Is More Always Better? Grammatical Gender Acquisition in a Trillingual Context.

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Theories and Models in L3 Grammatical Gender

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# Is More Always Better? Grammatical Gender Acquisition in a Trilingual Context.

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Boston University

Harvard LangCog February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023



Theories and Models in L3 Grammatical Gender

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- 1 Third Langauge (L3) Acquisition
- 2 Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Grammaticality Judgement Task
- 3 Experiment 2: Longitudinal Gender Development

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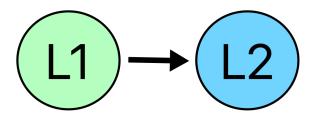
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## Cross-Linguistic Influence (CLI) in L2 Acquisition



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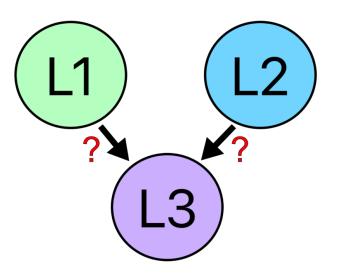
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CLI in L3 Acquisition



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Factors that may impact CLI

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### Factors that may impact CLI

- Naive vs. non-native status/Age of acquisition/Order of acquisition.
- Proficiency in all known languages.
- Linguistic similarity between languages.
- Perceived similarity between languages.
- Language dominance.
- Language status.

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Theories and Models of L3 CLI and Transfer

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## Theories and Models of L3 CLI and Transfer

- Cumulative Enhancement (Flynn et al., 2004)
- L2 Status Factor (Bardel & Falk, 2007)
- L1 Transfer (Hermas, 2010)
- Typological Primacy (Rothman, 2010)
- Language of Community (Fallah et al, 2016)
- Linguistic Proximity (Westergaard et al., 2017)
- Scalpel Model (Slabakova, 2017 )
- Top-Down Cognitive Control (Green, 2017)
- Full Transfer Potential (Westergaard, 2021)
- Grammatical Mapping (Fernández-Berkes & Flynn, in press)
- Cumulative Input Threshold Hypothesis (Cabrelli & Iverson, in press)

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## Theories and Models of L3 CLI and Transfer

L3 models differ in terms of:

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#### Experimen

## Theories and Models of L3 CLI and Transfer

#### L3 models differ in terms of:

• Initial state/stages transfer vs. longer-term development

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cality Judgemer

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## Theories and Models of L3 CLI and Transfer

### L3 models differ in terms of:

- Initial state/stages transfer vs. longer-term development
- Wholesale vs piecemeal initial transfer

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Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Grammaticality Judgement Task Procedures Theories and Models of L3 CLI and Transfer

#### L3 models differ in terms of:

- Initial state/stages transfer vs. longer-term development
- Wholesale vs piecemeal initial transfer
- Role of additional factors
  - Typological similarity
  - Age/order of acquisition
  - L2/L3 proficiency
  - Language status
  - Cognitive factors

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Research Questions

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### Research Questions

 Does previous grammatical gender knowledge from the L1 and/or L2 influence L3 grammatical gender acquisition?

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1: CrossSectional
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### Research Questions

- Does previous grammatical gender knowledge from the L1 and/or L2 influence L3 grammatical gender acquisition?
- Does the role/influence of previous grammatical gender knowledge change throughout the L3 acquisition process?

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### Research Questions

- Does previous grammatical gender knowledge from the L1 and/or L2 influence L3 grammatical gender acquisition?
- Does the role/influence of previous grammatical gender knowledge change throughout the L3 acquisition process?
- How might age/order of acquisition and language similarity promote or inhibit the transfer of previous grammatical gender knowledge to the L3?

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Grammatical Gender

German:

Der Mann	<b>Die</b> Frau	Das Mädchen
The man	The woman	The girl
Masculine	Feminine	Neuter

Romance:

Spanish	El chico	<b>La</b> chica
French	Le garçon	La fille
Italian	II ragazzo	La ragazza
Portuguese	O menino	<b>A</b> garota
English	The boy	The girl
English	Masculine	Feminine

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#### Grammatical Gender

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### Grammatical Gender in L2

• L1 gender can transfer to L2 (i.e. Franceschina, 2005)

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cality Judgemen Task

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- L1 gender can transfer to L2 (i.e. Franceschina, 2005)
  - Even between more typologically distant languages (i.e. Sabourin, 2001)

