



Research Networking Programmes

Short Visit Grant or Exchange Visit Grant

(please tick the relevant box)

Scientific Report

The scientific report (WORD or PDF file – maximum of eight A4 pages) should be submitted online within one month of the event. It will be published on the ESF website.

Proposal Title:

The effects of multiple input modalities on word processing and acquisition

Application Reference N°: 6674

1) Purpose of the visit

The Language Acquisition Research Group (GRAL) at the University of Barcelona is currently setting up the project 'The EFL learning potential of in- and out-of-school exposure, with a focus on undubbed videos. Effects of age, proficiency and cognitive differences'. As a member of this group, I am conducting research on vocabulary acquisition and would like to investigate in more detail in this project those issues related to word processing and word learning, together with researchers at the University of Nottingham. Although we specialise in different fields, we share common research priorities to do some application-oriented research.

The visit aimed at planning collaborative work on the effects that undubbed videos have on second (L2) / foreign language (FL) vocabulary acquisition. The objective of the stay was developing joint work that combined methods from two different complementary fields: language learning and cognitive psychology.

In my stay I had two main purposes: first of all, to get more acquainted with the research conducted in the host university, as well as to learn and exchange necessary information not directly related to our main areas of expertise. Secondly, it was a priority to work on the design and preparation of materials for the studies which will be conducted in Barcelona with a large number of Catalan/Spanish bilingual learners of English. In the preparation of the experiments, the focus was on word acquisition and word processing.

2) Description of the work carried out during the visit

In line with the objectives presented above, during my stay I was able to talk and work with researchers from different fields, like Dr. M. Rodgers, who is a specialist on language learning through watching videos and has conducted research on mass media and language acquisition. In addition, I was able to discuss with Dr. W. van Heuven (from the School of Psychology) several points to investigate in the experiments on word processing using eye-tracking. He has conducted extensive research on multiple input modalities and subtitling as an aid to L2 acquisition, with a special focus on incidental vocabulary acquisition. Dr. A. Pellicer, from the Bilingualism Research Group at Nottingham University, has also used the eye-tracking methodology to study vocabulary learning from reading. Therefore, they could provide valuable feedback to undertake the current research appropriately. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, and taking into account the relevant literature in the field, two vocabulary studies were designed.

3) Description of the main results obtained

Two main studies were planned to be conducted on word acquisition and word processing.

1) Focus on word acquisition

A classroom intervention to study the benefits of watching undubbed videos: the experiment will be conducted with EFL learners at three different proficiency levels (at the end of primary school, end of secondary school and at university). At each level, an experimental group and a control group will be present, with the experimental group being the one watching captioned materials (tv series) during a whole school semester. The short visit to the University of Nottingham has been especially useful for:

- the selection of the series to be shown and aspects that should be taken into consideration so as not to compromise the results obtained at the end of the treatment.
- the tools to be used to analyse the input (to work with videos and subtitles, to examine scripts, etc.).
- the design of the vocabulary tests (i.e. exploring formats to gauge possible gains that learners can obtain from viewing videos with captions). Furthermore, work was done on the item design for:
 - a) the pre- and delayed post-tests at the beginning and at the end of the whole treatment.
 - b) the immediate post-tests at the end of each session.
- the design of the comprehension tests, so that the results can be comparable to one of the very few studies available that used tv series in a different context (Rodgers 2013, with EFL Japanese learners).

2) Focus on word processing

Research conducted at the School of Psychology has shown that the extent to which people process subtitles under different subtitling conditions is not clear. Two highly controlled experiments will be conducted to study more precisely learners' behaviour when watching videos with subtitles:

A. One with EFL learners watching videos under three conditions: with intralingual subtitles, standard subtitles and without subtitles. Previous studies have also explored this issue with participants being exposed to a completely unknown language (Bisson et al. 2012).

B. One with EFL learners watching videos with different types of captions (just in the L2), to assess their suitability at different proficiency levels. Special emphasis will be put on young learners, as they have not been much studied in previous research in the field.

These experiments will be a contribution to the growing body of research that uses eye-tracking techniques to explore language processing in relation to language learning.

4) **Future collaboration with host institution (if applicable)**

From this opportunity to combine insights from different fields, two publications in indexed journals and a conference presentation will be prepared:

1) One in an second language acquisition journal: on vocabulary learning from watching tv series with captions at different proficiency levels. This will also be presented at an European conference.

2) One in a psychologically-oriented journal: on the processing of subtitles and reading behaviour of EFL learners.

We are now in the process of selecting the schools for the experiments and it is possible that some other form of dissemination of results is made in collaboration with the host institution.

5) **Projected publications / articles resulting or to result from the grant (*ESF must be acknowledged in publications resulting from the grantee's work in relation with the grant*)**

The publications above, which can be of interest both to the academic and language teacher communities, will acknowledge the support received from the ESF for the activity 'European Network on Word Structure: Cross-disciplinary Approaches to Understanding Word Structure in the Languages of Europe' and a reprint will be forwarded to the ESF secretariat.

6) **Other comments (if any)**

Cited references:

Bisson, M.J.; van Heuven, W. J. B.; Conklin, K. & Tunney, R. J. (2012). Processing of native and foreign language subtitles in films: An eye tracking study. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 35(2), 399–418.

Rodgers, M. (2013). English language learning through viewing television: An investigation of comprehension, incidental vocabulary acquisition, lexical coverage, attitudes, and captions. PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington.