

Title of Project:

Age, Intensity of Instruction, and Metalinguistic Awareness in EFL Learning

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Summary Statement:

As English becomes increasingly important as the global language of international communication, the response in many countries has been the earlier introduction of English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction in school. This decision is usually based on the belief that younger children learn second languages more easily and more rapidly than adolescents and adults. Implicit in decisions to lower the age of first instructional exposure to an additional language is also the belief that the greater the number of years of academic study devoted to foreign language learning, the better the outcomes. There is surprisingly little research evidence to support these beliefs. In fact, evidence from a variety of language learning contexts suggests that:

- 1) older children are actually more efficient learners
- 2) the distribution as opposed to simply the total amount of instructional time is a key factor
- 3) age may affect some but not all aspects of proficiency

Given the above, there is a need to understand:

- 1) how older learners are more efficient and in what aspects of language learning
- 2) how different degrees of intensity affect the quality of instructional time and the development of different aspects of proficiency

This research project will examine the relationship between age, intensity of instruction, and learning outcomes, as well as metalinguistic awareness in L2 and L3 learners of different ages and with different degrees of intensity of instruction. Learners in the two EFL contexts will be bilingual (Spanish/Catalan) students in Spain and francophone students in Quebec.

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