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Grammatical Gender

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Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Grammaticality Judgement Task Procedures Results

- L1 gender can transfer to L2 (i.e. Franceschina, 2005)
  - Even between more typologically distant languages (i.e. Sabourin, 2001)
- L2ers without gender in their L1 are able to develop a gender system (White et al., 2004; Sagarra and Herschensohn, 2010)

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#### Grammatical Gender

1: Cross-Sectional Grammaticality Judgement

Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Grammaticality Judgement Task Procedures Results Key Findings

- L1 gender can transfer to L2 (i.e. Franceschina, 2005)
  - Even between more typologically distant languages (i.e. Sabourin, 2001)
- L2ers without gender in their L1 are able to develop a gender system (White et al., 2004; Sagarra and Herschensohn, 2010)
- Key differences between offline vs. online experimental grammatical gender tasks (Długosz, 2021)

Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Grammaticality Judgement Task Procedures Results Key Findings

- L1 gender can transfer to L2 (i.e. Franceschina, 2005)
  - Even between more typologically distant languages (i.e. Sabourin, 2001)
- L2ers without gender in their L1 are able to develop a gender system (White et al., 2004; Sagarra and Herschensohn, 2010)
- Key differences between offline vs. online experimental grammatical gender tasks (Długosz, 2021)
- How do L1 vs L2 gender systems influence L3 gender development?
  - At the onset of L3 acquisition
  - At later points in the development process

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Results Key Findings

## Experiment 1: Brown (2020a)

- Online survey and grammaticality judgement task via Qualtrics
- Sequential Spanish/English bilinguals
- "Beginner" German learners
  - ullet <1 year (two semesters) L3 German instruction

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Results Key Findings

## Experiment 1: Brown (2020a)

- Online survey and grammaticality judgement task via Qualtrics
- Sequential Spanish/English bilinguals
- "Beginner" German learners
  - ullet <1 year (two semesters) L3 German instruction
- Intermediate or higher L2 proficiency

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Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Judgement Task

#### Procedures

## Key Findings

## Experiment 1: Brown (2020a)

- Online survey and grammaticality judgement task via Qualtrics
- Sequential Spanish/English bilinguals
- "Beginner" German learners
  - <1 year (two semesters) L3 German instruction</p>
- Intermediate or higher L2 proficiency

Language Background	Number of Participants
L1 English L2 Spanish L3 German	11
L1 Spanish L2 English L3 German	10
L1 English L2 German	11

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## German Grammaticality Judgement Task

### Gender Mismatch

\*<mark>Das</mark> Baum ist groß The<sub>[N]</sub> tree<sub>[M]</sub> is tall

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cality Judgemer

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## German Grammaticality Judgement Task

#### Gender Mismatch

\*Das Baum ist groß
The<sub>[N]</sub> tree<sub>[M]</sub> is tall

Words reflecting biological gender were not included



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## German Grammaticality Judgement Task

Gender Mismatch

\*Das Baum ist groß
The<sub>[N]</sub> tree<sub>[M]</sub> is tall

Words reflecting biological gender were not included

Error questions were balanced in terms of:

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## German Grammaticality Judgement Task

#### Gender Mismatch

\*Das Baum ist groß
The<sub>[N]</sub> tree<sub>[M]</sub> is tall

Words reflecting biological gender were not included

Error questions were balanced in terms of:

German Gender

Error Direction (M  $\rightarrow$  F, M  $\rightarrow$  N ect.)

Spanish Gender

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## Scoring

Gender Assignment vs. Gender Concord

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## Scoring

Gender Assignment vs. Gender Concord

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## Scoring

Gender Assignment vs. Gender Concord

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Tür (Door<sub>F</sub>)

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## Scoring

Gender Assignment vs. Gender Concord

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Tür (Door<sub>F</sub>)

DieF Der<sub>M</sub>

DasN

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Gender Assignment vs. Gender Concord

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Tür (Door<sub>F</sub>)

Der<sub>M</sub>

DieF

 $\mathsf{Das}_\mathsf{N}$ 

Grammaticality judgment tasks were graded based on participants' perceived gender of individual lexical items.

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Grammatical Gender Task

Tür (Door<sub>F</sub>)

Der<sub>M</sub> Die<sub>F</sub>

Das<sub>N</sub>

Grammaticality judgment tasks were graded based on participants' perceived gender of individual lexical items.

