 2003) have used multiple vocabulary tests to provide insight into the acquisition of different vocabulary knowledge dimensions. This has revealed that some dimensions are acquired with fewer exposures than others (i.e. word form is generally acquired before meaning). So far, research on incidental learning from listening (Brown, Waring & Donkaewbua, 2008; Vidal, 2003; 2011) has used only meaning-based vocabulary tests, revealing very little vocabulary learning. The current study appears to be the first one to apply the dimensions approach to the listening context. It investigated L2 learners’ acquisition of three vocabulary knowledge dimensions through listening: form recognition, grammar recognition, and meaning recall.

Participants (N = 30) listened to L2 passages which contained 28 nonsense words serving as target items. They completed, immediately or two weeks after listening, vocabulary tests measuring knowledge of the three dimensions. Results show that learners start developing knowledge of a word (i.e. form and grammar recognition) long before they master the form-meaning link. Knowledge of the three dimensions immediately after listening was form > grammar > meaning, with the former two knowledge types being more sensitive to attrition than the last. The effect of frequency of occurrence (3, 7, 11, or 15 exposures) on acquisition also differed between the three dimensions, but this effect was not strong overall. The acquisition of word meaning
seemed particularly unaffected by frequency, a finding reminiscent of research on incidental learning from reading. For listening to be a valuable source for vocabulary learning, it appears that considerably more than 15 exposures are needed.

The results will be used to discuss the potential of incidental vocabulary learning from listening, and how this appears to differ from reading.

References


Linearization of events in discourse: Insights from basic and advanced learner varieties

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Within the functionalist approach to SLA, this study examines the interaction of event linearization patterns in L2 with the ways in which temporal information is typically structured in learners’ source and target languages. Specifically, film verbalisations and picture descriptions by Czech and Hungarian learners of English at basic and advanced levels were elicited to test whether learners’ degree of susceptibility to reorganising linearization principles in the target language changes as a function of L2 proficiency. It was also examined whether linearization patterns within groups interrelate with L1-L2 contrasts in temporal structuring, i.e. with deictic vs. anaphoric event linkage techniques (Carroll & von Stutterheim 2003).

Previous research suggests that the way grammatical aspect is encoded in the speaker’s L1 influences event conceptualisation in L2 (Schmiedtova et al. 2011). Given the lack of consensus regarding partial (Bylund 2011) versus zero (von Stutterheim & Lambert 2005) susceptibility to reorganising L1 event conceptualisation patterns in L2, this work extends the analysis of how grammatical aspect influences conceptualisation processes
(Levelt 1989, Habel & Tappe 1999) to linearization. An original feature of the employed approach is testing L2 learners’ ability to adjust L1 thinking-for-speaking principles in L2 (Slobin 1996) by examining two conceptualisation processes (linearization and structuring) abreast. This novel approach contributes to the resonant discussion on conceptual reorganisation in L2 speakers and offers stimulating insights into the intricate connection between language structure and event cognition.

Analyses of non-chronological order construction frequencies showed (a) a pronounced effect of L1-specific linearization patterns on advanced learner production; and (b) a close interrelation of sequencing preferences with L1-driven structuring patterns at both levels of proficiency. These findings suggest that the process of event linearization in L2 largely rests on L1 fundaments, and that persisting L1 principles can lead to significant digressions from target-like performance even in highly advanced learner varieties.

References


Tracking the time-course of orthographic information in L2 spoken word recognition: An eye-tracking study using the visual world paradigm

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The present study explores the activation of orthographic and phonological information in a spoken word recognition task with second language learners. The main objectives of this study are to investigate how late SL learners use orthographic and phonological information during the recognition process, to track the time-course of this activation and to evaluate whether learners of different proficiency levels show different activation patterns.

Our 40 participants are Finnish late learners of French. Their proficiency in French varies from A2 to C2 on the CEFR scale. They have a very transparent and consistent orthography in their L1, but when learning L2 French, they have to learn new inconsistent mappings between phonology and orthography.

To collect the data, we are using an eye-tracking method with the visual world paradigm. We use the same setup as Salverda and Tanenhaus (2010): the participants are given spoken instructions to click on one of the four words presented in the orthographic form on a computer screen. The target word has a different degree of either orthographic (char – chair, char - cher) or phonological (large – laque, large – laide) overlap with the competitor words. The participants' gazes to the competitor words are analyzed as opposed to the gazes to phonologically and orthographically unrelated distractor words.

On the basis of our results, conclusions will be drawn on the importance of orthographic and phonological information in different phases of the SL spoken word recognition process with learners at different proficiency levels.

References

Recognition of word-final consonant reduction and ESL listening proficiency

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In connected speech the sounds at word boundaries are subject to the pressures of their sound environment (Gimson 1994). Two of these phenomena are assimilation and elision.

L1 findings into the effect of these processes on word activation revealed native listeners tolerate assimilated and deleted word-final consonants when recognizing words in speech (Cuttler 1998, Gaskell & Marslen-Wilson 1996, Gow 2001, 2002, Janse et al. 2007, etc).

In the case of SL speech perception, more research seems to be needed. Scholars like Brown (1990), Ur (1990), Gimson (1994), Norris (1994) and Field (2009) believe that variation in word-final consonants tends to cause ESL learners problems with word recognition. Consequently, they consider ESL students need help in learning to recognize instances of assimilation and elision in order to improve their listening comprehension. However, research findings do not conclusively support the relationship between the recognition of this type of reduction phenomena and ESL listening comprehension success.

In order to contribute to the renewed interest in perceptual processing (Field 2008), this study focuses on the relationship between the recognition of assimilated and elided forms and listening proficiency. 169 first-year undergraduate ESL students participated in this discrimination study. The experiment involved four different elision and ten different assimilatory changes. With this purpose, 36 two-word phrases were selected from the BNC. The study also included 36 filler phrases. The 62 stimuli were presented in a row with two other versions. Of these three stimuli, two were identical and one was different. After hearing the first phrase, students were asked to indicate 1) whether the second or third phrase they heard sounded the same as the first one or 2) whether the 3 phrases sounded different. The students’ level of proficiency was measured by the TOEFL listening subtest. Results will be presented and implications for the teaching of listening comprehension will be discussed.
Subcategorization errors: When and why they are difficult

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In recent generative approaches to SLA, it has been suggested that morphemes are problematic but syntax is not (e.g., Slabakova, 2011). However, this may not always appear to be true because certain syntactic errors sustain in SLA. In this paper, we examine subcategorization errors by Japanese learners of English (JLEs) and suggest that they arise due to functional features of morphological items.

'Promise'-type verbs subcategorize 'that'-clauses but 'blame'-type verbs do not, as in the English examples in (1a, b). In contrast, the Japanese translation equivalents (1c, d) are grammatical. Both have the same complementizer 'to,' but different case markers are used on the recipient/patient, as in (1c, d).

(1) a. I promised my mom that I would be back by 9:00.

b. *I blamed my brother that he was a liar.

c. Watasi-wa haha-ni 9-zi-madeni kaeru to yakusokusita.

I-TOP mother-DAT 9-o’clock-by be-back COMP promised

d. Watasi-wa ani-o usotuki-da to semeta.

I-TOP brother-ACC liar-be COMP blamed

According to Saito (2011), the Japanese complementizer 'to' merges at a higher position in a split-CP (Rizzi, 2004) than English 'that' does, which results in its appearance in a wider range of positions. Hence we predict that JLEs should erroneously accept sentences like (1b). We carried out an experiment with low- and high-intermediate JLEs, and found no progress in rejecting this type. This does not mean, however, that they are insensitive to subcategorization in general because they showed progress in rejecting sentences such as '*I blamed to my brother that he was a liar' (cf. 'I suggested to my brother that ...').

From these data we conclude that apparent syntactic errors are due to non-target-like knowledge of functional morphemes, and that they are problematic when they are language specific and different from those on corresponding items in their L1.
Re-examining the effects of word writing on vocabulary learning

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Barcroft (2006) found that writing words had a negative effect on vocabulary learning. Word writing, in comparison to learning word-picture pairs, contributed to significantly lower scores on a productive test of form and meaning. The research supported his previous finding that writing sentences inhibited vocabulary learning (Barcroft, 2004), but contrasted studies that have found that productive learning is typically superior to receptive learning on productive tests (Griffin & Harley, 1996; Mondria & Wiersma, 2004; Schneider et al., 2002; Stoddard, 1929; Waring, 1997b; Webb, 2009a,b). However, Barcroft’s studies did not take into account the fact that the two learning conditions may have different effects on different aspects of vocabulary knowledge. For example, the focus on form in word writing may contribute to greater knowledge of written form than learning word-picture pairs. In contrast, learning word-picture pairs may lead to greater knowledge of form and meaning than word writing. A partial replication of Barcroft’s (2006) study was carried out with knowledge of form and meaning and knowledge of written form measured separately. A third more ecologically valid learning condition that involved untimed word writing was also included in the treatment. The results indicated that (a) there was little difference between the effects of word writing and learning word-picture pairs on knowledge of written form and knowledge of form and meaning, and (b) that untimed word writing is likely to have a positive effect on vocabulary learning. The research and teaching implications of the study will be discussed in detail.

References
Learning to structure the trajectory between source and goal when talking about motion events: A comparison with eye-tracking of advanced L2 learners of German (L1Italian-L2German; L1French-L2German) and L1 German speakers

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The present study investigates the question as to why advanced Italian and French learners of German do not acquire use of the spatial concepts typical of the target language to structure a core component of any motion event – the trajectory traced by the entity in motion between source and goal. The study goes beyond explanations based on typological contrasts between Romance and Germanic languages (Talmy 1985), because relevant factors are anchored, not simply at the level of linguistic form (verbs, satellites), but in the concepts used to structure space and the basis from which they are derived (e.g. entity in motion; ground through which the trajectory is traced).

The events studied are based on live-recorded video clips depicting everyday motion events (persons, vehicles, on their way form one place to another). In order to cover a relevant range of different route contours, the trajectory traced by the entity in motion was varied on a systematic basis in the clips presented. The study is based both on linguistic as well eye-tracking analyses which serve to track direction of attention to the entity in motion, as well as the ground. The ET analyses cover information intake in the phase prior to speech onset as well as during the verbalization phase.

The study investigates to what extent

- the L2 learners differ from native speakers in direction of attention
how this reflects both the means chosen to structure the trajectory traced

-as well as the influence of the learner’s L1s.

Data base: 15 L2 speakers per group and 20 L1 speakers of German.

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Explicit and implicit knowledge in classroom L2 learners. The test case of German sentential negation

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It is a well-established finding that target-like post-finite patterns of sentential negation occur first in structures with “light” or “nonthematic” verbs, i.e. auxiliary and modal verbs, in untutored L2 German learner language. Only in later stages of acquisition, also [+finite] forms of lexical verbs are attested in an apparently raised position left to the negator. This learner’s behaviour can be accounted for in both semantic (Becker, 2005) and syntactic (Parodi, 2000) terms.

Paradoxically, however, negated [+finite] structures with lexical verbs are introduced first in instructed acquisition, while patterns with [+finite] nonthematic verbs are presented only later in the L2 classroom. Against the background of this situation, several tests have been conducted with Italian speaking novel learners of German (n=40, 60h of instruction). The main concern was to find out whether learners can profit from formal instruction in the acquisition of negation in a foreign language.

Interestingly, in tests focussing on implicit L2 knowledge, e.g an Elicited Imitation Task (cf. Ellis et al., 2009), classroom learners behave similarly to untutored learners: They frequently raise [+finite] nonthematic verbs over the negator (although such patterns
were not present in the classroom input), while this is not necessarily the case with [+finite] lexical verbs (despite the presence of such patterns in the classroom input). In tests involving more explicit linguistic knowledge, e.g. a written word order test, however, classroom learners show target-like post-finite placement of the negator with lexical verbs, but in the majority of cases they fail to apply the Vfin-Neg rule to structures with nonthematic verbs. Here, Vfin-Vinf-Neg or Neg-Vfin-Vinf patterns are produced.

All in all, results suggest that premature teaching of Vfin-Neg structures with lexical verbs might well result in successful (written) reproduction of such patterns by the learner, but does not seem to lead to the acquisition of German post-finite negation. Apparently, classroom learners follow similar developmental routes as untutored learners do. For the praxis of foreign language teaching, this implies that classroom syllabuses should be worked out in due consideration of mechanisms and strategies found in naturalistic language learning.

