

Symposium:

Predicting and improving English foreign language skills in elementary school children

Amsterdam | Thursday 26 October 2017 | 10:00 – 17:00

Location

Roeterseilandcampus building M (REC-M) 1.01,
Plantage Muidergracht 12, 1018 TV Amsterdam

Theme

This symposium is organized in the context of our ORWELL-project, a project that focuses on cognitive and motivational predictors of written and oral proficiency in English using a longitudinal approach. (Inter)national experts will present the latest scientific insights into foreign and second language acquisition and teaching.

Register

The symposium is free. You can register via: rudolfberlin-eng.org/symposia/

The ORWELL-project has been made possible with a grant from the Netherlands Initiative for Education research (NRO), part of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), the Dutch research council.

Program

10.00 – 10.15	Welcome
10.15 – 10.20	Opening by the chairs Dr. Patrick Snellings and Dr. Judith Rispens
10.20 – 11.00	Prof. Esther Geva (University of Toronto)
11.00 – 11.40	Prof. Victor van Daal (Edge Hill University)
11.40 – 12.20	Prof. Mikko Aro (University of Jyväskylä)
12.20 – 13.20	Lunch break (lunch not included)
13.20 – 14.00	Prof. Rick de Graaff (Utrecht University)
14.00 – 14.40	Prof. Carmen Muñoz (University of Barcelona)
14.40 – 15.20	Dr Margreet van Koert (University of Amsterdam)
15.20 – 15.40	Coffee break
15.40 – 16.20	Nihayra Leona, MSc (University of Amsterdam)
16.20 – 17.00	Prof. Judit Kormos (Lancaster University)
17.00 – 17.30	Drinks

For titles and abstracts, see below

Presentations



Prof. Esther Geva (University of Toronto)

Cognitive underpinnings of L2 language and literacy in typical and atypical learners – A longitudinal perspective

10.20 – 11.00

I have been conducting longitudinal prospective and retrospective research that examines developmental trajectories associated with (i) language, literacy, and cognitive skills of typically developing L2 and L1 students and their peers who may have learning difficulties such as dyslexia or language impairment; (ii) the role of L2 proficiency, and (iii) underlying cognitive processes that predict subsequent reading and language comprehension overall as well as in L2 learners with different developmental profiles. In this short presentation, I will describe a few studies that illustrate this body of research with a particular focus on predictors of vocabulary, decoding and reading comprehension. This research has theoretical implications as well as implications for assessment and intervention with immigrant children.



Prof. Victor van Daal (Edge Hill University)

The role of orthographic learning in second language acquisition: A theoretical review

11.00 – 11.40

Orthographic learning ability is defined as the ability to develop fully-specified lexical entries, which make efficient reading and spelling possible. Through experience with written words, that is, independent attempts to phonologically recode words, children become better at storing and retrieving orthographic representations. Individual differences in not only L1 but also L2 reading and spelling performance are determined by orthographic learning ability over and above vocabulary, rapid automatised naming and phonological short-term memory. Recently, we found in a series of modelling studies that orthographic learning uniquely contributes to reading and spelling attainment and shares little variance with other cognitive and linguistic skills. In the talk we will elaborate on both the (interactive) roles of phonological short-term memory and orthographic learning ability in L2 reading and spelling.



Prof. Mikko Aro (University of Jyväskylä)

Reading fluency development and interventions

11.40 – 12.20

Due to the features of Finnish orthography, persistent problems in reading speed are typical characteristics of reading disabilities, often despite good reading accuracy. However, the knowledge of efficient means for supporting reading fluency is scarce. The presentation summarizes the specific features of Finnish language and orthography, as well as findings concerning reading acquisition in Finnish, especially from the point of view of reading fluency. The presentation also outlines the approaches, and findings, of recent intervention studies focusing on reading fluency in Finnish.



Prof. Rick de Graaff (Utrecht University)

English as a Foreign Language in Primary Education: Effects of Teacher and Student Characteristics on Classroom Interaction and Language Acquisition

13.20 – 14.00

In many European countries English is taught as a foreign language in primary education from the age of 6. Language exposure in school is usually limited to a few hours per week. Twenty schools in the Netherlands have recently implemented a partial immersion program, in which 30-50% of lesson time is taught in English. Most classroom teachers involved are advanced-level non-native speakers of English; some are native speaking specialist language teachers. As language exposure and interaction opportunities are considered influential factors for language acquisition, it was investigated how teachers' language proficiency level and pedagogical approach affected quantity and quality of their English language use in terms of syntactic complexity, lexical sophistication and lexical diversity. Moreover, it was investigated how classroom language exposure and interaction related to pupils' language proficiency. Of each participating teacher, two lessons were observed, transcribed and analyzed in terms of pedagogical approach and language use. Results were related to grade 1 pupils' receptive vocabulary knowledge as measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-IV), in their third year of bilingual education. Individual characteristics such as out-of-school exposure to English and parents' SES were taken into account. Results indicate that teachers' language proficiency level does not directly predict classroom language use. Pedagogical approach, however, affects the quantity and quality of teachers' language use. Pupils in rich exposure and interaction classrooms tend to score higher on the Peabody test. The results of this study will be compared with the outcomes of K-6 low-intensity English programs in Dutch primary education. Here too we found large differences between pupils and schools, both in the early start (K-6) and late start (grade 5-6) groups. Implications will be discussed with respect issues of early start, intensity and quality of the English programs in primary education.