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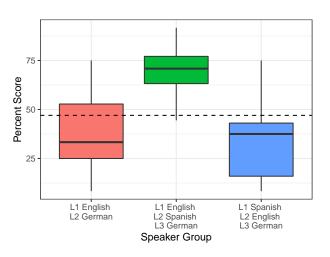
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### Experiment

# Experiment 1 Results Brown (2020)



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## Experiment 1: Key Findings

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Experiment 1: Key Findings

 Beginner L3 German learners with L2 Spanish were better at identifying gender errors in L3 German.

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Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Judgement Task Procedures

Key Findings

## Experiment 1: Key Findings

- Beginner L3 German learners with L2 Spanish were better at identifying gender errors in L3 German.
  - L2 Status Factor Model
  - Scalpel Model

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## Experiment 1: Key Findings

BUT...

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## Experiment 1: Key Findings

#### BUT...

 No interference was found from nouns with different Spanish genders.

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### Experiment

## Experiment 1: Key Findings

### BUT...

- No interference was found from nouns with different Spanish genders.
- These participants were beginners but not initial state learners.

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Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Judgement Task Procedures

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## Experiment 1: Key Findings

### BUT...

- No interference was found from nouns with different Spanish genders.
- These participants were beginners but not initial state learners.
- Are these results from initial transfer or some later developmental difference?

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#### Experiment

### Experiment 2

### Longitudinal L3 Development

 Dissertation project aiming to tease apart the findings of Experiment 1.

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Longitudinal L3 Development

- Dissertation project aiming to tease apart the findings of Experiment 1.
- Longitudinal design participants complete the experiment within the first two weeks of beginning their first German course, and again at the end of their semester.

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## Experiment 2

### Longitudinal L3 Development

- Dissertation project aiming to tease apart the findings of Experiment 1.
- Longitudinal design participants complete the experiment within the first two weeks of beginning their first German course, and again at the end of their semester.
- Examination of gender in both listening and reading contexts.

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## Procuedure Summary

A German listening task involving virtual eye-tracking

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Key Findings

- A German listening task involving virtual eye-tracking
- A German self-paced reading task

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Key Findings

- A German listening task involving virtual eye-tracking
- A German self-paced reading task
- A German gender assignment task (only at second meeting)

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Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Judgement Task Procedures

Key Findings

- A German listening task involving virtual eye-tracking
- A German self-paced reading task
- A German gender assignment task (only at second meeting)
- Multilingual LEAP-Q

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Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Grammaticality Judgement Task Procedures Results Key Findings

- A German listening task involving virtual eye-tracking
- A German self-paced reading task
- A German gender assignment task (only at second meeting)
- Multilingual LEAP-Q
- Proficiency and gender knowledge assessment in other known languages

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## Experiment 2 Participants

- "Ab initio" German learners
  - True beginners with no previous German exposure

Theories and Models in L3 Grammatical Gender

Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Judgement Task Procedures

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## Experiment 2 Participants

- "Ab initio" German learners
  - True beginners with no previous German exposure
- Intermediate or higher L2 proficiency
  - Spanish, French, Italian, & Portuguese

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## Experiment 2 Participants

- "Ab initio" German learners
  - True beginners with no previous German exposure
- Intermediate or higher L2 proficiency
  - Spanish, French, Italian, & Portuguese

Language Background	Number of Participants
L1 English L2 Romance L3 German	10
L1 Romance L2 English L3 German	6
L1 English L2 German	10

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## Listening Task

Trained on 12 nouns in the target language (German)

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Experiment

- Trained on 12 nouns in the target language (German)
  - Nouns were balanced between target language genders and translation equivalent genders

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F.....

- Trained on 12 nouns in the target language (German)
  - Nouns were balanced between target language genders and translation equivalent genders
- Nouns reflecting biological gender were excluded

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1: Cross-Sectional Grammaticality Judgement

Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Grammaticality Judgement Task Procedures Results

- Trained on 12 nouns in the target language (German)
  - Nouns were balanced between target language genders and translation equivalent genders
- Nouns reflecting biological gender were excluded
- Also trained on two adjectives, "Large" and "Small"

Theories and Models in L3 Grammatical Gender

Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Judgement Task Procedures

Key Findings

- Trained on 12 nouns in the target language (German)
  - Nouns were balanced between target language genders and translation equivalent genders
- Nouns reflecting biological gender were excluded
- Also trained on two adjectives, "Large" and "Small"
- Virtual eye tracking serves as the key measure