References


Investigating and developing beginner learners’ decoding proficiency in second language French: An evaluation of two programmes of instruction

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Decoding – defined as the sub-lexical process of mapping the graphemes of an alphabetic writing system onto the phonemes they represent – can be argued to underpin various aspects of L2 learning. Over the last twenty-five years, SLA research has consistently found evidence of L1-to-L2 transfer effects on learners’ processing mechanisms and outcomes. Correspondingly, studies conducted in Modern Foreign
Language (MFL) classrooms in English secondary schools – an under-researched context – have found that beginner learners of French tend to (a) pronounce L2 words according to English decoding conventions and (b) make poor progress in this aspect of L2 learning. Recent official guidance for MFL teachers, perhaps influenced by changing policies on L1 literacy teaching, has addressed this problem by advocating an explicit focus on decoding; however, there is a lack of convincing evidence that explicit L2 decoding instruction can be effective. The current study trialled two programmes of explicit, phonics-based instruction in French decoding for beginner MFL learners, delivered in ten-minute segments over thirty lessons. Six intact classes (three in each of two secondary schools) followed the programmes of instruction; six classes in two other schools formed a comparison condition. Participants (N=186) completed pre- and post-tests of French decoding; their output was analysed on a grapheme-by-grapheme basis. The two intervention groups made significantly more progress than the comparison group in terms of the number of graphemes pronounced 'acceptably'. Compared to the comparison group, the two intervention groups also appeared to show different and more extensive patterns of change in their realizations of individual graphemes, even where their pronunciations were still not judged 'acceptable'. Together, these findings suggest that explicit instruction can improve beginner learners’ proficiency in decoding L2 French, but that their progress may follow a longer and more complex trajectory than simply moving directly from ‘incorrect’ to ‘correct’ forms.

**Foreign accentedness in third language acquisition**

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The paper aims at investigating and modelling a relatively unexplored area of Third Language Acquisition (TLA), namely that of phonology. So far, research on third language phonological acquisition has been rather limited (cf. Hammarberg and Hammarberg 2005, Gut 2010, Llama et al. 2010, Wrembel 2010).

In this contribution I intend to compare and critically analyse the findings of a series of foreign accent studies that I conducted on languages acquired as L3 in different language combinations; (1) L1 Polish, L2 German, and L3 English; (2) L1 Polish, L2 English, and L3 German; (3) L1 Polish, L2 French, and L3 English; (4) L1 Polish, L2 English, and L3 French; (5) L1 German, L2 English, and L3 Polish. The L3 speech samples were collected employing the 'read on your own' task and an oral narrative. The experiments consisted in accent judgements of L3 speech samples performed online by expert judges, who were asked to (a) rate the L3 recordings for an overall degree of a foreign accent, intelligibility and irritability on a 6-point scale, (b) identify the native
tongue of the speakers, (c) point to the phonetic/phonological features that contribute to
the perceptual impression of the foreign accent in particular speakers.

The studies were expected to identify the sources of phonological cross-linguistic
influence in the L3 performance and to provide further evidence for Hammarberg and
Hammarberg’s (2005) hypothesis that L2 phonological interference overrides L1
transfer at the initial stages of acquisition of a third language. Therefore, the main
objective was to verify whether trilingual speakers have a tendency to be perceived as
being L1- or L2-accented in their L3 performance and to analyse different factors that
determine the observed variability, including typological relatedness in particular
language combinations, proficiency level in L2 and L3, frequency of L2 use, the
chronology of acquisition of foreign languages and metalinguistic awareness. The
results are interpreted within the framework of various models proposed for
multilingualism (e.g. Flynn et al. 2004, Bardel & Falk 2007, Rothman 2011).

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The role of Foreign Language Aptitude and L2 Structure Difficulty in an EFL classroom

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Foreign language aptitude has been investigated as one of the major of the individual difference (ID) variables in L2 learning. The predictive value of language aptitude has been maintained across different L2 learning conditions such as explicit and implicit learning, and form- focused instruction (FFI) (de Graaff, 1997; Erlam, 2005; Robinson, 1995; Sheen, 2006). Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that aptitude research has not reached its potential in SLA. One area of aptitude research in need of further study is whether and how learner aptitude interacts with the type of language feature (i.e. morphology and syntax) taught. For example, learners with high grammatical sensitivity could be expected to deal with syntactically complex L2 structures better whereas learners who are not good at inductive language learning skills may need some proactive focus-on-form activities. Research to explore these questions has the potential to inform curriculum planners and teachers how to best meet learner needs and abilities.

The present study investigates whether foreign language aptitude interacts with the type of language structure targeted in English as a foreign language curriculum. In a quasi-experimental research design, 66 secondary level learners were pretested on their knowledge of two L2 features and subsequently received instruction on those features. The instruments for ID variables included a computerized language aptitude test, L1 metalinguistic test, a motivation questionnaire, and a backward digit span test. L2 learning was measured via grammaticality judgment and oral production tasks. Learners’ performance on these measures was analyzed to explore the extent to which gains in their knowledge of the target structures could be predicted by language aptitude, working memory or other ID variables. The results of regression analyses showed that there is significant difference in the amount of variance explained in L2 gain for easy and difficult structures.
This paper aims to examine how subordination develops in English as a second language (ESL) acquisition in terms of the processing procedures proposed by Processability Theory (PT) (Pienemann, 1998). Based on Levelt’s (1989) speech production model, PT hypothesizes six developmental stages for English and assumes that learners become able to exchange information between main clauses and subordinate clauses when they are able to use the subordinate stage procedure and hence reach the highest stage (i.e., stage 6). The English indirect question, which exhibits the so-called ‘cancel inversion’, is the only structure which is predicted to emerge at stage 6. But the two main ESL studies on PT, both cross sectional, cited in Pienemann (1998), that is, Johnston (1985) for adult ESL and Pienemann and Mackey (1993) for child ESL, do not show this structure as attested in the data. Neither is it clear whether other subordinate constructions are acquired at that same stage 6 in PT. Later studies applying PT (e.g., Sakai, 2008) are also silent on these issues.

I will present data from a two-year longitudinal study on the speech production of a Japanese primary school child learning English in a naturalistic environment in Australia. I will trace the way in which English subordination develops over time by carrying out a full distributional analysis both for indirect questions and other types of subordinate clauses (e.g., relative clauses). I will also compare the development of subordination with the development of other morphosyntactic structures. Results show that indirect questions emerge after the acquisition of morphosyntactic structures covering stages 1 to 5, which supports PT predictions. However, other subordinate structures, such as relative clauses, emerge at early stages. This indicates the need for a reconsideration of subordination in ESL acquisition.

References
Sensitivity to Movement Operations in the L2 acquisition of Telicity

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Telicity has to do with whether an event has an inherent endpoint or not (Tenny, 1994). It sits at the syntax-semantics interface, its semantics being analyzed as a result of movement and feature-checking operations (e.g., Borer 2005). Most existing work on L2 telicity is concerned with L1 transfer and examines situations where L1 and L2 differ on whether and how the boundedness of the direct object plays a role in telicity computation (e.g., Slabakova 2000, 2001, 2005; Gabriele, 2010; Kaku-MacDonald, 2009). Sensitivity to the underlying syntax in L2 telicity has not been addressed in the literature.

L1 acquisition research has however shown that children (English and Spanish) show sensitivity to the type of syntactic operations underlying telicity derivation (Hodgson 2006; 2010). Specifically, they are significantly more successful in correctly judging Locatum structures (ex. 1) as being telic, compared with their performance in Simple Telic structures (ex. 2), even though both sentences are telic:

1. The water filled the bucket. Locatum/Overt movement
2. John filled the bucket. Simple Telic/Covert movement

The explanation is that while the movement operation for the Locatum structure (1) is an overt one, the movement for the Simple Telic structure (2) is covert.

This study asks whether L2 learners’ performance is similarly affected by such difference in underlying syntax. 36 L1 Chinese/L2 English learners and 16 L1 controls took part in a naturalness rating task where they were presented with the Locatum (1) and the Simple Telic (2) sentences which in the crucial conditions imply an incompletion reading of the event (e.g. *The water/John filled the bucket, but the bucket didn’t become full). It was found that the L2 learners did not make a distinction between the two structures (1 vs. 2), unlike what has been found for L1 learners. At the same time, their performance is significantly worse than native adult controls’. We conclude that unlike child learners, L2 speakers are not able to make effective use of syntax (e.g.,
Clahsen & Felser (2006) and that syntax-semantics interface phenomena may not be easy to acquire (contra e.g., Dekydspotter et al, 2001).

Selective References

The advantage of being adult: A study of spoken and written number morphology in child and adult L2 French

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In second language (L2) acquisition, the common notion is that young children learn the L2 easily and quickly in comparison to older children or adults, possibly due to a critical period in language acquisition (Herschensohn 2007). However, in L2 literacy learning, the situation turns out to be the opposite. Koda (2005) claims that L2 children suffer from a “double handicap” because they lack adequate oral language command when L2 literacy learning commences, and, unlike adult learners, they have limited prior literacy experience in their L1. This paper takes its stance in a previous case study of child L2 learners that clearly illustrates the double handicap of these children when they learn to write in French (Ågren submitted).

This presentation focuses on the acquisition of subject-verb agreement in number. This is a complicated morphosyntactic domain with great discrepancies between spoken and written French. Spoken and written production data from the child L2 learners in the above mentioned study (n=6) are compared to data from adult learners of French (n=20). The results indicate that, just as expected, the older L2 learners clearly outperform the younger learners in written French. More surprisingly, the older learners perform at the level of the younger learners in spoken French, despite considerably smaller amounts of input. These results suggest that the earlier mastery of the written
language system can have a positive impact on the spoken language of the adult L2 learners.
This study looks at an area of non-convergence in ultimate attainment of L2 grammar and relates it to a specific view of the syntax-pragmatics interface, based on the Relevance theoretical (RT) notion of procedural meaning (Blakemore (1987); Wilson & Sperber (1993); Escandell-Vidal, Leonetti & Ahern (2011)). We sustain that a cognitive perspective on pragmatics like that of RT should be considered in SLA research because it can provide a view of intentional communication and linguistic meaning that is essential for predicting such non-convergence areas, and in addition, offer useful implications for language instruction. Our hypothesis is that grammaticalized procedural items (which may consist of either inflectional morphology or independent units) encoding constraints on inferential processes of utterance interpretation tend to occupy the frontier of ultimate attainment due to the language-specific nature of the mapping between the linguistic items and the restrictions they place on inferences. Thus, the ability to integrate the semantic information that such procedural items encode into the inferential process of building an appropriate context in utterance interpretation represents a degree of L2 proficiency rarely attained, such effects generally being only available in L2 if explicit cues that are not purely grammatical are provided. The particular support of this hypothesis we will offer consists in original data comparing the interpretation of Spanish indicative-subjunctive alternation in concessive and conditional clauses by adult native versus L2 speakers from French and English L1 backgrounds in instructional settings. The interpretation of mood in these clauses involves identifying contextual assumptions leading to the appropriate choice among assertive, presuppositional, quotative or irrealis readings, a task in which subjects operate with significantly more difficulty in L2 than in L1, and which we examine by means of a written interpretation task.

References
English landscapes around elementary schools in Japan: Words pupils may encounter in their community

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This study investigated alphabetic words used in billboards, signs and signposts in the vicinity of elementary schools in central Japan, and analyzed them to describe their characteristics. The survey was conducted in Tokyo (the metropolis), Chiba (the metropolis outskirt), and Tochigi (a rural area). Elementary schools were chosen from those either within 2km from a train station (8 schools), or those located in tourist spots (2 schools). Signs with alphabetic words visible from roads with a radius of 4km around each elementary school were photographed with digital cameras. The alphabetic words were then analyzed in terms of location, origin, and frequency. In total, eight-hundred ninety pictures were taken and analyzed. All words written in alphabetic words were collected in a database for analysis.

It was revealed that the areas where schools are located made a big difference in the number of alphabetic words. The metropolitan areas and the bedroom towns had by far the largest number of English words. On the other hand, the rural area had much fewer English words. In addition, the alphabetic words were used in many places throughout the community. For example, they were used in billboard commercials and commercial stores, on vending machines and road signs. As for the etymology of the word in alphabetic script, the number of Japanese words translated into English as well as that of Japanese words directly transcribed in alphabetic letters was by far the largest, followed by shortened English words. Surprisingly, we found only four signs which included English errors.

