

Developing linguistic competence in second language learning: fluency and prosody in Italian learners of German

Simona Sbranna

IfL-Phonetik, Universität zu Köln

In second language (L2) learning, attention is generally focussed on the knowledge learners have to acquire. However, shifting the focus to learners themselves may reveal to be much more fruitful, as learners' profile, in particular their previous knowledge and language background, influences the learning process.

Therefore, the present research project aims to shed light on the role of learner-specific profiles in L2 learning, investigating the effects of the native language (L1) on L2 fluency and prosody throughout the learning process. For this purpose, the development of L2 prosodic and interactional competence will be investigated in Italian learners – Neapolitan variety – of German at different levels of L2 proficiency.

The first section of the project is dedicated to L2 fluency. I will problematize the lack of attention in research on L2 fluency in interactions and show the results of preliminary attempts to design a method for a comprehensive analysis of the co-created fluency by L2 speakers in dialogues.

The second section focuses on L2 prosodic marking of information status. I will show that contrary to previous findings, Italian speakers of the Neapolitan variety do distinguish between new and given items postfocally, although they do not make this distinction with the presence or absence of deaccentuation. Moreover, I will show the strategy that the same speakers apply in L2 German to mark prosodically information status and compare it with preliminary results of a native German control group.