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1: Cross-Sectional Grammaticality Judgement

Experiment 1: Cross-Sectional Grammaticality Judgement Task Procedures Results Key Findings

- Trained on 12 nouns in the target language (German)
  - Nouns were balanced between target language genders and translation equivalent genders
- Nouns reflecting biological gender were excluded
- Also trained on two adjectives, "Large" and "Small"
- Virtual eye tracking serves as the key measure
- Two key experiemntal conditions, Gender Match and Gender Error

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### Listening Task Gender Match











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## Listening Task Gender Match





(F) "Hier ist der große Stift richtig" (M) (Here, the(M) big pen (M) is correct)







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### Listening Task Gender Match













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## Listening Task

Gender Mismatch

















**(M)** 

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## Listening Task

Gender Mismatch





**(F)** "Hier ist das große Stift richtig" **(M)** (Here, the(N) big pen (M) is correct)







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### Listening Task Gender Mismatch













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## Listening Task

 Are learners at each data collection point point able to process gender cues in real time?

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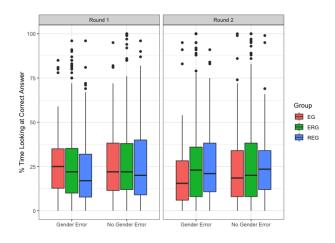
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## Listening Task

Results: Noun Learning



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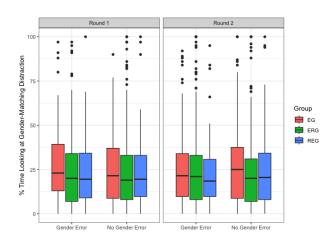
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## Listening Task

Results: Gender Distractions



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### Reading Task

Self-paced reading task

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### Reading Task

- Self-paced reading task
- Same nouns as in the listening task

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### Reading Task



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### Reading Task



Hier (Here)

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### Reading Task



ist

(is)

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E. ...

1: Cross-

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### Reading Task



die/der (the, F/M)

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### Reading Task



Tüe door

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### Reading Task



gros big

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### Reading Task



(Hier ist die/der Tür gorß) (Here the(F/M) door is large)





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### Reading Task

- Are learners at each time point able to process gender cues, and are they deterred by gener errors, when processing in real time?
- Are these results different between the reading and the listening task?

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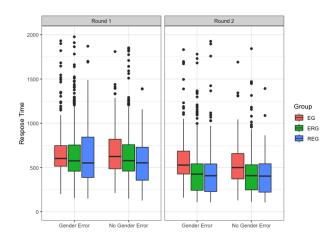
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### Reading Task Results



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Discussion and Takeaways

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### Discussion and Takeaways

 L3 acquisition is a unique field of linguistic inquiry distinct from L2 acquisition

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 L3 acquisition is a unique field of linguistic inquiry distinct from L2 acquisition

 While "beginner" learners might show evidence of CLI from L3 in their processing of written gender, this was not found in "ab initio" learners.

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### Discussion and Takeaways

- L3 acquisition is a unique field of linguistic inquiry distinct from L2 acquisition
- While "beginner" learners might show evidence of CLI from L3 in their processing of written gender, this was not found in "ab initio" learners.
- Grammatical gender acquisition in L3 is a complex process that maybe be influenced both positively and negatively by previous gender knowledge, particularly from the L2.

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### Discussion and Takeaways

- L3 acquisition is a unique field of linguistic inquiry distinct from L2 acquisition
- While "beginner" learners might show evidence of CLI from L3 in their processing of written gender, this was not found in "ab initio" learners.
- Grammatical gender acquisition in L3 is a complex process that maybe be influenced both positively and negatively by previous gender knowledge, particularly from the L2.
- Grammatical gender processing results differed between listening and speaking tasks

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### Next Steps and Future Questions

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### Next Steps and Future Questions

Continued analysis of dissertation data

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### Next Steps and Future Questions

- Continued analysis of dissertation data
- Examination of more diverse language triads

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### Next Steps and Future Questions

- Continued analysis of dissertation data
- Examination of more diverse language triads
- Longer-term development examinations

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### Special Thanks











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## Thank You!

These slides can be found at https://www.meganmbrown.com

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## Questions?

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