Further research will soon be carried out to make clear how many of these words are actually noticed by elementary pupils and how many of them they recognize as English words.
Aspects of cultural communication in recognising emotions

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Jose Soto and Robert W. Levenson (2009) state the following with regard to the importance of emotions in interpersonal communication: “An important part of our interpersonal lives is the production, perception, interpretation, and response to emotional signals. Being able to perceive these signals accurately carries clear advantages for predicting behaviour as well as forming and maintaining social bonds.” Expression and perception are filtered through culture-specific sets of rules, determining what signals are socially acceptable in a particular group. When these rules are shared, interpretation is facilitated. In contrast, when cultural filters differ between producer and perceiver, understanding the other’s state is more difficult. (Sauter et al. 2010)

The purpose of this study was to find out whether Estonian Russians, for whom Estonian is a second language, can identify vocal emotions expressed in Estonian. Their perception of emotions was compared to that of adult Estonians and young adult Estonians (under 30 years of age) and of Russians from Russia. To this end, a listening test was devised consisting of Estonian sentences that were recognised by Estonian adults as expressing joy, anger, sadness and neutrality. The results showed that compared to adult Estonians, Estonian Russians were not able to recognise vocal emotions from speech. The level of emotion recognition among Estonian Russians was most similar to that of young adult Estonians; but both differed significantly from adult Estonians. The study confirmed that, cultural norms are mastered through interaction: in order to recognise vocal emotions expressed in another language, it is necessary to live in a culture for a longer period of time and actively communicate in the respective language.

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Fluency from Formulas: The use of patterns in Gaelic second language acquisition

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This paper reports on research undertaken from a Cognitive Linguistics perspective into the learning of Scottish Gaelic by adults. Using Construction Grammar as a starting point, the paper examines learners’ use of concrete formulas and abstract constructions at different stages of the acquisition process, and the relationship between these and scores for overall linguistic competence. Cognitive approaches argue that pattern recognition is a key factor in language acquisition. On sufficient exposure to different examples of a given grammatical structure, learners begin to recognise its underlying syntactic pattern and learn to reproduce it elsewhere, e.g., (a) is a formula acquired by learners, which is later recognised as a ditransitive construction indicating transfer of possession; (b) shows its schematic representation, into which other nouns and verbs of the appropriate semantic class can be inserted:

a) Thug e leabhar dhomh.

'He gave me a book.'

b) [VERB-transfer SBJ OBJ-DIRECT OBJ-INDIRECT]

As this is a cross-sectional study, data were elicited from learners at different levels of proficiency, in order to examine how the use of formulas and schemas develops as learners become more advanced. Data were analysed to establish whether learners make more use of abstract schemas as linguistic proficiency improves. Analysis further explored the interaction between the use of schemas, and three measures of global linguistic ability: complexity, accuracy, and fluency. Preliminary findings indicate that particular aspects of language become more schematic as learners become more proficient, and that this correlates with higher scores for global ability. Thus, the study describes the way language skills develop in learners, and characterises their abilities and linguistic habits at different stages of the acquisition process.

In order to facilitate the learning process, and see that new speakers of Gaelic maximise their potential, it is important to better understand how they learn, and what linguistic resources are available to them. As well as contributing to research on cognitive approaches to second language acquisition, this study therefore has important applied value. Evidence for the benefits of cognitive approaches to language pedagogy is
Categorisation of body parts by Japanese learners of English

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Recent studies in bilingual cognition show that L2 users are not the same as L1 monolinguals in perceptual behaviours (Cook and Bassetti, 2011). The present study investigates how body parts are categorised by Japanese speakers learning English as an L2, and further examines whether there are any effects of learning English on the way they categorise body parts.

Enfield, Majid and Staden (2006) found that not all languages have conventional lexicalisation of body parts. Japanese and English also segment parts of the body in different ways. For example, Japanese ‘ashi’ can often refer to either ‘leg’ or ‘foot’ without explicitly differentiating the two parts. Japanese ‘te’ also refers to either ‘arm’ or ‘hand’, which are differentiated in English. On the other hand, the English term ‘back’ does not differentiate ‘upper back’ and ‘lower back’ in the way as Japanese does, and English ‘head’ can be used to label both ‘head’ and ‘face’, which are not usually differentiated in Japanese.

This study, therefore, investigates whether there are any effects of learning English on how Japanese learners of English segment some parts of the body: that is, whether Japanese speakers are likely to shift their segmentation of body parts in L1 Japanese as they acquire higher proficiency in English. Eighty-five Japanese learners of English participated in this study in three different universities in Japan. They were instructed in Japanese to colour in the printed arm, leg, back, etc. on paper. These data were analysed in relation to their English proficiency levels. The coloured parts of the body by the different proficiency groups were compared and English learning effects were examined.
Rosa versus rossa: The acquisition of Italian geminates by native speakers of Dutch

Bastien De Clercq and Ellen Simon

UGent

This study examines to what extent native speakers of (Flemish) Dutch, who are beginning learners of Italian, have acquired the perception and production of the Italian contrast between singleton (short) and geminate (long) consonants. In Italian, but not in Dutch, consonants can be phonemically long and minimal pairs like dita (‘fingers’) – ditta (‘company’) differ only in the singleton vs. geminate character of the consonant. The results of an AXB discrimination task and a word-reading task revealed that learners were able to perceive the distinction between singletons and geminates and produced longer closure/frication durations for geminate than for singleton consonants. In addition, just like native speakers, they produced significantly longer vowels preceding singletons than preceding geminates. However, the distribution of individual tokens showed a considerable overlap between the singleton and the geminate category. The results confirm Mah & Archibald’s (2003) hypothesis that learners may redeploy a familiar native language length contrast in vowels in the context of consonants, but may fail to phonetically implement the consonant contrast in a native-like way.
Thematic role assignment in noncanonical sentences: Is L2 processing more “shallow” than L1?

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Even though real time processing of linguistic input is an essential part of second language acquisition, only a limited number of studies have examined online sentence processing of L2 learners. The main focus of these studies has been the amount and type of incoming information that L2 learners process in real time language comprehension, as well as whether L2 learners’ online processing can be native-like or not (e.g. Clahsen & Felser, 2006; Dallas & Kaan, 2008; Hopp, 2010). According to the Shallow Structure Hypothesis, L2 learners – unlike native speakers – have limited access to syntactic information during sentence processing (Clahsen & Felser, 2006). The present study aims to provide more insight into L2 learners’ online processing routines focusing on L2 learners’ online thematic role assignment in canonical and non-canonical structures. Previous research has shown that native speakers often misinterpret non-canonical sentences such as 'The dog was bitten by the man', assigning an agentive thematic role to 'the dog' and not 'the man' (Ferreira, 2003). Using Ferreira’s (2003) experimental materials, we investigated the online processing strategies of 40 German advanced L2 learners of English in a self-paced reading task. Similarly to Ferreira's (2003) pattern of results for monolingual English speakers, our results indicate that German L2 learners of English make significantly more errors in semantically implausible than in plausible sentences. Strikingly, however, the L2 participants - contrary to the monolinguals - showed no significant difference between active and passive structures. These results are consistent with previous research on online L2 processing showing that nonnative parsing strategies differ fundamentally from native parsing routines in that they are mostly formulated on the basis of ‘shallow’ semantic rather than grammatical operations (Clahsen & Felser, 2006).

References
At the Slavic department of the University of Oldenburg more than half of the enlisted students have a history of migration from the former Soviet Union. This is an unusual high number, considering the fact that students with a migration background are still underrepresented in the German university system (c.f. 19th SS).

In my poster presentation I want to address the questions: “How does the language biography reflect on cultural identity for this group?” and “How is the attitude towards German and Russian reflected on their level of literacy in both languages?”

The analysis of 19 language biographies shows that for all of the students, who had acquired Russian as a first language, this language also stays their dominant language of communication with their closest contacts in life after their 20th birthday. German is their language of communication with the wider environment, but also the dominant language of email-communication and reading.

11 language tests on reading comprehension and a short test of proverbs in both languages show solid competence of German, but significant differences in the competence levels in Russian.

The motivation to study Russian and other Slavic languages could thus also be interpreted as an attempt to level the felt cultural identity with the actual competence as a culturally literate speaker of Russian.

References:
19th Social Survey of the Deutsche Studentenwerk conducted by HIS Hochschul-Informations-System
The role of type frequencies in implicit grammar learning - testing predictions from usage-based models of language in the second language classroom

Karin Madlener

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg

Predictions from usage-based models of language and language acquisition point to a crucial role of (high) type frequencies, type variability and type-token ratios for processes of parsing, pattern detection, abstraction and productive generalization (Bybee 2008, Ellis 2002, Ellis 2009, Tomasello 2003).

Various hypotheses have been verified for artificial grammar learning (Goldberg/Casenbisher 2008, Johnson/Goldberg 2011, Suttle/Goldberg 2011), but the assumptions have rarely been tested in instructed second language acquisition.

This study examines the role of frequency distributions in implicit grammar learning in an authentic second language classroom context. The core research questions are: Does high type frequency input help SLA learners to quickly develop a productive generalized pattern for a new schematic construction? Does low type frequency input, in contrast, lead to storage of unanalysed and unrelated exemplars of the target construction as prefabs in the absence of pattern detection and productive generalization?

Adult learners of German as a second language (n=120) were presented, on a daily basis over two weeks, with enhanced audio input declared as listening comprehension tasks. However, these featured a considerable amount of the target construction (sein + present participle of causative psychological verbs like That was fascinating/disappointing...). Conditions (5 test conditions, 1 control group) differed with respect to overall type frequencies (9, 25 or 50 types in 75 tokens) and type-token ratios (balanced or skewed) of the target construction in the listening texts.

Data from pre-, mid-, posttests and daily written tasks were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively with regard to evidence of pattern abstraction and productive generalization and use.
The poster presents the most relevant results regarding i) the effects of high and low type frequencies on noticing, pattern learning and productive generalization and ii) the effects of skewed type-token ratios on acquisition and hypotheses testing, and considers possible consequences for instructed adult SLA.

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How does L1 influence L2 processing? A Polish-English adaptation of Translation Recognition task

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Previous research demonstrates that during processing of lexical stimuli in one language both languages remain active. A promising tool to study the relative influences of the two languages on one another is Translation Recognition task developed by Sunderman and Kroll (2006). In this task, participants decide whether two words are translation equivalents in two languages. The critical manipulation in the task is that some of the words are not translation equivalents but are similar to the correct translation either in form or in meaning. Studies that used this task with English-Spanish population show that bilinguals experience form and meaning interference from translation neighbors and
that in more proficient L2 users there is less reliance on orthographic properties of processed stimuli and no mandatory mediation of L1 translations during L2 processing.

In the current study, we report data from a Polish-English adaptation of the translation recognition task. To this end, we tested a group of L1 Polish speakers with varying proficiency in English (L2). Preliminary results show that overall, a similar pattern of results was observed as in English-Spanish speakers, but some important differences were also reported which suggest that degree of orthographic overlap between languages may play an important role in creating form interference between the two language of a bilingual. This is a work in progress and the data are being further analyzed as well as more data is being collected.

**Code switching in internet forums: Russian and German**

Nicole Richter

*University of Jena*

In case several languages are used by a speaker in everyday communication, it is well known that it is very likely to find influences in his/her speech data. The interlanguage emerging from this type of language use shows features of the two or more languages involved as well as the mother tongue of the speaker. In the communicative practice in computer mediated communication (CMC) different phenomena of code switching, code mixing and other features of multilingualism can be observed (cf. Tsiplakou 2009). Especially the communication in internet and discussion forums and other platforms that share many features with oral communication provides data that can be analyzed grammatically, orthographically, syntactically or even phonetically to some extent (cf. Danet/Herring 2007). For the present contribution I initially looked at bilingual electronic communication in internet forums for people mainly speaking both Russian and German. The texts do not only show mixing phenomena in the morphology and lexis, but also interesting writing conventions because of the two differing alphabets (cf. also Androutsopoulos 2006). Russian and German both belong to the group of fusional-inflecting languages which may easily lead to the mixing of morphemes (see also Brehmer 2007). For grammar it could be observed that i.e. case and number markings of either language can be attached to a word of the L1 or the L2. These first data present observations on multilingual language use and shall be extended in order to systematically analyze the morphological and lexical mixing of Russian and German by bilingual (internet) users. Data from CMC would have to be compared with data from oral bilingual communication situations to see to what extent the findings in both modalities differ or correspond.
L2 vowel production and perception: What is not due to misperception?

