

# **Intensive Exposure Experiences in Second Language Learning**

## **SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

**Series Editor:** Professor David Singleton, *Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland*

This series brings together titles dealing with a variety of aspects of language acquisition and processing in situations where a language or languages other than the native language is involved. Second language is thus interpreted in its broadest possible sense. The volumes included in the series all offer in their different ways, on the one hand, exposition and discussion of empirical findings and, on the other, some degree of theoretical reflection. In this latter connection, no particular theoretical stance is privileged in the series; nor is any relevant perspective – sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, neurolinguistic, etc. – deemed out of place. The intended readership of the series includes final-year undergraduates working on second language acquisition projects, postgraduate students involved in second language acquisition research, and researchers and teachers in general whose interests include a second language acquisition component.

Full details of all the books in this series and of all our other publications can be found on <http://www.multilingual-matters.com>, or by writing to Multilingual Matters, St Nicholas House, 31–34 High Street, Bristol BS1 2AW, UK.

# **Intensive Exposure Experiences in Second Language Learning**

Edited by  
**Carmen Muñoz**

**MULTILINGUAL MATTERS**  
Bristol • Buffalo • Toronto

**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Intensive Exposure Experiences in Second Language Learning/Edited by Carmen Muñoz.

Second Language Acquisition: 65

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Immersion method (Language teaching) 2. Language and languages—Study and teaching. 3. Second language acquisition—Study and teaching. 4. Education, Bilingual. I. Muñoz, Carmen.

P53.44.I58 2012

418.0071—dc23 2012022009

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN-13: 978-1-84769-805-6 (hbk)

ISBN-13: 978-1-84769-804-9 (pbk)

**Multilingual Matters**

UK: St Nicholas House, 31–34 High Street, Bristol BS1 2AW, UK.

USA: UTP, 2250 Military Road, Tonawanda, NY 14150, USA.

Canada: UTP, 5201 Dufferin Street, North York, Ontario M3H 5T8, Canada.

Copyright © 2012 Carmen Muñoz and the authors of individual chapters.

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the publisher.

The policy of Multilingual Matters/Channel View Publications is to use papers that are natural, renewable and recyclable products, made from wood grown in sustainable forests. In the manufacturing process of our books, and to further support our policy, preference is given to printers that have FSC and PEFC Chain of Custody certification. The FSC and/or PEFC logos will appear on those books where full certification has been granted to the printer concerned.

Typeset by Techset Composition Ltd., Salisbury, UK.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by the MPG Books Group.

# Contents

Contributors	vii
Acknowledgements	xi
Introduction	xiii

## **Part 1: Theoretical Underpinnings of Intensive Learning**

1	Is Intensive Learning Effective? Reflecting on the Results from Cognitive Psychology and the Second Language Acquisition Literature	3
	<i>Raquel Serrano</i>	

## **Part 2: Intensive Instruction**

2	Intensive L2 Instruction in Canada: Why not Immersion?	25
	<i>Patsy M. Lightbown</i>	
3	Closing the Gap: Intensity and Proficiency	45
	<i>Laura Collins and Joanna White</i>	
4	When Comprehensible Input is not Comprehensible Input: A Multi-dimensional Analysis of Instructional Input in Intensive English as a Foreign Language	66
	<i>Laura Collins, Joanna White, Pavel Trofimovich, Walcir Cardoso and Marlise Horst</i>	
5	What Language is Promoted in Intensive Programs? Analyzing Language Generated from Oral Assessment Tasks	88
	<i>Joanna White and Carolyn E. Turner</i>	
6	Time and Amount of L2 Contact Inside and Outside the School – Insights from the European Schools	111
	<i>Alex Housen</i>	

**Part 3: Learners' Perceptions and Intensive Exposure**

- 7 The Significance of Intensive Exposure as a Turning Point in  
Learners' Histories 141  
*Carmen Muñoz*
- 8 Change or Stability in Learners' Perceptions as a Result of Study  
Abroad 161  
*Elsa Tragant*

**Part 4: Naturalistic Immersion**

- 9 The Impact of Study Abroad and Age on Second Language  
Accuracy Development 193  
*Àngels Llanes*
- 10 Oral and Written Development in Formal Instruction and Study  
Abroad: Differential Effects of Learning Context 213  
*Carmen Pérez-Vidal, Maria Juan-Garau, Joan C. Mora and Margalida  
Valls-Ferrer*
- 11 Differences in L2 Segmental Perception: The Effects of Age  
and L2 Learning Experience 234  
*Romana Kopečková*
- Index 256

# Contributors

**Walcir Cardoso** (PhD, McGill University) is an associate professor of applied linguistics at Concordia University (Montreal, Canada). He conducts research on the second language acquisition of phonology, morphosyntax and vocabulary, and the effects of computer technology (e.g. clickers, text-to-speech synthesizers, automatic speech recognition) on L2 learning.

