

Multiple L2 learning



The **AIM OF THE PROJECT** is to give an account of the development of advanced foreign/second language (L2) proficiency in learners in a multilingual learning and living environment. The overarching research question addressed is whether and how multiple L2 learning in a multilingual learning context shapes the ultimate level of attainment in the L2s. The results of the investigation are supposed to feed into the planning and evaluating of educational policy and practice for learner populations, whose members are striving to become multilingual agents in multicultural environments.

Action research

TARGET GROUP: University students in a trilingual environment

Highly educated adult learners who learn two additional languages at university level in order to become multilingual professionals able to sell their multiple language capacities and multicultural expertise in an internationalized marketplace.

A hot topic in more than one way

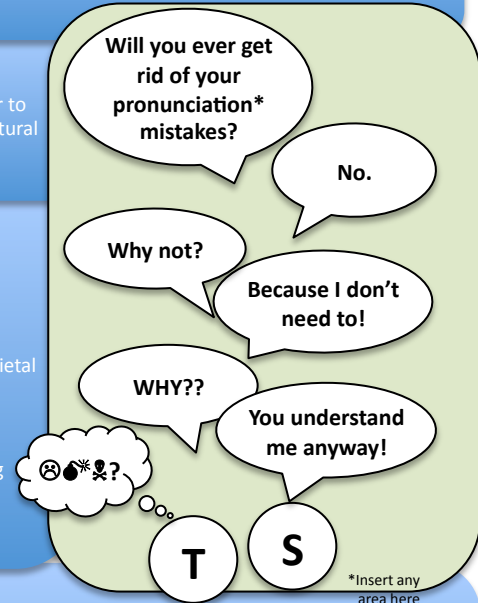
INTERESTING

Socio-politically and socio-economically:

- Investigating the mobile, multilingual agents characteristic of and demanded by a 'globalized' world

Linguistically:

- Simultaneous learning of multiple additional languages, giving rise to individual and societal multilingualism
- The complexities of communication in multilingual settings
- English as a special challenge for L2 learners on both psycholinguistic and social levels
 - Communicative needs, comparative usefulness of the L2s, investment in L2 learning
- Development of advanced L2 capacities, which are the prerequisite for becoming competent agents in multilingual and cross-cultural communication



L2 development contextualized

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

A longitudinal and fully contextualized account of the individuals' L2 learning processes. The focus is on the relationship between instructional goals and learning outcomes (patterns of language use) at different stages of the learning process.

Language usage/linguistic output



Learners' individual investment in L2 learning

The multilingual nature of the context of L2 learning and the relationship

between the languages involved

Inter- and intralingual transfer on the phonetic ('accent') and discourse-pragmatic ('pragmatic fluency') levels

Based on functional theories

THEORETICAL BASIS

- 'Language use in context' perspective with L2 learning conceived of as a context-bound, situated practice and process.
- 'Dynamic model of multilingualism' (Herdina & Jessner 2001), where social factors are seen as influencing L2 learning,
- Systemic Functional Linguistics** as a social and functional approach to language in which language is understood as a systemic resource for making meaning and construing experience in context (Halliday 1978, 1994);
- L2 development is conceptualized in terms of *language socialization* (Ochs & Schieffelin 1986, Duff & Hornberger 2010, Duff 2010) into the academic *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) inside the university and individual personal communities (*social networks*, e.g. Milroy 1987) outside.

Longitudinal format and data triangulation

DATA and METHOD

The project has a longitudinal format, using an apparent time format and multiple wave sampling. L2 development is measured by observing three comparable populations from the first, second, and third year of study, respectively. Production data is sampled at least twice per group in authentic settings related to academic activities (e.g. presentations, in-class group work, exams). Throughout the project time, real-time data is collected as the first year population moves through the three-year BA-program. The combination of apparent time and real time format allows for comparison between and within the learner populations. The analysis of the language data is triangulated by an analysis of the individuals' personal learning contexts (language biographies, communities of practice, social networks), captured through questionnaires and introspective interviews.

X Data collection points

	Years of study →		
	1	2	3
Group 1	X	X	X
Group 2		X	
Group 3			X

"L2 learning is probably needs-driven"

A TENTATIVE HYPOTHESIS

The language requirements of the academic community of practice, which operates on an L2 basis, and the social networks a learner is member of may overlap to various degrees and either converge or diverge over time, resulting in either a reinforcement or weakening of the investment in L2 learning and a development of L2 proficiency that either diverges from or converges with the instructional goals.