

Language is a prerequisite for daily (pre-)school life and success: The Language Development Team @FU introduces itself

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We will start the talk by defining language as a core communication ability, which is a prerequisite for social participation. As for the school context, language is the medium in which most of the didactic content across disciplines is conveyed (Kempert et al 2019) and the mastery of the (societal) language strongly correlates with school success (Paetsch et al 2022). Language diversity during childhood and adolescence can, among other reasons, originate from medical conditions (e.g., developmental disorders) or from (delayed) exposure to an (impoverished) input (e.g., late successive bilinguals) (Kauschke et al. 2023). One of our goals as language experts within Special Education is to raise awareness of the complex nature of language and how cross-linguistic similarities and differences (Adani et al., 2010; 2017) as well as linguistic and non-linguistic resources (Schipke et al., 2024) may influence the acquisition process. Towards this end, the cooperation of linguists and professionals working within the (pre-) school systems has the potential to open new (evidence based) venues on how language development in challenging circumstances can be targeted and supported in a specific and effective way.

Towards this end, the core of our talk will concentrate on three on-going research strands:

Production and comprehension of case marking after two-case prepositions: We tested children's case marking skills after local one-case and two-case prepositions in canonical and non-canonical sentences in production and in comprehension. An heterogeneous sample of ninety-three preschoolers with a diverse age of onset and socioeconomic status participated. Further, the effectiveness of a training using story books and songs with increased input of accusative and dative case marking structures after prepositions was evaluated.

Processing of number- and case-disambiguation in sentences with word order variation and its relation with executive function (EF) and academic language skills: We examined the interpretation of S(ubject)-V(erb)-O(bject) and OVS sentences with unambiguous case- and number-marking in German-speaking children (4- and 8-year-olds) as well as their working memory, inhibition and academic language skills abilities (in 8 y.o.).

Evidence-based practice in language support - training study with an app for learning articles: For children and adults who are learning German as a second or foreign language and also for children with language development disorders, gender assignment (*der, die* or *das Maschine?*) is often prone to errors for a long time. Such difficulties can only be overcome through intensive practice. Learning apps offer the opportunity to make the process of memorizing and practicing more entertaining. We developed the learning app 'Das Die Der - Artikel lernen' in order to investigate to what extent practicing with our self-developed learning app leads to an improvement in the use of articles in populations in which gender assignment may be fragile or not consolidated yet.

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