**Laura Collins** is an associate professor of applied linguistics in the Department of Education at Concordia University in Montreal and co-editor of the *Canadian Modern Language Review*. Her research interests include the relationship between pedagogical practices and language learning outcomes, cross-linguistic influence and the acquisition of tense and aspect.

**Marlise Horst** is an associate professor in applied linguistics at Concordia University in Montreal. Her recent research explores second language vocabulary acquisition from a corpus-informed perspective. She is also interested in the effects of instruction designed to raise learners' cross-linguistic language awareness.

**Alex Housen** (MA, UCLA; PhD, University of Brussels) is professor of English and applied linguistics at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. His research interests include second language acquisition, (second) language teaching, bilingualism and bilingual education.

**Maria Juan-Garau** is associate professor in English applied linguistics at the University of the Balearic Islands, Spain. Her research has focused on bilingualism and second language acquisition. She is currently interested in the influence of learning context on the acquisition of English as an additional language, with special attention to content-and-language-integrated learning and study abroad settings.

**Romana Kopečková** holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Trinity College Dublin and has published on age-related differences in second language speech learning. Her current research examines cross-linguistic influence in third or

additional language phonological acquisition. She has collaborated on a multi-disciplinary research project 'Second Language Acquisition and Native Language Maintenance in the Polish Diaspora in Ireland and France', funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

**Patsy Martin Lightbown** is Distinguished Professor Emeritus (Applied Linguistics), Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. With Nina Spada, she co-authored *How Languages are Learned* (Oxford University Press), an introduction to second language acquisition research for teachers, now in its fourth edition. For more than 25 years her research focused on language acquisition in Quebec classrooms. She now lives and works in the USA, continuing to work with teachers and teacher trainers through conferences and professional development courses.

**Àngels Llanes** received her PhD on Applied Linguistics at Universitat de Barcelona and is currently a lecturer at the English and Linguistics Department at Universitat de Lleida, Spain. Her research mostly focuses on the role of age and learning context (study abroad, study at home and summer camps) on L2 development. Her current research interests also include the effects of individual differences, time distribution (intensity), task type, and content and language integrated learning on L2 outcomes.

**Joan Carles Mora** is a lecturer in English phonetics, language and linguistics in the University of Barcelona, Spain. His current research interests include L2 phonological acquisition, bilingual and L2 speech perception and production, perceptual dimensions of L2 speech, and individual differences in L2 pronunciation development.

**Carmen Muñoz** is a professor in English and applied linguistics in the Department of English Studies at the University of Barcelona, Spain. Her research interests include the effects of age and input on the acquisition of a foreign language, as well as the role of aptitude and individual differences. A special focus of her recent research is foreign language learning by young learners.

**Carmen Pérez-Vidal** is an associate professor of English in the Department of Translation and Linguistic Sciences at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, in Barcelona, Spain. Her research focuses on language progress in different contexts of acquisition, including study abroad and European content and language integrated programmes, bilingualism and the development of oral and written competence.

**Raquel Serrano** is an assistant professor in the Department of English Studies at the University of Barcelona, Spain. Her research interests

include the effect of learning context and time distribution on the acquisition of English as a foreign language, the role of explicit classroom instruction in the acquisition of explicit/implicit knowledge, and bilingualism.

**Elsa Tragant** holds an MEd in TESOL (Teachers College, Columbia University) and a PhD in English philology at the University of Barcelona, where she is associate professor. She currently teaches English as a foreign language teaching and research methods courses. Her current interests are language learning strategies, L2 motivation and classroom research. She has conducted research both in foreign language and in study abroad contexts.

**Pavel Trofimovich** is an associate professor of applied linguistics in the Department of Education at Concordia University, in Montreal, Canada. His research focuses on cognitive aspects of second language processing, second language phonology, sociolinguistic aspects of second language acquisition and the teaching of second language pronunciation.