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To examine claims that pronunciation errors of second language (L2) learners are mainly due to their misperception, which means production ability is restricted because they “fail to discern the phonetic differences between pairs of sounds in the L2, or between L2 and L1 sounds” (Flege, 1995), the present study investigated L2 learners’ production ability of a vowel which was perceptually discriminated quite well from L1 vowels (that is, learners did discern it from L1 vowels). The experiment consisted of two tasks. Japanese monolingual listeners first were asked to discriminate Chinese Mandarin high-back vowel /u/ from Japanese vowels /u/ (high-central) and /o/ (mid-back). Participants listened to pairs out of three vowels and answered whether the pairs of vowels were ‘same’ or ‘different’. Immediate imitation task followed after the perception task. Acoustic analysis showed that participants who scored above 90% in the perception task did not produce target-like sounds in the imitation task (in terms of F1 and F2). However, they were able to produce Chinese /u/ as a different vowel from others, since sounds they imitated were distributed among empty space in their individual vowel spaces, significantly apart from any of other Japanese vowels (note that the space of distribution differed between individuals). The result indicates that whether learners can perceptually discern the phonetic difference between L1 and L2 is relevant to their ability of producing a L2 sound as a new sound, but irrelevant to how it approximates the norm of target language. Provided that we define errors (or foreign accents) as learners’ productions which differ from the native norms, pronunciation errors of L2 learners possibly caused to a large extent by other factors than misperception such as articulatory constraints.

References

Perception of intelligibility enhancing speech styles in adverse conditions

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Lombard and foreigner-directed speech are two altered speech styles that occur in situations where speech communication is challenged. However, the two styles differ: while the former is a response to noisy environments, the latter is a reaction to perceived comprehension difficulties of non-native speakers. Previous studies have shown that Lombard and clear speech styles are more intelligible than speech produced in quiet when presented with equivalent amounts of noise [2, 4, 5]. One way in which foreigner-directed and Lombard speech may increase intelligibility is by enhancing certain cues to phonological contrasts. It is also possible than certain speech styles are more beneficial for some listener groups than for others. For example, foreigner-directed speech may be more beneficial for non-native listeners than native ones. The current study compares the perception of vowel shortening in English [1, 3, 6], a duration-based voicing correlate, realized in (i) native adult-directed speech, (ii) foreigner-directed speech, and (iii) Lombard speech, and goes on to investigate which speech styles are responsible for intelligibility increases for non-native listeners in quiet and noise. Native (British) and two non-native groups (Polish and Spanish) took part in a two-alternative forced choice word identification task involving the voiceless/voiced contrast in word final position in quiet and noisy conditions. Although there was a tendency for the listeners to benefit from altered speech styles in certain cases, we did not find a clear pattern of intelligibility increases. As expected, native listeners outperformed non-native listeners, and in particular non-native listeners’ performance was worse for voiced rather than voiceless coda consonants, at least when target items included intrinsically short vowels. These results may reflect L1 interference. For instance, Spanish word-final consonants are relatively rare and mostly voiceless, and in Polish only voiceless consonants are present word-finally, which may explain a better recognition of voiceless codas.
The acquisition of French liaison in L1 and L2: Phonological or lexical strategies?

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Liaison, a phenomenon of external sandhi in spoken French, is without a doubt one of the phonological concepts which has most inspired contemporary phonology. However, while attempts to formalize the phenomenon of liaison have been the focus of a vast body of work (see Tranel 1995, Côté 2005 for reviews), the developmental aspects of liaison in the phonological grammar of both children and adults have received considerably less attention.

In this paper, we examine the hypothesis put forth by Wauquier (2009) that there exist differing acquisitional strategies, and therefore differing processing strategies, in a first and second language (L1 and L2, respectively) in the acquisition of liaison. Based on production errors in both L1 and L2 acquisition, Wauquier suggests that L2 learners process liaison at the lexical level based primarily on surface (and orthographic) forms, while L1 learners make use of a phonological strategy allowing them to create abstract generalizations based on the particular prosodic position of the liaison consonant. Furthermore, Wauquier proposes that, while L1 learners without exception eventually acquire stable, immutable representations of liaison consonants, L2 learners, even at advanced levels, may not encode, or may erroneously encode, the prosodic position of linking consonants in their phonological grammar of French leading them to process instances of liaison on a case-by-case basis.

We present more recent data from psycholinguistic experimentation suggesting that, while acquisitional strategies may initially follow different paths in L1 and L2 development, L2 learners can indeed establish abstract generalizations of liaison that are in line with those of native speakers. Data exhibiting nativelike behavior in both the production and perception of French liaison in late learners will be presented, attesting to the establishment of abstract constructions in late learners and calling into question the existence of a critical period for the acquisition of this phonological phenomenon.
This paper investigates the acquisition of certain stress patterns in English by Mexican Spanish native speakers. Three tasks were designed to test the participants’ ability to assign and perceive stress accurately: a production, a perception and a repetition task. Several word categories are used each contains real and unreal words. This research attempts to shed light into the process of stress acquisition, hence the English proficiency of the participants ranges from beginners to advanced learners and a control group of English native speakers.

The results indicate that while the participants treat real and nonce words equally, stress is not equally easy/difficult to assign or perceive in all word categories. Namely, in the categories where stress falls further than the third syllable from the right-edge of the word, the L2 learners are less accurate at perceiving and assigning stress, possibly due to the fact that stress assignment in Spanish is restricted to the three syllables on the right-edge of the word.

What is more, as the L2 learners’ English proficiency increases, their ability to assign and perceive stress correctly improves; this ability however does not remain unchanged: the results show regression in the most advanced L2 learners which could indicate attrition of their ability to assign stress.

The results show that correct perception does not necessarily anticipate correct production or vice versa; in some word categories the participants performed better in the production task while in others they performed better in the perception task. On the other hand, the results from the repetition task are highly accurate, which suggests ability to perceive stress accurately from an early stage of the learning process; hence the errors made in the perception task (identifying the syllable that bears stress) are possibly caused because this task is cognitively more complex than the repetition task.
Comparison of English and German foreign language learner strategy use

Katerina Vlčkova and Miroslav Janik

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INTRODUCTION

Learning strategies have presented a crucial concept in the theory of second language acquisition since the 1960s. They capture a wide range of linguistic behaviours and most often are defined as sets of “conscious thoughts and actions that a learner takes to achieve a learning goal” (Chamot 2004), or as “operations to acquire, retain, retrieve or perform” (Rigney 1978). The concept is connected with self-regulation, metacognition, learning style, and cognitive style. Strategies are most often classified according to psychological functions – cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective (O’Malley, Chamot 1990), or 4 language skills (Cohen, Weaver 2006). In our research, Oxford’s (1990) classification is used. Strategies are divided into direct (memory, cognitive, compensatory) and indirect (metacognitive, affective, social) ones. Strategy choice and use is influenced by different variables like gender, experience, motivation, or proficiency. Our research question was: Does the use of learner strategies differ according to the acquired foreign language (English or German)?

METHODS

The research is based on Oxford’s strategy classification (1990) and adapted, enlarged inventory SILL (Oxford 1990). Research sample comprised 1482 pupils at the end of primary education, 2384 pupils at the end of lower secondary comprehensive education, and 1038 students at the end of upper secondary comprehensive education.

The strategy inventory for the primary pupils consisted of 28 items with a 3-point frequency scale ($\alpha = 0.74$). The inventory for lower ($\alpha = 0.90$) and upper ($\alpha = 0.80$) secondary students used a 5-point scale for 67 items. Students were asked to report their strategy use in a preferred foreign language which was mostly English.

RESULTS

Differences in overall strategy use were found only among pupils at primary level. Pupils learning English reported to use strategies more than pupils learning German. Nevertheless, lower secondary pupils learning German reported using memory, affective, and social strategies more than pupils learning English. Relations were
significant but extremely weak (R > 0.05). The upper secondary students preferring English tended to use more cognitive strategies, and students who preferred German used more memory and affective strategies. Students at all levels also differed in the use of some single strategies. The influence of English as the first foreign language on strategy use in German as the second foreign language will also be analysed.

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Acknowledgement
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A universal semantic constraint on the acquisition of the Japanese topic marker by advanced L2 learners

Chika Yoshida

Tenri University

The Japanese topic marker wa is reported to be one of the most difficult grammatical items to master for L2 learners of Japanese (Sakamoto et al., 1995; Yagi, 2000; Tohyama 2003). Yoshida & Shirahata (2011) reported that even a highly advanced Chinese learner of Japanese (i) overused the topic marker wa and (ii) was unable to correctly use some combinations of case particles with wa (e.g. niwa, dewa) However, why wa is so difficult to master has not been fully discussed.
We re-analyzed oral production data and grammatical judgment data produced by a Chinese learner and found that most of the errors included topicalized noun phrases (henceforth, NPs) with a thematic role THEME. Our finding seems to suggest that the errors should be analyzed from a semantic perspective and may be related to the degree of topicality of arguments, with the highest being most topical: Actor > Participant > Theme > Goal/Source/Location, proposed by Jackendoff (1990). Moreover, as one of the language-specific features in Japanese, topicalized arguments with ACTOR, PATIENT or THEME are realized as NPs+wa. Arguments with GOAL or SOURCE are canonically realized as NPs+niwa/karawa, respectively. On the other hand, topicalized LOCATION is realized as one of the two forms; NPs+wa/niwa, which will mislead L2 learners to the overgeneralization of wa.

In order to clarify what thematic roles are easy to topicalize, and whether it is possible to deduce universal semantic hierarchy on topicalization, we examine data of the acquisition of target Japanese (L2) by native speakers of Chinese, English, and Korean. They were also initially exposed to Japanese after the ‘critical period’ but are highly advanced in their L2 Japanese and are considered near-native. We found universal and L1 influence errors, which suggests that their inter-language is partially based on thematic properties in their L1, namely, Chinese/English/Korean.

References
8 Thematic Colloquium

Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context: Input, Social and Psycholinguistic Perspectives

AILA Research Network ‘Study Abroad and Language Acquisition’

Panel Convenors: Martin Howard¹ and Carmen Pérez Vidal²

¹University College Cork, ²Pompeu Fabra University

Discussant: Robert DeKeyser

University of Maryland

General Abstract

Study Abroad research focuses on classroom learners who assume pseudo-naturalistic status during a stay in the target language community. Since the 1990s, studies have increasingly focused on specific aspects of the learner’s L2 repertoire, such as in the case of grammatical, lexical, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and fluency development. Findings indicate that progress is not necessarily uniform across the different areas of the learner’s L2 repertoire (Freed 1995, Howard 2011). Moreover, studies based on a comparison with a control group often show the limitations of Study Abroad in comparison with classroom instruction, especially in the areas of grammatical and phonological development (Coleman 1994, Collentine 2004, Díaz Campos 2004, Mora 2008, Pérez Vidal & Juan Garau 2011).

This panel aims to consolidate such findings by illuminating other aspects of the learner’s development in relation to psycholinguistic issues, as well as exploring how input and social factors may constrain the individual variation underlying development. In the latter regard, we need to understand the specificity of the learner’s L2 exposure while abroad in terms of the type, quantity, frequency, intensity and quality of interaction. Moreover, how do extralinguistic and social factors impact such interaction in relation to the effect of duration of stay abroad, initial proficiency level at the start of study abroad, the learners’ raison d’être in the L2 community, and the social networks that they develop? Taken together, we need to understand the correlation between (psycho)linguistic development and what the learner is ‘doing’ in input and
interactional terms while abroad. Against this background, the presentations within the panel are based on new, innovative studies in a Study Abroad framework which explore such issues across a range of L2s, learner populations and Study Abroad programmes of varying durations.

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Individual Abstracts

Paper I

**Accuracy in L3 English interactive discourse: Context, contact and onset level**

Maria Juan-Garau

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The present study tries to throw new light on the impact of formal instruction (FI) and study abroad (SA) contexts of acquisition on accuracy as the existing evidence,
particularly on the latter context, has not produced conclusive results. More specifically, it examines the effects of a three-month SA period, preceded and followed by FI periods in the at home (AH) context, on forty-three advanced-level EFL undergraduates’ oral accuracy at T1 (N=35), T2 (N=43), T3 (N=43), and T4 (N=13). The participants are bilingual Catalan/Spanish and hence English is their L3. The study additionally includes baseline data from eighteen native speakers of English, who are also undergraduate students.

