Interaction of Age and Instruction in Children and Adolescents’ L2 Acquisition of Vocabulary and Grammar

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INTRODUCTION

- Cross-situational statistical learning (CSL) contributes to vocabulary and grammar acquisition (Rebuschat et al., 2021).
- Aim: effect of age and instruction in L2 vocabulary and grammar learning via CSL:
  - using artificial language;
  - focusing on the nature of learning process (DeKeyser, 2013).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is CSL age-invariant that remains stable throughout development, or does it improve with age?
2. To what extent does explicit instruction affect children’s learning of L2 vocabulary and grammar in CSL, and how does this impact vary across different age groups?

MATERIALS & METHODS

- Participants and Conditions: N = 150; Age 8-13
  - Explicit instruction was given on grammar (i.e., the verb-final word order) of the artificial language

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CROSS-SITUATIONAL LEARNING TASK

- 30 minutes
- Training: block 1-3, vocabulary test 1
- block 4-6, vocabulary test 2
- Transitioning to testing
- Syntax Testing

DEBRIEFING SESSION

- Noticing
- No report
- Debriefing questionnaire

RESULTS

- Training trials
  - Significant learning:
    - Implicit group: 12-13 children only
    - Explicit instruction group: all three age groups.

- Vocabulary testing trials
  - Learning effect was found in:
    - Implicit: Nouns 10-11, Verbs 12-13, Markers 10-11

- Syntax testing trials
  - Who learned successfully?
    - 8-9 & 12-13 children; 10-11 marginal
  - Instruction helped?
    - 12-13 children only

DISCUSSION

- Cross-situational statistical learning improves with age.
- Instruction boosts learning process.
- Older children benefit more on verb and syntax learning.

REFERENCES