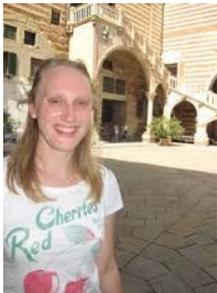


Prof. Carmen Muñoz (University of Barcelona)

Ten years of school English language learning: Outcomes and critical factors

14.00 – 14.40

English is taught in Spanish schools from grade 1 of primary school and it is generally introduced even earlier, in pre-school. An important question is: What linguistic outcomes can we realistically expect at the end of obligatory school after 10 years of English lessons in input-limited classrooms? An even more crucial question is: Why do we obtain such results? To deepen our understanding of the processes of English learning in our schools we embarked in a longitudinal study which started in grade 1 (6-7 years old). We gained access to five state-funded schools, followed the students' linguistic progression, and gathered information about their family background, and students' affective and cognitive factors. We sat in their classrooms and talked to their teachers. Then we moved with the focal students to their secondary schools, observing the transition, and finishing our study at the end of compulsory education in grade 10. This presentation will describe the study and its outcomes and will then focus on the factors that are perceived to be more critical in the learners' 10-year long trajectories.



**Dr. Margreet van Koert, Dr. Judith Rispens, Nihayra Leona, MSc.,
Dr. Jurgen Tijms, Prof. Maurits van der Molen & Dr. Patrick Snellings (University of Amsterdam)**

Dutch pupils' English vocabulary and grammar skills

14.40 – 15.20

The ORWELL project is a longitudinal study aiming to uncover the predictors of successful English language learning. The current study presents parts of the outcomes from the first measurement. It examines the effects of Dutch vocabulary and grammar, English vocabulary and extramural English on pupils' English grammar skills. Participants are Dutch fourth grade pupils (N=275). The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test was used in Dutch (Schlichting, 2005) and in English (Dunn & Dunn, 2007) to measure the children's level of vocabulary knowledge. In addition, the tasks Word Structure in English, Sentence Structure in English and Formulated Sentences in Dutch of the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (Wiig, Semel & Secord, 2003) were used. Finally, a questionnaire determined the pupils' extent of extramural English. The results show that the Dutch vocabulary and grammar skills do not predict the English grammar skills, but the pupils' English vocabulary size does. Furthermore, extramural English added to this prediction. Thus, the level of proficiency in the first language seems to have less influence on the pupils' English grammar skills than extramural English.



Nihayra Leona, MSc., Dr. Judith Rispens, Prof. Maurits van der Molen, Dr. Margreet van Koert, Dr. Jurgen Tijms & Dr. Patrick Snellings (University of Amsterdam)

Extramural English vs. motivation: Extramural English as the more important predictor of English language learners' vocabulary

15.40 – 16.20

A great number of studies has highlighted the role of motivational factors in adult English second language learning. Some studies have suggested that the younger the learners, the less important the role of motivational factors. Other studies pointed to the contribution of extramural English, i.e. exposure to English outside of a formal language learning setting, to English language learning. As part of the ORWELL project, we investigated the contribution of both motivational factors and extramural English to children's English language learning. Participants were 284 monolingual (Dutch) and bilingual (Dutch-other language) primary school children (4th graders, 9-yr olds). The results revealed that the children's English receptive vocabulary is predicted by several types of extramural English, and that motivational factors play a minor role. These findings indicate that extramural English is critical to children's English language learning. In contrast to adults, the role of motivation in young children learning English as a second language is relatively minor. The implications of these findings for the teaching of English as a second language in children will be discussed.



Prof. Judit Kormos (Lancaster University)

Motivation and the foreign language learning processes of students with specific learning difficulties

16.20 – 17.00

In this talk I discuss the role of motivation in influencing the foreign language learning processes of students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs). Relevant links between cognition and motivation will be made with a special emphasis on how the cognitive appraisal of learners' difficulties impacts on their motivation, and how affective reactions can reciprocally influence the cognitive processes of language learning. To exemplify these links, I report a series of studies conducted in Hungary that examined the motivation of students with SpLDs by means of interviews and questionnaires. In the final part of the talk I explore how the social and educational context interacts with the affective correlates of SpLDs.