Complexity and task performance in newly immigrated students

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Currently higher numbers of newly immigrated students mark a spike in a general continuity of immigration into the German school system. Education policy regards linguistic competencies as a prerequisite for school integration.

While it is clear that these language competences go beyond the requirements of everyday communication, in many cases it remains unclear what specific requirements and competences are involved. Some theoretical approaches like 'language of schooling' (SCHLEPPEGRELL 2001) or 'Sprachausbau' (MAAS 2015,) try to conceptualize the ultimate attainment of this language of and for education. But how do these competences emerge and evolve in early phases of language acquisition in newly immigrated students and how can this development be modeled?

SLA research has introduced concepts such as complexity to track linguistic development in the L2 (cf. PALLOTTI 2015). And while linguistic complexity seems to fit well with the above concepts, it varies not only in terms of individual developmental phases, but also with respect to different registers and tasks (cf. BIBER/GRAY 2011, MICHEL ET AL. 2019, VANDEWEERD ET AL 2022).

Our presentation focuses on intra- and interindividual differences within the framework of linguistic complexity. More specifically, we focus both on individual developmental paths against the background of register and task variation. The data sample includes oral and written data from different communicative tasks and is taken from a longitudinal learner corpus of newly immigrated students in Germany (cf. SCHLAUCH 2022). We aim to ask for complexity parameters for early / earlier learner language varieties that take into account both quantitative as well as qualitative parameters. Our presentation aims at tracking down the hypothesis that knowledge of register differences (cf. LÜDELING ET AL. 2022) leads learners to adapt their linguistic behavior to different register requirements already in early language acquisition phases.

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