The study seeks to analyse the gains in accuracy obtained in the SA context in the light of the gains derived from the preceding formal instruction environment as well as the impact of contact during SA on such gains. It also compares native and non-native performance and tries to determine whether students with a lower or higher pre-departure level become more accurate after SA. Performance in a role-play task has been examined through indexes of oral accuracy, including an analysis of verb use, and a questionnaire on stay conditions.

Results show an advantage for the SA context in accuracy development, which becomes more native-like after the stay and is maintained at T4. Students with lower pre-departure levels seem to benefit the most from SA. Some contact variables associated with accuracy development are identified. Our study indicates that, although benefits only become apparent abroad, the AH and the SA contexts might support gains in oral accuracy differentially.

Paper II

Social Network Analysis as a Means to Investigate Input, Interaction and Acquisition during the Year Abroad

Kevin McManus, Nicole Tracy-Ventura, Rosamund Mitchell, Patricia Romero de Mills and Laurence Richard

University of Southampton

Residence abroad (RA) should provide ideal conditions for the acquisition of a second language (L2), but in practice, learner development is known to vary greatly. Many small scale case studies have shown that RA can be problematic in terms of learner access to naturalistic input (e.g. Pellegrino Aveni, 2005; Wilkinson, 2002). One way to investigate learners’ interaction and contact with the L2 on a larger scale is to systematically document learners’ ‘social networks’ (Li, 1994; Milroy, 1987). Isabelli-Garcia (2006) and Wiklund (2002) have shown how social network analysis can contribute to interpreting the trajectory of L2 development in an immersion context.
However, these researchers did not document in detail the nature of learners’ interactions within their L2 networks. More research is needed on: (1) the characteristics of learners’ interactions with members of their social network and (2) the ways in which learners benefit (or not) from different interaction patterns.

The present study examines the nature and density of British university learners’ social networks in France (n=25) and Spain and Mexico (n=25) during a nine-month stay abroad. In this paper, the following research questions are addressed:

- What is the nature of learners’ social networks whilst abroad and how do these networks change over time?
- How and do learners use both L1 and L2 whilst abroad, and how do these language patterns of language use change over time?
- What is the relationship between social network density, interaction quality and L2 development?

Social network and language engagement questionnaires, as well as a range of language and global proficiency tests, were developed and administered to these learners at two different points during their stay abroad. Questionnaire and proficiency results will be presented and compared in order to elucidate the relationship between learners’ social networks and selected aspects of L2 development.

References


Although the study abroad (SA) context has been a major area of research since the mid-1990s, very little is known about the nature of language to which students have access within the learning context. The current paper aims to illuminate this gap in knowledge by firstly dismantling the often monolithic view of the SA learning context. This is achieved by considering SA as a macro-learning context comprised of a series of micro-contexts or loci of learning. Each locus of learning can be defined as an individual situation in which acquisition takes place. It is predicated on the role of the speaker, the role of the interlocutor, degrees of formality, social distance, physical location of the interaction, mode and topic. The two main loci of learning which have been considered in the study are the institutional locus and the conversational locus.

The second stage of the paper demonstrates how access to loci of learning and therefore input and output opportunities can be determined by the accumulated length of time spent in the SA context. To achieve this, detailed submersion profiles of 20 non-native speaker teachers of English were compiled. The informants are all highly proficient speakers of English and represent ten different nationalities. Following compilation, the profiles underwent in depth analyses to establish correlations between the accumulated length of time spent in the SA context and access to loci of learning. Results indicate a clear progression from asymmetrical exposure favouring the institutional locus of learning for learners who have accumulated less than three months in an SA context towards a balanced exposure to both the institutional and the conversational locus for learners who have accumulated in excess of one year in an SA context.
The Development of L2 Rhythm during a 3-Month Study Abroad Period

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In the last decade, an ever-increasing number of studies have been devoted to the acquisition of L2 suprasegmentals; however, L2 rhythm is still relatively underresearched. So far, studies on L2 rhythm have essentially focused on: a) the evaluation of contrastive rhythm metrics (White & Mattys 2007a, 2007b), and b) the influence of L1 rhythm on L2 (Grenon & White 2008; Tortel & Hirst 2010). To our knowledge, no studies have examined the development of L2 rhythm over time and in a study abroad (SA) context, where research on oral production has largely focused on fluency development (Freed 1995; Towell et al. 1996). The present study aims to examine whether a 3-month SA period significantly affects the development of learners’ L2 rhythm and compare learners’ rhythmic patterns to those of native speakers (NSs).

Semi-spontaneous speech samples from 30 Catalan/Spanish advanced learners of English were elicited by means of an oral interview before (T1) and after (T2) a 3-month SA period and compared to NSs’ productions performing the same task. Developmental gains in L2 rhythm were assessed quantitatively through a set of well-established rhythm metrics ($%V$, $\Delta C$, $\Delta V$, nPVI, rPVI, varcoC and varcoV).

Results for NNSs revealed significant changes in rhythm from T1 to T2 towards TL norms for some of the measures ($\Delta C$, varcoC, $%V$). When compared to NSs’ productions, significant differences emerged for most of the measures at T1 but not at T2, suggesting that the SA period had had a favourable effect on the development of learners’ rhythmic performance.
9 Language Learning Roundtable

Contributions of L1 perceptual assimilation to L2 speech perception and perceptual learning

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Language experience systematically “tunes up” our perception of speech. Perceptual attunement to the native language (L1) is evident quite early, well before the end of the infant’s first year, and continues to be refined during the preschool years and into childhood. The primary benefit of this attunement is that it optimizes the speed and accuracy of word recognition in the native language. However, it also has a well-known drawback: L1 attunement places severe limits on perceptual sensitivity to the consonant and vowel contrasts of other languages that deviate phonologically and/or phonetically from native segments and contrasts. These perceptual constraints are especially obvious in adults who are completely naïve to the language of the target stimuli. However, L1 perceptual biases are also striking in the perception of many non-native L2 segmental contrasts by late-onset (post-puberty) second language (L2) learners, whose speech perception and comprehension are hindered not only during the initial phase of L2 acquisition but even after years of L2 use. Moreover, the L1 perceptual bias appears to contribute substantially to L1-accented production of L2 words, even in speakers with years of L2 experience. At the same time, however, it is important to note that certain non-native contrasts nonetheless remain quite easy for naïve and late-L2 listeners to perceive and/or learn.

Our presentation will address theories and empirical findings on perceptual learning of L2 speech contrasts, particularly with respect to the wide variations in degree of difficulty for perceiving and learning different types of non-native contrasts. We will begin by considering how research on non-native speech perception by completely naïve listeners may illuminate phonetic and phonological aspects of speech perception at the beginning of late L2 learning. One common assumption has been that naïve adults’ perception of non-native phonemic contrasts can directly
account for the relative difficulty or ease that late L2 learners have with specific segments and contrasts in their adopted language. Another common assumption has been that developmental changes in non-native speech perception underlie the observed onset-age differences that have been reported in the literature on the acquisition of native-like speech perception and production in an L2. However, as we have argued previously (Best & Tyler, 2007), evaluation of these assumptions must take into account that models of non-native speech perception such as the Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM) have focused primarily on naïve listeners’ perception of unfamiliar speech contrasts, whereas models of L2 speech acquisition such as the Speech Learning Model (SLM) have focused on experienced listeners who vary in onset age and/or level of exposure to those contrasts.

Our presentation at EUROSLA 2012 will build from that foundation to further probe the factors that may influence naïve listeners and L2 learners in similar versus different ways. We will review and discuss recent empirical findings from our own and others’ laboratories, in order to critically assess and expand upon our earlier hypotheses (Best & Tyler, 2007) regarding the commonalities and complementarities between inexperienced listeners and those learning an L2, as viewed from the most-frequently cited models of experiential effects on speech perception: PAM and SLM. Among the issues we will address are:

- How active L2 learning may affect perception of phonetic versus phonological information;
- How early- versus vs. late-onset L2 acquisition may impact L2 speech perception;
- How L2 vocabulary development may interact with perceptual adjustment in L2 speech perception;
- What these considerations imply for optimal timing and conditions for perceptual “re-tuning” to L2 speech contrasts and maximal skill development for recognition of spoken words in the L2.
How does language learning influence brain activity: Real-time fMRI study of processing of prosody

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Brain and language have lived in a symbiosis for thousands of years. However, mechanisms of cortical reorganization that underlie enhancement of language and speech processing have been poorly investigated. Recently, methods (real time functional magnetic resonance imaging rt-fMRI) and devices (brain computer interfaces) have been developed that actually allow us the insight into the language processing brain in vivo and at real time. Here, we addressed changes in functional connectivity induced in subjects who learnt to deliberately increase activation in the right inferior frontal gyrus (rIFG) and improved their ability to identify emotional intonations. At the beginning of their training process, we observed a massive connectivity of this region to a widespread network of temporo-parietal areas, which decreased and lateralized to the right hemisphere with practice. Volitional control of activation strengthened connectivity of the rIFG to the right PFC whereas practice increased its connectivity to pre-central gyri bilaterally. These findings suggest that the mechanisms that underlie enhancement of speech processing cannot fully be described in terms of activation patterns but should take into consideration functional connectivity of brain networks.

We have also observed some interesting individual differences among the speakers that we investigated. In particular, we were interested in the neural patterns that are used by so called “phonetically talented” subjects. In the presentation we will discuss the details of our conceptualization of talent. We will present all the factors which seem to determine phonetic talent and we will have a look of its neural underpinnings. The functional brain connections used by talented speakers differ qualitatively and quantitatively from the neural networks used by average language learners. Real time brain imaging coupled with intelligent brain computer interfaces gives us, for the first time, the possibility to attempt a bio-feed-back solution directly at the neural level and in this way “learn from the gifted”. Implications of these findings for language learning and language teaching will be discussed in the presentation.
Acquiring a second language sound system: A developmental perspective

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The acquisition of a second language sound system has often been regarded as the result of a linear relationship between several factors, like the learner’s age, the L2 sound system, the motivation to learn, the phonological aptitude, and the learning context. In these views, acquisition is usually seen as the development from strong L1-like pronunciation to native-like pronunciation, during which most learners stop learning somewhere along the way. Research that has investigated the impact of these individual factors on the acquisition of L2 sound systems has yielded contradictory results about, for instance, the influence of perception on production and the influence of age related factors on L2 sound development.

The factor that is most frequently mentioned in relation to the development of the L2 phonological system is ‘age’. The general observation is that young starters of second language learning stand a greater chance of attaining a native-like pronunciation than older starters. Whether or not this is due to a critical period for language acquisition is a matter of debate. While some scholars have argued that ultimate L2 attainment is impossible for learners who have started learning the second language at a late age (Scovel, 1988), others have claimed that even late
learners can reach the highest levels of L2 proficiency in certain aspects of the language system, provided that the learning situation is ideal (in terms of input, language instruction, motivation, etc.) (Bongaerts, 1999). Fact is that numerous studies have reported that the age of onset of L2 acquisition is the most successful predictor of the learner’s ultimate attainment, most obviously when it concerns the acquisition of the L2 sound system. To account for the advantage for younger starters, several studies have associated this observation with the influence of the learner’s native language. While the role of crosslinguistic influence in syntax and semantics is subject to debate, it is generally recognized that learners transfer properties of their first language’s sound system into the foreign language. Earlier research has shown that the role of crosslinguistic influence on L2 sound systems correlates with the age of acquisition (AoA): the lower the AoA, the less important crosslinguistic influence is. The most familiar models accounting for the acquisition of L2 sound systems (Best’s (1994) Perceptual assimilation Model, Kuhl’s (1992) Native Language Magnet Model and Flege’s (1995) Speech Learning Model) have all related age to the influence of the native language sound system. All of these models address the issue of categorical perception and the mechanisms of creating language specific phoneme boundaries. With the coming of age, it is argued, it becomes increasingly difficult to reset phoneme boundaries. Although this account provides a strong explanation for the way in which native speakers acquire the sound system of their first language, is also raises several questions that are left unanswered. While some researchers have shown that phonemic vowel categories have become established at around 6 months (Kuhl, 1986), it has also been argued that establishment of phonemic categories is not complete until young adulthood (Flege, 1995). These seemingly contradictory views cannot be overcome by traditional product-oriented research.

