

Diversity and uniformity in the building blocks of home languages: an interplay of factors

Natalia Gagarina

gagarina@leibniz-zas.de

More than 20 years ago, Xanthos et al. (2011) reported on the speed of morphological development in child language as related to morphological richness of child-directed speech in nine languages. For each language, they selected 1-2 participants per language. The comparison of their results with the classical language acquisition research (Brown (1973), Ingram (1989) etc. on English; Smoczyńska (1985) on Polish; Gvozdev (1961) on Russian) revealed similarities in trajectory and timing of the acquisition of morphology and other building blocks despite the differences in grammar. Corpus and experimental research also showed homogeneity/similarity in the child acquisition trajectories cross-linguistically.

Since then, developmental trajectories of languages, especially in the contexts in which environmental language differs from the home language of the child, have merged as the central focus of language acquisition research. Due to the large number of various factors that impact this acquisition, diversity in the timing and path has increased dramatically. Internal and external factors for each of the building blocks of language and their interaction in development of proficiency create multiple and complex effects. In this talk, I will try to highlight how diversity vs. similarity in the acquisition of the main building blocks of home languages, such as lexicon, grammar, and discourse, contribute to our understanding of the multilingual child's language acquisition.

I will try to answer two questions: (1) What is typical (or similar) in the development of home languages? (2) What is diverse (or different) in this development?

For lexicon and grammar, I will summarize findings from several (longitudinal) large-scale studies addressing both languages of bilingual speakers with L2 German and several L1s. For spoken discourse, I will address the findings from several special issues on the *Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives (MAIN)*.



Natalia Gagarina is Vice Director of the Leibniz-Centre General Linguistics (ZAS) and Head of the Research Area 2 “Language Development & Multilingualism”. She is an extraordinary professor at Humboldt-Universität and is a visiting professor at the Uppsala University since December 2017. Her research focuses on monolingual and bilingual (a)typical language acquisition of lexicon, morphosyntax, and discourse. In recent years, she worked intensively on the macro- and microstructure of narratives and the development of language assessment methods for multilingual children. She is active in transfer and policy consulting and the founding head

of the Berlin Interdisciplinary Network for Multilingualism (BIVEM). Gagarina published in *Applied Psycholinguistics*, *PNAS*, *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, *Journal of Child Language*, *First Language*, etc.