



***Reflections on tracking language  
development during a year abroad:  
PROLINGSA (Linguistic Progress during Study Abroad)***

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# Linguistic Progress during Study Abroad (PROLINGSA)

- Who we are and what we do
- Origins of the project
- Theoretical considerations
- Aims
- Methodology
- Reflections on methodology
- Initial observations

# What we do

- SLA research (L2 French, English, Spanish)
- Pascale
  - Acquisition of nominal reference (with E. Lenart)
  - Acquisition of tense, aspect, evidentiality (with E. Melac)
- Pascale & Amanda
  - Research methodology (with A. Gudmestad)
  - Acquisition of means of expression of modality
- Amanda
  - Acquisition of phraseological competence in an L2 (with F. Forsberg Lundell & C. Lindqvist)
  - Acquisition of variable structures in an L2 (with A. Gudmestad & B. Donaldson)

# Our methodologies

- Pascale
  - Experimental tasks (film or picture retelling tasks)
  - Corpus analysis (oral production data). Cross-sectional data collection.
- Amanda
  - Experimental tasks (e.g. contextualized written production; experimentation on the processing of lexical chunks with reaction time measurement)
  - Development of phraseological competence tests
  - Corpus analysis (written and oral data)

# Origins of the project

- COST baby
- Interest in language development (phraseology, TAM reference)
- Methodological concerns with cross-sectional studies (Ortega & Iberri-Shea, 2005) (individual variation often not taken into account, Hulstijn 2015)
- COST SAREP Mallorca January 2018
  - John Plews' plenary on language learning journals



# Theoretical considerations

- “Nowadays, more and more study abroad researchers recognize the **value of longitudinal studies** that entail the on-going collection and **analysis of qualitative or mixed-method data** to make sense of divergent language and culture-learning processes » (Jackson, 2017, p. 122)
- “Only a longitudinal approach, including the **voices of the researched** and the ways they represent their experience, can provide insights into the **relationship between language learning and social context**, and thereby begin to unravel the mystery of individual differences that has traditionally plagued the interpretation of study abroad research” (Kinginger & Blattner, 2008, p. 241)
- “we also need to know more about why students go abroad, **how they conceive of strategic language learning** (Gillette 1994), and what benefits they believe will accrue to them if they succeed” (Kinginger, 2009, pp. 110-111).

# Aims of the project

- Scientific goals:
  - Measuring the impact of study abroad programmes through tracking linguistic development during a year abroad Erasmus+ exchange programme in Ireland and the UK
    - Lexical and phraseological competence (Fitzpatrick, 2012)
    - Use of modality (Leclercq & Edmonds 2017)
  - Connecting strategic and social factors to linguistic development (Dewey, 2017; Gao, 2006; Mitchell et al. 2017)
- Institutional goals:
  - Promoting international mobility
  - Better preparation of candidates before international mobility
- Other goal: involve learners in a project that will be beneficial to them

# Methodology

- Pilot study
- Case studies
- 5 participants (2nd or 3rd year university students majoring in languages [*langues étrangères appliquées*] and embarking on a year-long Erasmus exchange in Dublin, Cork or London)
- Longitudinal approach:
  - Pre-departure data collection (June 2018)
  - 3 data collection during study abroad period
  - Post-stay data collection (May 2019)



# Tasks

- **Data collection 1 (pre-stay)**
  - Filmed semi-guided interview (biographical information, expectations and aims regarding year abroad)
  - Oxford Proficiency Test
  - Lex30
  - Emails sent to academic staff
  - Explanation of language journal procedure
- **Data collection 2, 3, 4 (during-stay)**
  - Filmed semi-guided interview
    - Discussion of language journal entries
  - Emails sent to academic staff
- **Data collection 5 (post-stay)**
  - Filmed semi-guided interview (retrospective reflection on year abroad and expectations/aims for the future)
  - Oxford Proficiency Test
  - Lex30
  - Emails sent to academic staff

# Participants

| Participant | Male/female | Age in June 2018 | OPT       | Lex30 score | Host university |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------------|
| A           | F           | 19               | Lower int | 43          | DIT             |
| C           | F           | 18               | Lower int | 29          | UCC             |
| Y           | M           | 19               | Advanced  | 68          | Middlesex       |
| N           | M           | 19               | Advanced  | 69          | UCC             |
| M           | F           | 19               | Advanced  | 58          | UCC             |

French L1 (except Y, early bilingual French/Turkish)

No long-term stay abroad


BA in applied foreign languages (English + Italian/Spanish/Chinese/Arabic + business modules).

# Methodological reflections

- Finding a balance between the needs of the researchers and the participants

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- Finding a balance between the needs of the researchers and the participants
- Adapting the language learning journal

- Each entry concerned at least one experience communicating with a German speaker. 
- S/he had to briefly
  1. describe the experience / interaction,
  2. record any specific words or phrases or grammar needed,
  3. record any new words or phrases heard and even picked up,
  4. identify gaps in her/his language that would have facilitated communication,
  5. explain whether the communication was successful, how it made you feel, and whether there was any cultural learning involved, and
  6. set/adjust personal learning goals.

Taken from the powerpoint presentation used by John Plews during his plenary talk at the COST event in Palma de Mallorca, January 2018

Each entry should focus on one experience communicating with an English speaker (native or non-native), in which you noticed something. This “something” can be anything that is linked to language (so, grammar, pronunciation, words, how to say things in certain contexts, etc. etc.)

Each entry should include the following elements:

- The date and place
- A description of the communication / interaction experience
  - Case 1: you were stuck at some stage during the interaction. What happened? What did you do?
  - Case 2: you noticed something interesting during the interaction. What was it? How did you react?
- What did you learn from this experience?

# Methodological reflections

- Finding a balance between the needs of the researchers and the participants
- Adapting the language learning journals
- Choosing a measure of lexical knowledge
  - Fitzpatrick & Meara (2004); Fitzpatrick & Clenton (2017)



Write down the first four  
(English) words you think of  
when you read each word in  
the list

substance

# substance

| C                         | A | M  | Y  | N                                  |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>hold<br/>something</i> |   | <i>medication<br/>illegal<br/>inside</i> | <i>drug<br/>toxic<br/>unknown<br/>colour</i> | <i>fluid<br/>concrete<br/>grow</i> |

# Interviews June 2018 / C

## How do you plan on improving your English?



# Interviews June 2018 / Y

## How do you plan on improving your English?



# Conclusion

- According to participants, fundamental role of social experience/networks in language development
- What dynamics between social experience and linguistic development?
  - To be explored through case studies

Thanks

Merci

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