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| **Charting the first hours of foreign language learning in the classroom: An experimental study with English-speaking novice learners of Polish** |
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| **Background** |
| Understanding the language learning process and how it is affected by specific teaching practices is critical for language learning theory development. It also has deep implications for educational practice and policy. Despite these factors, few experimental studies exist. This project provides the UK adult contribution to a 4-lateral collaboration (Germany/France/Netherlands) on the very first phases of foreign language learning: a topic that has received scant attention (Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 1998). Another noted research gap (Flege, 2009) relates to how learners make effective use of different types of input: work has either looked at artificial/miniature languages (Mueller, 2006; Saffran, 2001) or exposure to small amounts of highly controlled natural input (Gullberg, Roberts & Dimroth, 2012). Finally, age is assumed critical in determining second language (L2) success, but often research focuses on ultimate attainment of adult L2s vs. natives. Child L2 research has been relatively neglected, but shows that children do have problems (Unsworth, 2005), particularly in a foreign language setting and that younger and older L2 learners may use different—as yet undefined—learning mechanisms (Myles & Mitchell, 2011). |
| **Aims & Design** |
| Together with our collaborators we are attempting to address the above research gaps, providing complete beginners (English, French, German, Dutch) with controlled Polish input specifically designed such that cross-linguistic comparisons on learning at different linguistic levels (lexicon, morpho-syntax, phonology, pragmatics) can be made. Learning is measured by the same tasks, targeting perception, comprehension and production. The type of instruction is manipulated: an equivalent group of learners experience an 'explicit exposure' condition in which the structured basic Polish input is supplemented with form-related information directing attention to the forms being taught (e.g., singular/plural morphology), thus simulating more traditional grammar teaching. The effect of age will be addressed by running the same study with children (10yrs) in each country. |
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| **Collaborators** |
| Germany - Christine Dimroth (University of Osnabreuk) [http://www.imis.uni- osnabrueck.de/UEBERUNS/mitglied/dimroth.htm]  France - Rebekah Rast (American University in Paris) [http://www.aup.edu/faculty/dept/clen/rast.htm], Marzena Watorek (Paris 8) [http://univ- paris8.academia.edu/WatorekMarzena], Heather Hilton (CNRS) [http://www.umr7023.cnrs.fr/-Hilton-Heather-.html]  Netherlands - Marianne Starren (Radboud University Nijmegen) |
| **Impacts** |
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| **Publications** |
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