



Research Project

discet₃

Diagnostic Screening Tools for English Teachers at Tertiary Level

TIMEFRAME

October 2015 – September 2020

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

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RESEARCHERS

Erwin M. Gierlinger	language learner beliefs and vocabulary acquisition
Harald Spann	literature in foreign language learning
Thomas Wagner	motivation, language aptitude, and communication

PROJECT OUTLINE

discet₃ is an international research project which deals with two key aspects of language learning. On the one hand, it deals with diagnostic screening tools and tests for foreign language aptitude, proficiency, and development with regards to our future students in the new Austrian EFL teacher education programme. On the other hand, part of this project is to create and evaluate data-driven pedagogical interventions and educational programmes in order to foster and develop language learning in prospective Austrian EFL students. Thus, this project pursues two objectives. First, existing tools and tests on foreign language aptitude and proficiency will be evaluated and adapted; if necessary, new tools and tests will be created. Second, based on the students' testing and monitoring, tailor-made assistance programmes will be developed, applied, and also evaluated, so that the students can be supported professionally in their effort to reach the target proficiency level.

discet₃ is based on two assumptions. First, as a consequence of profound curricular revisions and adaptations in the new *Cluster Mitte* (i.e. the new teaching and research cooperation in Upper Austria and Salzburg), both the students' language level at point of entry and language development in the course of the study programme need to be investigated and researched. Second, an increasing diversity in the English language proficiency levels of applicants – as voiced by a number of tertiary institutions in Austria – appears to necessitate a comprehensive cross-sectional screening and placement testing as part of the study programme's inception.

discet₃ can be subdivided into three stages. At first, existing tools, tests, and routines will be, in accordance with the curriculum and local constraints, adapted and piloted. If required, complementing tools will be developed and evaluated in this stage, too. Then, based on the first cross-sectional data, assistance programmes will be implemented and evaluated. Finally, based on the cross-sectional and

longitudinal data as well as the evaluation of the training programmes, a test battery will be compiled and documented. Such a battery could serve as an assessment and developmental tool for EFL teacher education programmes at tertiary level in Austria.

PROSPECTIVE COLLABORATORS

	institutions	collaborators	expertise
1.	University College of Education Upper Austria	T. Wagner E. Gierlinger H. Spann	–project management, EFL teaching and learning, training programmes, data pool, data analysis
2.	The Private University College of Education of the Diocese of Linz	G. Keplinger	–data pool, EFL teaching and learning, training programmes
3.	Johannes Kepler University Linz	I. Born-Lechleitner	–data pool, EFL teaching and learning
4.	University College of Education Salzburg	K. Siller	–data pool, EFL teaching and learning, training programmes
5.	Swansea University (Wales, UK)	V. Rogers P. Meara	–assessment tools in L2 vocabulary acquisition
6.	Catholic University Leuven (Belgium)	E. Peters M. Montero Perez	–adaption of tools and tests according to students' requirements and languages involved
7.	Paris-Lodron-University Salzburg	M. Kaltenbacher T. Angelovska	–co-author of curriculum, data pool, applied linguistics
8.	Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt	G. Sigott W. Delanoy	–testing language proficiency, language acquisition
9.	Karl-Franzens-University Graz	S. Mercer	–learner identities, learner biographies, applied linguistics
10.	University Vienna	C. Dalton-Puffer	–morphology, lexis, language acquisition and language learning
11.	Language Learning and Testing Foundation	C. Stansfield	–tests and research on language aptitude

METHODOLOGY

discet 3 breaks down into three main research areas. The respective areas, along with their principal investigators, are:

- (a) motivation, language aptitude, and communication (Wagner)
- (b) language learner beliefs, vocabulary acquisition (Gierlinger)
- (c) literature in EFL teaching (Spann)

These three areas research a number of dimensions and aspects of language learning. They are given in the following table:

area		dimensions and aspects	instruments, tools, measurements
(a)	1	language aptitude	– Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) – LLAMA Language Aptitude Test, Lognostics
	2	motivation	– Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)
	3	willingness to communicate	– WTC-Scale
(b)	1	receptive vocabulary breadth	– Y-Lex v.2.05, Lognostics
	2	receptive vocabulary depth	– Depth of Vocabulary Knowledge Test (DVKT) – V-Quint v.1.0, Lognostics
	3	productive vocabulary breadth	– Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (PVLТ) – Lex30 v. 4.00, Lognostics – V-Capture, Capture-Recapture analysis, Lognostics
	4	lexical variability in text production	– Lextutor, VocabProfiler – D-Tools v. 2.00, Lognostics – V-Words, Lognostics
	5	language learner beliefs	– interviews, questionnaires

(c)	1	reading habits	– reading survey, based on Applegate & Applegate (2004)
	2	reading competencies	– questionnaire based on Burwitz-Melzer’s model (2007) and the concept of <i>performative literacy</i> by Blau (2003)

PROSPECTIVE TIMEFRAME

stage	measures and objectives	year
project stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –screening of tests and tools, licences, literature, model studies, contact with project partners, workloads, responsibilities –determine dimensions and aspects to be researched –adaption of existing tools, web-based applications –piloting Y-Lex, VocabProfiler, LLAMA, PLAB, and reading habits –development of complementary quantitative and qualitative tools 	2015 – 2016
project stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –prepare data collection with the first cohort 2016 –study I: motivation, language aptitude, and communication –study I: vocabulary acquisition and text production –study I: literature and language learning 	2016 – 2017
project stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –study II: motivation, language aptitude, and communication –study II: vocabulary acquisition and text production –study II: literature and language learning –development and piloting of assistance measures and training programmes 	2017 – 2018
project stage 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –studies III: all three areas –data triangulation –evaluation of assistance measures and training programmes –development and piloting of assistance measures and training programmes –drafting and devising of follow-up projects 	2018 – 2019
project stage 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –studies IV: all three areas –data triangulation, longitudinal studies –evaluation of assistance measures and training programmes –dissemination, conferences, publications –drafting and devising of follow-up projects –completion of screening- and test-battery –transfer of results into the realm of curriculum development 	2019 – 2020