Recent studies in other areas of L2 research have clearly demonstrated that longitudinal, variability-based approaches can reveal remarkable facts about the learning process. These studies have used a Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) approach to language development, and have focused on the development of L2 writing and on L2 vocabulary (Verspoor, Lowie & van Dijk, 2007; Caspi, 2010; Verspoor & Spoelman, 2011S) and L2 sound systems (Lowie, 2011). A number of longitudinal case studies have shown that a DST-approach can contribute to our understanding of the dynamic interaction of factors affecting L2 phonology in important ways. For instance, longitudinal analyses of perception and production data of both children and adults show that the perception and production affect each other differently at different moments in time, and in interaction with the situational context. This means that for the individual language learner perception does not
straightforwardly precede production. These studies also point to the large amount of exposure that is required for the sound system to develop or change.

In this contribution, I will present an alternative to the traditional product-oriented view of the development of L2 sound systems. Referring to data from children and adults, I will demonstrate how a nonlinear, process-focused approach is able to account for learner data by truly appreciating the complex dynamic interaction of the forces shaping the L2 sound system.

**Beyond segments: A look at new or neglected approaches in L2 speech research**

Ineke Mennen

ESRC Centre for Research on Bilingualism, Bangor University

The field of L2 speech learning has gained a fairly good understanding of segmental aspects of language differentiation. For example, we know that languages may differ in their phoneme inventories or phonological features, but also in the phonetic detail of segments. We also know that it is this level of phonetic detail of cross-language differences that is most important in predicting which sounds will pose difficulties in L2 production and perception of segments (Strange 2007). Our understanding of the exact nature of cross-language phonetic similarity/dissimilarity is, however, still rather limited as it has only been examined in very restricted phonetic/phonotactic and prosodic contexts and findings cannot be generalized beyond these (Strange 2007). Current theories of L2 speech learning (e.g. Flege’s Speech Learning Model [Flege 1995, 2003] and Best’s Perceptual Assimilation Model [Best 1995, Best and Tyler, 2007]) rely on this poorly understood concept of phonetic similarity between native language (L1) and L2 speech to predict the relative difficulty/ease of production and perception of non-native speech.

Although the above models have been in existence for almost two decades, they have not yet attempted to account for any non-segmental aspects of L2 speech learning, and there are only very few studies that address aspects of L2 speech learning that go beyond segments. The focus of my talk will be on two neglected aspects in L2 speech research: intonation and articulatory settings. There are several
reasons for the apparent gap in empirical research in these two areas: the fact that (i) they are difficult to separate from other influences, in particular segmental ones; (ii) until relatively recently it was almost impossible to measure suprasegmental features in real time or provide direct access to the articulators and current technological advances have not been exploited fully; (iii) our understanding of intonational primitives and of articulation and its relation to acoustics is still rudimentary; and (iv) we are faced with the challenge of considerable between-speaker variability which may mask crosslanguage differences.

My talk will give an overview of L2 research in these two areas. It will discuss some of the theoretical and practical problems that arise in analysing L2 intonation and articulatory settings and it will demonstrate some of the theoretical and technological advances that have been made in these areas that have made the study of these issues more feasible. In my talk, I will be drawing on some of the existing research as well as on various recent research projects to illustrate these problems and show examples of what is currently possible. Finally, I will be discussing some ways to take research into these area further forward.

References
Discussion of contributions to the 2012 Roundtable on “Interdisciplinary perspectives on the acquisition of second language phonology”

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The contributors to this Roundtable highlight conspicuous gaps in our knowledge of second language speech, and they present current and future research activities which address hot topics in our field.

The presentations by Dogil and Mennen show most clearly how methodological and technological advances now make it possible to address questions which, until quite recently, most colleagues shunned away from because they were deemed “too difficult” (given the tools at our disposal), “too speculative”, or both. One of these topics consists of issues surrounding language learning “talent”. Previous studies have shown that even if the most important variables in second language speech learning, age of learning and language use patterns, are accounted for, a fairly large amount of variation remains unaccounted for (e.g., Flege et al. 1995). The research presented by Dogil aims to account for important causes of individual variation among learners whose learning environments and conditions are very similar, and it provides exciting perspectives on improving instructed second language learning. The Dynamic Systems approach advocated by Lowie also holds the promise of a better understanding of individual variation in speech learning abilities. While surely everyone in our field would agree that longitudinal studies of speech learning are highly desirable, the very vast majority of L2 speech research has been (and probably will be) based on cross-sectional research for purely research-pragmatic reasons (i.e., time & money). Lowie presents longitudinal data which are needed to address many open questions in our field, among these the complex relation of speech production and perception at various stages in L2 speech learning (e.g., Bohn & Flege 1997).

Mennen’s presentation is probably the most courageous one because she focuses on two topics that others have stayed away from for very different but perhaps
understandable reasons. The reason why the most important models of L2 speech learning, Flege’s SLM (1995) and Best’s PAM/PAM-L2 (Best 1995, Best & Tyler 2007) deal with segments rather than segments plus suprasegmentals is not that segments are easy, but that segments are relatively easy to describe, to analyze, and to test in speech learning compared to anything happening above the level of the segment. Mennen shows that technological advances make this important but much neglected aspect of L2 speech learning now more accessible for research. These advances make it also possible to investigate the topic of “articulatory setting” in a professional manner. This topic has a fairly long history of largely fruitless, impressionistic speculation in foreign language speech pedagogy, while speech scientists have stayed away from it until quite recently (e.g., Gick et al. 2004). Both topics, intonation and articulatory settings, open up very much needed perspectives on a complete view of second language speech learning beyond the segment.

In equally important step beyond the segmental speech level is presented by Best & Tyler, whose PAM-L2 (Best & Tyler 2007) is the first theoretically based attempt in L2 speech research to link speech development to lexical development. When one considers the by now very large body of research on L2 speech, one could easily get the impression that the ultimate aim of L2 speech learning is, well, to learn L2 speech sounds. Best & Tyler’s presentation is a highly appropriate reminder that we communicate in words (and sentences), of which phonetic segments are “merely” the building blocks, and that at least parts of L2 speech learning are highly likely to be lexically driven. Their model provides interesting suggestions for examining how vocabulary development interacts with L2 speech learning.

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The relationship between the degree of learners’ uptake and their L2 development: Analysis of NS-NNS recast episodes

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Theoretical and empirical SLA research suggests that learners’ language proficiency level is closely connected to their working memory (WM) capacities, and these variables impact their production of modified output (e.g., Mackey et al, 2010). This study examines the relationship between recasts and learners’ uptake, taking into account 1) learners’ proficiency level and 2) timing of recasts. 543 recast episodes were detected from 17 beginning, 16 intermediate, and 17 advanced learners. Recast episodes were categorized first by a) the number of morphemes which learners uttered between the error and correction, and b) the number of morphemes in the recasts, then c) the relation between these numbers and the level of uptake. The results revealed that in all three groups, learners modified their production more successfully—in the form of repair—if the recasts and/or the number of intervening morphemes are low. Advanced learners differentiated themselves from the two remaining groups in that they were able to withstand a time lapse with a greater number of intervening morphemes. This suggests that they were more successful at retaining the positive evidence in recasts temporarily in their short-term memory store while allocating their attention to the negative evidence. Interestingly, however, intermediate learners’ overall uptake production was the highest, and advanced learners’ uptake rate decreased to the same level as beginning learners, hence a ‘horseshoe pattern’ in the relationship between the degree of learners’ uptake and their L2 development. The finding indicates that advanced learners prioritize corrections that are particularly relevant to advancing their L2 development. And if this is indeed the case, this study posits a possible explanation of how fossilization occurs in second language acquisition.

References
Vocabulary development in CLIL. The case of Czech pupils' learning history and civics in English

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"Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language." (Coyle, Hood, Marsh, 2010: 1). My PhD study aims to contribute to broadening the empirical basis of 'English for knowledge acquisition' within CLIL. Specifically, the purpose of my investigation is to study growth in English vocabulary for knowledge acquisition in 4 CLIL classrooms in the Czech Republic. In 2 of the four classes, 12-year-olds are learning History in English. In the two remaining classes, 12- and 13-year-olds are learning about cultural and social issues as part of Civil Education, again learning this subject matter in English.

Growth of vocabulary size features as the study's dependent variable. It is investigated in relation to input and processing variables. Input variables include the extent to which the vocabulary that pupils are expected to learn is task-essential or the average amount of English used in the class. Processing variables include the extent to which pupils use CLIL learning strategies or the amount of language support they receive. Learner variables, such as gender, motivation for CLIL, pupils' overall intelligence will also be taken into account. Considering all data together, multiple regression analyses will be performed to investigate the strength of a model of growth of vocabulary size in CLIL education.

During my presentation I will focus on the study's design and methodology and also present my first research results gained from student answers to vocabulary tests specifically designed to measure vocabulary growth over a period of one school year. These vocabulary test results will be related to pupils' answers to an adapted version of the SILL's questionnaire (Strategies Inventory of Language Learning, Oxford, 1996).

References
Motivation is thought to be a powerful variable affecting second language acquisition (SLA). Studies investigating technology use in second language (L2) instruction generally report positive effects on motivation. A related research area, called Intelligent Computer-assisted Language Learning (ICALL), focuses on computer applications that use artificial intelligence technologies to facilitate L2 learning. Existing research in ICALL tends to emphasise either the performance of the technology, or the pedagogical effectiveness of the training, despite the significant potential to impact motivation through individualised language instruction. ICALL-based instruction can offer a variety of topics, linguistic skills, and practice modalities, and log observable learner behaviours, such as time-on-task and learning gains, to adapt to learners’ interests and progress. ICALL systems also provide a convenient context for eliciting motivational self-report information. To summarise, these systems have interesting capabilities which deserve more attention from a motivational perspective.

In the Feedback and Acquisition of Syntax in Oral Proficiency (FASOP) project, we use an ICALL system to investigate issues in SLA. The system uses automatic speech recognition to drive a spoken practice activity that provides corrective feedback (CF) on learners’ utterances. In previous experiments with over 30 participants, we used the system to look at the effect of CF on word order accuracy in spoken Dutch. This paper proposes using our system to address the previously-mentioned gap in motivation-oriented ICALL research. As a first step, we conduct a survey based on Dornyei’s L2 Motivational Self System with Dutch L2 learners of varying backgrounds to obtain descriptions of their current and future L2 selves. Results from this survey will inform the development of a computer-processable representation of an L2 self, to be employed in a future ICALL system that uses discrepancies between participants’ current and future selves to adjust parameters of its instruction with the aim of enhancing learner motivation.
Reverse psychological predicates in heritage speaker Spanish

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One of the attested outcomes of heritage speaker (HS) bilingualism involves the competence and/or use of linguistic properties in a way that differs from that of monolingual speakers of the heritage language dialect implicated (e.g. Montrul 2008). This project contributes to current trends of HS research by examining the syntax of reverse psychological predicates (RPPs) (gustar ‘to like’ as its prototype) in HS Spanish, an illustrative domain given the structural differences that exist between Spanish and English (e.g. Parodi Lewin 1991). Spanish RPPs uniquely display an unmarked OVS word order, selecting a postverbal nominative <theme> that controls verb agreement and a postverbal dative <experiencer> that is obligatorily doubled by a clitic and the dative marker a. In English, however, psych-predicates never reveal this structure. In addition, previous research has descriptively documented RPPs as being problematic for L2ers (e.g. Montrul 1997, 1998, Toth 2003) and HSs (de Prada Pérez & Pascual y Cabo 2011, Toribio & Nye 2006, Dvorak 1983, Dvorak & Kirschner 1982).

I refine previous studies via the examination of two proficiency groups of HSs, first generation immigrants, and Spanish monolingual speakers. In addition to a background questionnaire and a language proficiency test, participants completed a scalar grammaticality judgment task and an elicited production task. Preliminary results reveal HSs’ target-deviant preferences regarding the presence of the dative marker a (57.4%) as well as verbal (75.09%) and clitic (59.2%) agreement which contrasts with a high level of accuracy with agreement with non-RPPs (97.9%). The final results will be discussed vis-a-vis accounts that seek to explain divergence in HS grammars such as incomplete acquisition (e.g. Montrul 2008) and the possibility that cross-generational attrition affects the quality of input that HSs receive (e.g. Sorace, 2004; Pires & Rothman 2009).

