

Thinking Aloud and Reading Time Experiments: Using qualitative and quantitative Methods to investigate Reading Processes in heterogenous Groups with low-literate Participants

In the context of the project Einfach Alpha! we are investigating possibilities and limits of simplifying technical language texts that are used in the vocational training of low-literate learners. We would like to discuss in more detail two of the methods we use.

In a practical vocational training context, we use a modified form of thinking aloud (Afflerbach & Johnston, 1984), in which trainees are instructed to think aloud before, during and after working on a construction piece. The data allow us to make inferences about their understanding and (non)use of (written) language resources that are available to them in the form of detailed work instructions. This is also interesting for research on writing acquisition as the (non)availability of such resources can promote or inhibit a development of (written) language skills. In pre-training classes on health and care, we use a variant in which the participants act as experts and evaluate schoolbook texts. Thereby they identify structures that they comprehend easily and those that cause difficulties.

Furthermore, we conduct reading time experiments (Jegerski, 2014) that help us to identify structures that are read faster and thus might be easier to process. So far, we have been able to use the method for reading time experiments at text, and sentence level. This method could also be used in an adapted form to study literacy (development).

In our presentation we would like to show and discuss how already existing methods can be successfully adapted to new contexts, inter alia for the target group of LESLLA learners and for the investigation of reading skills.

References:

Afflerbach, P. & Johnston, P. (1984). On the use of verbal reports in reading research. /*Journal of Reading Behavior*/, /16/(4), 307-322.

Jegerski, Jill (2014). Self-paced reading. In Jill Jegerski & Bill van Patten (ed.). *Research methods in second language psycholinguistics*. New York: Routledge, S. 20-49.

Biographies:

Alexis Feldmeier García works at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster and the University of Fribourg and focuses on learning processes in adolescents and adults with difficulties in reading and writing.

Askan Ghobeyshi works as a research assistant at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster and is involved in the project with the topics of literacy, language-sensitive teaching, and simplified language, among others.

Carolina Olszycka works as a research assistant at the Institute for German as a Foreign Language Philology at Heidelberg University. She is working on her PhD on the topic of morphologically complex verbs as a potential barrier in reading comprehension.

Sandra Pappert is a member of the Institute of German as a Foreign Language Philology at Heidelberg University. Her work centres on experimental and applied psycholinguistics, and grammar.