



Table Talk
Forschungsforum LehrerInnenbildung



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Zentrum für
LehrerInnenbildung

14. Table Talk des Zentrums für LehrerInnenbildung

Mittwoch, 26. April 2017, 12.00 – 14.00 Uhr
mittendrin / Vinzi Rast (Dachgeschoß), Währingerstr. 19, 1090 Wien

Table Speaker

Assoz. Prof. Mag. Dr. Susanne Maria Reiterer (Institut für LehrerInnenbildung,
Institut für Sprachwissenschaft)

Individual differences in language “talent”: old questions – new tests – investigations in children and adult language learners

There is huge individual variation specifically in adult foreign language acquisition, with regard to all subsystems of language learning: phonetic, lexico-semantic, morpho-syntactic and pragmatic domain. The underlying principles are still not known. Are they subject to more biological, psychological, cognitive or social constraints? In my past and current research I employed brain imaging, psych-linguistic testing and tried to model language abilities or individual profiles using a Gaussian distribution. Higher or lower ability in a certain linguistic trait is represented towards the tails of the bell curve, whereas classical theories are built for the mid-range only. With this “spectral” approach, I propose to investigate more closely also the 30% speakers with higher and lower aptitudes by applying brain imaging to determine brain functions correlated with differences in language ability in combination with large scale psycho-socio-cognitive profiling. In my research so far I had a strong focus on the phonetic level as one example/domain of foreign language acquisition, also using the terms “pronunciation”; “speech imitation”; or simply “phonetic talent”. The main underlying question is “what makes a good pronunciation and what does it correlate with in terms of neural, cognitive, psychological and social processes? For this aim we investigated in multiple studies a corpus of over 500 mainly - but not exclusively - German (L1) learners of diverse foreign languages (L0, L2, L3...main L2 being English) at diverse age groups: kindergarden (4-6) and school children (6-12 years) and developed new multilingual aptitude test material.

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