References

Second language perception and production of English consonants and vowels by Catalan speakers: A training study

Angélica Carlet

UAB

It is well-known that the acquisition of second language (L2) sounds that are non-existent in the first language (L1) is very complex. This cross-language difficulty can be related to a failure in perceiving and consequently producing some phonetic categories of the target language accurately (Bohn & Munro 2007). Several studies involving L2 phonetic training (Hardison, 2003; Hazan et al., 2005; Iverson and Evans, 2007; Aliaga-García and Mora, 2008) have had positive results in instructional settings and have shown that phonetic training has a positive effect on the ability to correctly perceive the sounds of the second language.

This study examines the effect of two types of high variability phonetic training (audio-visual and auditory-only) on the perception and production of a series of consonant and vowel contrasts that have been found to pose a particular problem to Spanish/Catalan learners of English. In addition, the study aims to explore other factors that may have a bearing on the effect of training such as learner differences in motivation and differences in the phonetic/prosodic context in which the sound contrasts are tested. Finally, the study also investigates if improvement and gain generalize to other aspects not explored in the training, such as new segments, new talkers and new prosodic contexts. Two experimental groups and a control group are tested by means of a pretest/posttest/retention-test design.
The prediction is that phonetic training will improve L2 performance, with the audio-visual training group outperforming the auditory training group, especially on the perception and production of visually salient segments, with a potential interaction of the other variables, namely motivation and context of testing. Retention of the knowledge acquired in the training is predicted to occur as well as generalization to new, that is, untrained sounds, talkers and prosodic contexts.

‘Are you a ‘dushevny’ person?’ Strategies to overcome Conceptual Non-Equivalence in the speech of Russian-English bilinguals

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This research is focused on the presence of conceptual non-equivalence in lexis between the languages, specifically, between Russian and English.

The study investigates the strategies a speaker uses to overcome non-equivalence in speech. The study also explores the speaker’s feelings connected with instances of inability to express themselves fully in one of the languages.

The interaction between both languages is viewed as bidirectional (Cook 1992; Jarvis 2009; Laufer 2003; Pavlenko & Jarvis 2002), i.e., the process that works both ways from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L1, and which is a by-product of the formation of the compound state of mind with two linguistic systems called multicompetence (Cook 1991, 2003, 2008).

Situations often occur where a certain concept, known to a bilingual, is missing its linguistic form in one of the languages used by the speaker. As a result, a bilingual is often faced with a dilemma how to adapt their message to fit the available target linguistic repertoire.

This study argues that during speech production a multicompetent Russian-English speaker resorts to three main strategies of overcoming non-equivalence: calquing, circumlocution and conformity. Furthermore, non-equivalence can also cause inability to express speaker’s intended message which can lead to conversational breakdown.

It is also hypothesized that there is a correlation between the observed strategies and the individual differences within the group of my participants.
A number of behavioral studies using divided visual field, dichotic listening and verbal-manual interference paradigms have shown reduced left hemisphere (LH) dominance, suggesting right hemisphere (RH) contribution in bilinguals’ performance on lexical, semantic and syntactic tasks involving L1 and/or L2 stimuli (see review: Hull and Vaid, 2007), with increased bilaterality observed for L1 (see review: de Groot, 2011), L2 (Liu et al., 2010; Proverbio et al., 2004) or for both languages (Proverbio and Adorni, 2011). Also, some neuroimaging and electrophysiological data demonstrated right hemisphere contribution to language (Dehaene et al., 1997; Proverbio et al., 2002).

The question arises whether the experience in contribution to language processing on the part of the bilingual right hemisphere could facilitate that hemisphere’s general (L1 and/or other than L2) language processing in a way that would be absent for the monolingual right hemisphere. For this question to be answered positively, one or both of the following research hypotheses should be confirmed. First, responses to linguistic stimuli channeled to the RH should be faster and more accurate in bilinguals than in monolinguals. Second, the LH dominance effect, calculated as the difference between reaction times to stimuli channeled to the right vs. the left hemisphere, should be smaller for bilinguals than for monolinguals, which would indicate greater RH involvement and thus reduced language lateralization for the former group. To verify these predictions, right-handed monolingual and bilingual participants will be tested on
a lexical decision task, using the divided visual field that channels stimuli selectively to the right or left hemisphere. Since previous studies revealed bilateral hemisphere activation for a novel language (Perani et al., 1996), participants will be tested not only in L1, but also in a set of stimuli representing a language unknown to either group, with which they will be familiarized before the experiment proper.

References


Lexical Complexity as a measure of L2 proficiency in spontaneous speech

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Lately, L2 studies with international adoptees (e.g., Schmid, 2012) have revived the debate on the factors which affect L2 (ultimate) attainment, i.e. age-related maturational constraints (e.g., Long, 2005) as opposed to context-related factors like continued exposure to the L1 (e.g., Hopp, 2010). It has been argued (Pallier et al., 2003) that in a context such as international adoption where exposure to the L1 is interrupted, successful L2 acquisition can take place independently of the age of onset (AoO) of L2 acquisition. My PhD research aims at disentangling the factors AoO and degree of L1 exposure in the L2 proficiency of highly advanced L2 speakers.
To this end, I am investigating the level of L2 proficiency of international adoptees by means of a corpus of autobiographical interviews. The adoptees’ L2 proficiency is assessed along the dimensions of linguistic Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (Housen & Kuiken, 2009). In my presentation, I will focus on lexical complexity, understood as the ability to use prototypical aspects of a specific word but also a variety of peripheral or infrequent properties (Bulté et al., 2008). I will present the specific measures I used and report preliminary results showing the impact of AoO and degree of L1 exposure on L2 proficiency.

More specifically, I would like to discuss the special challenges of measuring lexical complexity in our data, i.e. spontaneous speech data of highly proficient, older speakers. I am particularly concerned with the following issues: (1) the theoretical grounding of lexical complexity; (2) its operationalization with respect to our data; (3) sensitive measures with regard to the nature of our data; (4) the statistical data analyses; and (4) the challenges of spontaneous, oral data.

References:


Varying effect of L1 across grammatical morphemes: Thinking-for-speaking approach

Akira Murakami

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The study investigates whether L1 influences the accuracy of L2 English grammatical morphemes and whether its strength varies across them. The data were retrieved from over 10,000 learner essays in the Cambridge Learner Corpus, representing diverse L1s (Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Russian, Turkish, German, and French) across five proficiency levels. The target morphemes were articles, past tense –ed, plural –s, possessive ’s, progressive –ing, and third person –s.

The study found (1) L1 influence is a significant predictor of morpheme accuracy (contra to Dulay & Burt, 1973, 1974, and in line with Luk & Shirai, 2009, and Hawkins & Buttery, 2010) and (2) the interaction between L1 influence and morpheme is significant. The most susceptible to L1 influence are articles and progressive –ing, followed by plural –s, followed by third person –s and possessive ‘s as most insensitive morphemes to L1 influence. This finding is interpreted in Slobin’s (1996, 2003, 2008) framework of thinking for speaking.

Since definiteness cannot be experienced directly in our everyday lives, in the absence of its encoding in learners’ L1s, the learners have to learn both to attend to the relevant distinction (i.e. definite-indefinite and count-mass) and to map the form onto the concept in order to acquire English articles. Similar is the case in progressive –ing. L1 influence is weaker in plural –s because the singular-plural distinction is clear to the non-linguistic eye. Learners, therefore, regardless of whether their L1s encode plurality, have little difficulty to draw the distinction. The count-mass distinction, however, poses a unique challenge to those whose L1s have a count-mass distinction incongruent with that of English. Third person –s and possessive ‘s do not show much L1 influence because person and possession are linguistically encoded in all the target languages, and, thus, learners are used to paying attention to the concepts.
In generative L2 research, two different views have been taken on the considerable observed variability in the use made of verbal inflections by L2 learners (e.g. He likes sweets/He like sweets). One is that it results from a deficit in syntactic knowledge (a position taken by the Minimal Tress Hypothesis/Organic Grammar (e.g. Vainikka & Young-Scholten 2005) and the Representational Deficit Hypothesis (e.g. Hawkins & Hattori 2006; Tsimpi and Dimitrakopoulou 2007)). An alternative view is that it is the result of difficulty in mapping from morphology to Phonetic Form (a position taken by the Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis (e.g. Prévost and White 2000a,c) and the Prosodic Transfer Hypothesis (e.g. Goad & White 2004), or in assembling features into new lexical items (the Feature-Reassembly Hypothesis, e.g. Lardiere 2009).

This study tests three of these hypotheses in four different syntactic contexts (affirmatives/negatives/adverb insertions/wh-interrogatives): Minimal Trees/Organic Grammar, Prosodic Transfer and Feature-Reassembly. The source of evidence is written and spoken production data elicited from adolescent Japanese classroom learners of English. A picture stimulus production task was designed to examine both morphological and syntactic properties associated with IP (subject-verb agreement, past-tense markers, strength of inflection, null/overt subjects, Nominative Case), CP (wh-movement) and DP (articles, plural inflection). Participants are 90 junior high school students (aged 13-16) to investigate L2 grammars at the initial-state and in early development and 30 university students (aged 19-20) in later development.

The results show both difference and similarity among the four syntactic contexts. This provides evidence that selective variability in verbal morphology is a consequence of problems in mapping between levels of representation. The implications of the findings for explaining the nature of interlanguage variability in adolescent L2 learners are discussed.

References
Vowel length perception and production in L2 German
– An experimental phonetic approach with special consideration of orthography as influencing factor

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The scientific investigation of L2 phonology is often described as being underrepresented in SLA (Gut 2009: 14). In my Ph.D. project, I therefore want to investigate the perception and production of German vowel length by German-as-a-Foreign-Language learners with different L1 backgrounds (Polish, Danish, and Turkish). Vowel length in German is phonologically distinctive and is assumed to pose a problem for various L2 learners (Hirschfeld 2005). This, however, has not yet been experimentally investigated. I am therefore planning to conduct experiments that investigate the influence of the L1 background on L2 German vowel perception and production, with special consideration of orthography as influencing factor.

Since there is a complex interplay between durational and spectral features in German vowels (Kohler 1995), the perception experiment is aimed at keeping the two dimensions quantity (duration) and quality (spectral features) apart: In reminiscence of a design used by SENDLMEIER (1981), prototypical German vowels will be manipulated (in PRAAT), so that pairs can either be matched for quality or for quantity. For the investigation of L2 productions I am planning to conduct a picture naming task of words that, in orthography, are either marked for vowel length or not (f. ex. through the so called ‘lengthening h’). I am furthermore planning to run a reading experiment with nonsense words that are also either marked for length or not.
I am expecting that for the L2 learners long vowels are especially problematic when they are not orthographically marked (in comparison to a German native speaker control group). Since the L2 learners differ systematically in their L1 vowels system concerning the length feature (Danish: phonological distinction; Polish: no phonological distinction; Turkish: phonetic distinction), I am further expecting to find significant differences between the groups.

References

Studying the effect of corrective feedback - how to measure progress in oral proficiency?

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In studying the role of corrective feedback (CF) for second language (L2) acquisition, an important issue is how to establish a CF effect. Norris & Ortega (2000) show that it is crucial to answer whether CF affects implicit or explicit knowledge. This has repercussions for testing the effect of CF.

In our current experimental setup, we study the effect of CF on grammatical accuracy in spoken Dutch L2. This is done by using a Computer-assisted Language Learning system with automatic speech recognition (ASR). Learners complete a training session in which they are required to produce spoken output, and the system provides automatic CF in case of errors. By pre- and post-testing we measure the CF effect on spoken proficiency. In the current experiment, language learners completed two treatment sessions of forty-five minutes, where they trained on a specific grammatical construction in a question-and-answer setting without being explicitly told what they were practicing.

Following Ellis (2005), in which the authors conclude that a timed grammaticality judgment task (TGJT) and an oral production task can reliably test implicit knowledge, we use two pre- and posttests: a TGJT and a discourse completion task (DCT). The
DCT restricts the utterances to be produced by presenting the beginning of the sentence, thereby making the production less spontaneous, but forcing the learner to use the target grammatical structure.