**Carolyn E. Turner** is associate professor of second language education in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University. Her research examines language testing/assessment in educational settings and in healthcare contexts concerning access for linguistic minorities. She is presently Immediate Past President of the International Language Testing Association and Senior Associate Editor of *Language Assessment Quarterly*.

**Margalida Valls-Ferrer** is a lecturer in the Department of English Studies at the University of Barcelona, Spain. Her research focuses on second language phonology, in particular the acquisition of suprasegmental phenomena by L2 learners, and second language acquisition in different learning contexts.

**Joanna White** is an associate professor in the Department of Education at Concordia University in Montreal. In her research and in her teaching, she is interested in the relationship among programme design, pedagogical practices and learning outcomes. Specific areas of research include form-focused instruction, the cross-linguistic awareness of teachers and students, oral proficiency development, vocabulary learning and teaching, and programme comparisons.

# Acknowledgements

This book is the outcome of intensive cross-fertilizations. It owes its existence to the common interests of colleagues from different research sites, and as such it is a celebration and a meeting point. Above all I am grateful to the inspiring work of all the contributors and their commitment to this collective volume. I would like to especially thank Patsy Lightbown for her contribution, since her pioneer research in intensive classes has been crucial for the present and future of intensive instruction.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the GRAL research group, who provide the daily support and motivation for enjoyment of research, and especially to Àngels Llanes and Raquel Serrano, who were a source of continuous encouragement for this task. Sincere thanks are also due to David Singleton, who gave this project all of his support.

I wish also to express my appreciation for the financial support provided by the Spanish MICINN (through grant FFI2010-21478), the AGAUR (through grant SGR137) and the ICREA Acadèmia programme.

# Introduction

The role of intensive exposure to the target language (TL) in second language acquisition has not frequently been addressed as an issue in and of itself. However, intensive exposure is a critical distinctive characteristic in the comparison of the learning processes and outcomes in different learning contexts: naturalistic and foreign language instruction; stay abroad and at home; and extensive and intensive instruction programmes.

Here as elsewhere dichotomous divisions are convenient but simplifying labels. Take the case of foreign language instruction, which encompasses very diverse teaching–learning situations with different degrees of focus on, for example, the explicit learning of grammar rules or the learners’ use of the TL in real tasks. The conception of language learning that underlies these choices or the characteristics of the educational system in which teaching takes place will define the amount and type of input to which learners are exposed in a continuum that is also influenced by the use of the TL outside the classroom (in both the immediate surroundings and the community context; see Housen, this volume; Muñoz & Lindgren, 2011). Likewise, learning through immersion in the TL community does not result in homogeneous outcomes, one of the causes being the large differences in opportunities for input and interaction as well as the choices learners make in relation to contact with fellow native speakers of their first language (L1) or native speakers of the second language (L2). In that respect, age of immigration and related socio-psychological factors appear to be determinant factors. On the one hand, the compulsory schooling of younger arrivals and the intense contact with peers that it affords most frequently result in a language dominance switch, from the L1 to the L2. In contrast, older arrivals may be more motivated to maintain their more fully formed linguistic–cultural identity through contact with native speakers of their L1, and are less prone to switching their language dominance (see, among others, Jia & Aaronson, 2003). Another case in point is the very high inter-individual variability in language gains that participants in study abroad programmes present, which seems to be in consonance with learners’ orientations towards the TL and TL speakers (e.g. Kinginger, 2008). These orientations may ultimately determine

the amount and quality of language contact in which learners engage and their learning outcomes.

Notwithstanding the diversity found across foreign language (FL) teaching situations, traditional classrooms are commonly considered limited in their provision of input and possibilities of contact with the TL (see White & Turner, this volume). One specific consequence of this input limitation is an alleged ceiling effect for learning, which may be assumed to be lower or higher in relation to the relative difficulty of the TL (i.e. its distance from the L1 or the individual's language repertoire). Breaking through this ceiling into the more advanced level proficiencies may be difficult if learners are not provided with immersion learning experiences (Rifkin, 2005). In fact, the perception of a ceiling in their FL progress may push learners to provide themselves with intensive input experiences (see Muñoz, this volume). Another consequence of an input-limited learning setting may be that the time pressure that results from it enhances individual differences, as Collins and White (this volume) suggest.

