

THE DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORY OF SECOND LANGUAGE LISTENING

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY THROUGH THE LENS OF COMPLEX DYNAMIC SYSTEMS THEORY



UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION

Listening is usually the very first source of input so can be seen as the primary skill in language learning.

Interaction between subsystems is the key to listening success. Yet no research exists which examines how they interact over time.

What little longitudinal work on listening *does* exist is limited to months (if not weeks), has a maximum of three data collection points, and tends to focus on strategy use.

COMPLEXITY THEORY

States that learning is complex (many factors contribute) and dynamic (its nature fluctuates often). It explores variables in motion, relative to one another, and in context.

Therefore demands a multi-wave, multi-variable longitudinal research design.

Teachers see the complexity of interactions and processes in their lessons, so has particular validity for classroom research.

LEARNING AS GROWTH

If one imagines a learner's growth as a plant, the central element of the present study is about the relationship between the size of the leaves (the sub-systems of listening comprehension) and the plant (listening comprehension) as a whole.

It is also necessary to explore the context in which the learner's comprehension grows, and the classroom environment is seen as the soil, and the psychology and sociology of the learner as additional nutrients (here: sunshine).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the developmental trajectory of L2 French listening in a limited input instructed context?
- Over time, what change is seen in the relationships between various factors which contribute to L2 listening?
- To what extent do all listeners progress in a similar fashion?
- To what extent is listening progress linear?

METHODOLOGY

Cohort of 105 new starters at secondary school, beginning to learn French.

Test battery seven times a year: 21 times in total, starting Oct 2018, and thenceforth every half term until July 2021.

Small group of learners to be interviewed regularly.

Teachers to log listening activities in their lessons and participate in regular interviews, to understand the context of the learning.

Growth in listening comprehension as conceptualised by a plant, its soil and its nutrients

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