Analysis of participants' performance on the tests produce interesting but mixed results, and persistent questions surface: do the tests measure similar language competencies, how do the modalities of the tests influence the results, and how can we be sure the tests are tapping into implicit knowledge? We would welcome an opportunity to discuss our findings and our methods for testing implicit knowledge of a specific grammatical feature.

**Evaluating input in the foreign language classroom: Assessing non-native speaker teacher proficiency**

**Liv Persson**

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Considerable differences exist between schools in the Netherlands with respect to the quantity and quality of foreign language input that young children receive (Thijs, Tuin, & Trimbos, 2011). Little research has explored to what extent the quality of the teacher’s foreign language proficiency influences children’s language development (but cf. Bowers & Vasilyeva, 2011). Educational scientists have studied the (dis)advantages of native speaker versus non-native speaker teachers, but approached the subject from a didactic rather than a linguistic point of view (see e.g., Arva & Medgyes, 2000). Furthermore, only exploratory studies (e.g., Chevalking, 2010) have been carried out investigating differences between non-native speaker teachers of various proficiency levels and how this affects children’s language learning. In summary, it remains unknown if, and if so: to what extent, differences in the quality of foreign language input have an effect on children’s language development.

The present study aims to assess the role of the teachers’ foreign language proficiency in children’s language learning. The teacher’s proficiency is determined as follows: (i) through self-assessment statements (Council of Europe, 2009) and (ii) based on the judgements of trained native speaker judges. In addition, classroom observations are conducted to assess the type of language used inside the classroom. In this longitudinal study, data is also gathered on children’s receptive vocabulary, grammar, and morphosyntactic development over two years time.

In this doctoral workshop I would like to receive feedback on the appropriateness of the suggested ways of assessing teacher proficiency in the foreign language. Main issues I
would like to discuss concern: (i) the applicability of the CEFR framework (either through self-assessments or through native speaker judgements), (ii) possible changes in teacher proficiency over time, (iii) potential discrepancies between the teachers’ ‘actual’ foreign language proficiency and language use inside the classroom and (iv) situations that involve multiple teachers for a single group of children.

References


**Effects of perceptual training on the perception and production of English vowels by native speakers of European Portuguese**

**Anabela Rato**

*University of Minho*

Many studies have demonstrated that computer-based perceptual training programmes can be effective in improving second language learners’ perception of segmental speech contrasts, but only a few have aimed at observing the transfer to production. Also, to my knowledge, there has been no research which analyzed the effects of phonetic training on the pronunciation of English vowels by native speakers of European Portuguese. Therefore, this study aims at investigating the effect of high-variability phonetic training on the perception and production of three English vowel contrasts /i-/ɪ/, /ɛ-/æ/, and /u-/ʊ/ by thirty Portuguese EFL learners.

The perceptual training will consist of five sessions divided into two blocks: (1) discrimination tasks and (2) alternative-forced-choice identification sequences followed
by immediate feedback. In the first three sessions the learners will perform 1.1) a categorical AX discrimination task and 1.2) a two-alternative forced choice task, and in the last two sessions 2.1) an oddity discrimination task and 2.2) a seven-alternative identification task. Two sentence-reading tests will be designed so as to investigate the production of English and European Portuguese vowels and an alternative-forced-choice identification task with natural stimuli will be applied to test the participants’ perception of English vowels. The same test structure will be used for pre-, post-, and retention tests.

Two theoretical frameworks will be addressed in order to explain the findings of this study, namely the Speech Learning Model (SLM) developed by Flege (1995) and the L2 Perceptual Learning Model (PAM-L2), proposed by Best and Tyler (2007) which is based on the Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM, Best, 1995). These theoretical models will be used to describe how the L2 phonological categories are mapped onto existing L1 categories.

Counterfactuals in French and Italian: From some descriptive features in L1 to Second Language Acquisition

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Counterfactual thinking is a human cognitive process in which reality is compared to an imagined view of what might have been [1]. One of its overt markers is the two-clause conditional if P Q [2] but, unlike hypothetical conditionals, counterfactuals introduce an antecedent (if P) that the speaker assume as false at topic time. The acquisition of counterfactuals has mainly been studied in children and it has raised the question of whether difficulties in such an acquisition come from the conceptual or the syntactic field [3], [4]. The aim of the study is to transfer this question to adult instructed SLA. The formal and structural particularities of French and Italian expressing counterfactuals provide us with an interesting scenario to test Slobin’s thinking for speaking theory at that abstract level.

The article is the result of a cross-sectional pilot study focused on the acquisition of counterfactuals in spoken French as a L2 by a group of 10 instructed Italian bilinguals. Participants are aged between 20 and 30 years old. They have learnt French as a L2 for at least four years and lived in France at the time of data collection. Guided interviews were developed both in French and Italian in a random order. As a stimulus, participants were given a 200 words text. After reading the text, they were asked to answer a set of
eight instructions corresponding to three different tasks: a mutation task [5], a causal listing [5] and a preventability task [6]. The same method was carried out with a French native control group.

The main finding of the study is that spoken French and Italian differ in the way they locate syntactic resources in the construction of alternatives to factual events. More specifically, the presence of if-clauses is greater in Italian L1 while French native speakers generally do not retrieve the protasis in order to produce counterfactual alternatives. Instead they enhance apodosis with modal verbs. This has both structural and semantic implications since French shows marked preference for shorter utterances carrying permission and obligation values. In addition, the comparison between French L2 and L1 in our corpus reveals that Italian bilinguals transfer some syntactic devices from Italian concerning the information structure. Besides access to standard verbal morphology remains problematic in L2 when it is framed by modal and subjective values -by the means of reported evidentials or epistemic markers- introducing the attribution of mental states.

References


To use or not to use: The (over)use of partitive subjects in Estonian, German and Dutch learners of Finnish

Marianne Spoelman

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Finnish belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family and is particularly well known for its rich and complex morphology. Consisting of fifteen cases, the Finnish case system also comprises a partitive case, which is a typical case characterizing the Finnic languages. Being mainly used as a subject, object and predicative case expressing negative polarity, quantitatively unboundedness and aspectually unboundedness, the Finnish partitive involves a wide range of functions. Probably as a consequence of this, the use of the partitive case remains a constant struggle for L2 learners of Finnish.

This study, conducted within the framework of a research project on the use of the partitive case in Finnish learner language, investigates the (over)use of partitive subjects in Estonian, German and Dutch learners of Finnish as a foreign language. Research materials were selected from the Estonian, German and Dutch subcorpora of the International Corpus of Learner Finnish (ICLFI) and aligned to the CEFR levels of proficiency. As Finnish and Estonian are closely related languages and partitive subjects are similarly used in both languages (i.e. in existential sentences), Estonian learners of Finnish are likely to have a far easier time than German and Dutch learners of Finnish who cannot draw on L1-L2 similarities in this respect. By comparing learners of Finnish from closely related and non-related L1 backgrounds, the current study aims to address how the presence versus lack of L1-L2 similarities may affect the foreign language learning process.

As will be discussed, the study revealed conspicuous interactions between positive interlingual influence (i.e. L1 influence) and negative intralingual influence (e.g. overgeneralization) in that the former was merely prevalent in the Estonian learner corpus and the latter mainly in the other learner corpora. It will be argued that these phenomena may inhibit each other because they emerge in a similar way.
Effect of L2 time of exposure on L2 development: A study on language acquisition by teenagers of bilingual education programs in Colombia

Isabel Tejada Sánchez

*Universitat Pompeu Fabra*

The diversity of Bilingual Education (BE) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) practices are playing an important role these days in shaping those societies which share the goal of achieving multilingualism in education (García, 2008; Perez-Vidal and Juan-Garau, 2010; Serrano, 2010). The situation in Colombia is a case in point, as specific forms of BE have spread both in public and private educational institutions in the past 20 years. This has given rise to the inclusion of BE teaching programs in different languages, a situation which we seek to analyze with data from mainstream secondary education EFL programmes (De Mejía & Fonseca-Duque, 2009).

This paper presents an ongoing cross-sectional study undertaken with descriptive data collected in BE institutions in the city of Cali. These institutions offer early immersion programmes in English as an L2 beginning at age 4 through to age 17 with approximately 8,300 cumulated hours of L2 instruction. However, a notorious decrease in the intensity of exposure to the L2 occurs by age 15: at that point school time in the L2 shrinks from amounting to a 50% of the total curriculum hours to less than 30%. The study measures the effect of such a decrease in the hours of exposure on the progress in English within the BE program. For this purpose, EFL proficiency tests were administered in two data collection times (T1-T2) to four age groups of students (N=25-30 each) at the beginning of the decrease of intensity and through the following years: when L2 intensity in exposure reaches 50% of school time (age 14), followed by 40% (age 15) and then by 30% (ages 16 and 17), which coincides with the end of the programme. The preliminary outcomes suggest an effect of the intensity decrease on L2 development in guided written and oral production tasks for the four groups compared.

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Pérez Vidal, C. & Juan Garau, M. (2010). From Bilingualism to Multilingualism in Catalan/Spanish Communities in Spain. To CLIL OR NOT TO CLIL?
Recent research in SLA focusing on motion events shows that the speakers’ L1 and L2 mutually influence each other in the domain of event conceptualization (Brown & Gullberg 2011, Czechowska & Ewert 2011). The question remains, however, whether bidirectional cross-linguistic influence is also present for fictive motion (FM) sentences that describe static scenes in dynamic terms (e.g. The path wanders through the jungle; cf. Talmy 2000).

To date, no detailed corpus analysis of salience and diversity of FM constructions in Polish has been conducted that would help to establish the links between lexicalization and conceptualization of FM events and that would answer the question of the degree of participation of trajectories (travellable: roads and untravellable: fences, cf. Matsumoto 1996) and motion verbs in FM in Polish as compared to English. Such cross-linguistic corpus-based analyses will be performed prior to the main eye-tracking experiment.

The objective of the empirical study is to (1) explore the processing and conceptualization of FM events in Polish and English via eye-tracking and (2) ascertain whether monolinguals and bilinguals similarly conceptualize FM events in their languages, reflected in eye movements across the display in non-verbalized and verbalized context. Recent priming and eye-tracking research on English and Hindi monolinguals showed that, as compared with static counterparts (e.g. The path is in the jungle), FM expressions (a) take significantly longer to process (Matlock 2001, 2004), and (b) yield different eye movements for visual displays (Matlock & Richardson 2004, Mishra & Singh 2010). These findings are viewed as the evidence for distinct mental representations for static and FM descriptions. The empirical work on FM in Polish, however, is limited to the author’s three priming experiments where Polish and English monolinguals and Polish-English bilinguals exhibited discrepant FM processing latencies as a function of motion priming and a language profile. This finding may indicate that conceptualization of FM may be not only be language-dependent but also monolingual/bilingual profile-sensitive, which will be re-examined with eye-tracking.
Developing a pedagogical framework for teaching the Chinese aspect marking system – A comparative study of grammar-translation and communicative approaches

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Aston University

The L2 acquisition of Chinese aspect has been investigated by many researchers (Sun, 1993; Zhao, 1996; Wen, 1997; Teng, 1999; Duff and Li, 1998, 2002; Jin and Hendriks, 2005; Ma, 2006). Their studies show two main findings, one is the acquisition order of the aspect markers, and the other is the accuracy in using the aspect markers. Among those, only Duff and Li (2002) mentioned the effect of teaching on the accuracy of using Chinese aspect. However, it is unknown what impacts teaching methods/approaches could have on learners’ use of the aspect markers. This paper aims to contribute to filling that gap. It explores whether a specific teaching framework assists the learning of Chinese aspect markers by L2 learners. We first design a session of Chinese aspect following the acquisition order of the Chinese aspect markers in the research findings. The session will then be delivered to two groups of beginner level learners in a UK University using different teaching approaches. One is the grammar-translation approach, which focuses on learning of aspectual forms, and the other is the...
communicative approach, which focuses on meaning. The learners will take a pre-test assessing their general knowledge of Chinese, an immediate test after the teaching session on aspect to compare the immediate impact of teaching approaches, and a post-test after two months to trace the lasting effect the teaching approaches. The investigation aims to find out whether the grammar-translation approach leads to learners’ higher accuracy levels than communicative approach in using aspects in grammatical tasks, and whether the communicative approach leads to learners’ better use of aspect than the grammar-translation approach in comprehension tasks.
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