In contrast, an immersion setting has the potential to provide the large amount of practice that is necessary for language automatization processes to take place, such as the gradual reduction of reaction time or error rate (see Llanes, this volume). In skill theory, declarative knowledge is said to become procedural knowledge through initial practice. This initial practice may be afforded by the classroom, but for procedural knowledge to become automatized, much more input and practice with this input are necessary than a typical classroom offers (DeKeyser, 2007). The large amount of input that is provided by an immersion experience also leads naturally to implicit learning, which is argued to be advantageous for complex structures that are difficult to learn explicitly (e.g. Robinson, 1996). Another type of learning that is facilitated when learners are exposed to massive amounts of input is incidental learning, which may play a major role in lexical learning. This ties in with usage-based theories for which input frequency is the key determinant of language acquisition (e.g. Ellis, 2002).

However, TL improvement during immersion experiences is not homogeneous, as observed above. In addition to the variability in the quality and the quantity of interaction that learners experience, individual internal factors play a significant role. One such factor seems to be initial proficiency level. From the perspective of skill theory, DeKeyser (2007) argues that, to obtain optimal benefits from a stay abroad, students need to be in possession of sufficient procedural knowledge that can then become automatic through practice in the immersion setting. This may explain the apparent continuity effect observed by Pérez-Vidal *et al.* (this volume) that highlights the value of previous FL instruction for students who experience a stay abroad.

The issue of the optimum initial proficiency level for intensive learning experiences has educational relevance for both study abroad programmes and intensive instruction programmes. Serrano (2011, this volume) reports on a

study in which learners with lower initial L2 proficiency level benefit more from intensive instruction than students with higher proficiency level. Collins and White (this volume) demonstrate that the amount and concentration of instructional time allow beginner-level learners to make rapid progress over the course of a few months. The relative benefits of intensity for different proficiency levels is one of the questions that further research should answer. A related question is the most effective time distribution (e.g. concentrating all time into a single sustained intensive experience vs a series of spaced intensives) for immediate L2 learning and long-term retention (see Collins & White, 2011; Serrano, this volume).

Whereas this and other important questions have not yet been answered, research findings have accumulated showing the linguistic and attitudinal benefits of intensive instruction, and how it may be a valuable alternative to a 'drip-feed' early start approach (see Lightbown, this volume). Furthermore, research is now revealing some of the limitations of intensive classes, and pointing out the need to pay attention to the occurrence of certain target forms in the input (see Collins *et al.*, this volume). Likewise, research on L2 learning in the European Schools system highlights the importance of form-focused instruction at some stage of schooling to help students acquire the less accessible aspects of the TL and ensure lexical precision and grammatical accuracy (see Housen, this volume).

## This Book

The chapters in this volume investigate L2 learning in different contexts with intensive TL exposure: longer- and shorter-term naturalistic immersion (in an immigration or a study-abroad situation), intensive instruction and informal intensive environments in FL settings.

The first chapter, by Raquel Serrano, reflects on the results obtained by different studies on the effect of time distribution on learning and tries to account for the different tendencies suggested by research within the cognitive psychology literature and the second language acquisition literature. In general, time concentration has been shown to be negative for learning and retention in psychology experiments. In contrast, the revision of studies in second language acquisition suggests a certain benefit of concentrating the hours of instruction instead of spreading them over long periods of time. The chapter highlights the difficulties in establishing a comparison between the studies in the two research fields because of methodological differences and differences in the type of learning under examination.

The next four chapters look at intensive programmes in Quebec from different and complementary angles. Intensive classes in Quebec have become a privileged setting for classroom research on L2 learning because – as Laura Collins and her colleagues note in the introduction of Chapter 4 – in

the space of a few months the progress made in language development is substantial, the reason being directly related to the time on the task, including both its distribution and its quality. In Chapter 2 Patsy Lightbown, a key contributor to research in intensive instruction, sets the ground for the following three chapters. She begins by relating the origins of intensive English instruction in the 1970s to the success of French immersion programmes, which inspired the efforts of French-speaking parents in Quebec to look for ways to help their children learn English. She describes the characteristics of the two approaches, remarking that the major difference between them was that immersion included content-based instruction while intensive English focused on the teaching of the language itself. She goes on to relate how the latter also met with success and, as a result, the intensive approach was adapted for the teaching of French in other Canadian provinces in the 1990s. In addition to describing and comparing Canadian approaches to teaching English and French intensively and through immersion, the chapter discusses the potential for applications of these approaches outside of Canada.

In the next chapter, Laura Collins and Joanna White examine the effects of intensive instruction on different aspects of proficiency over time. The research question of this longitudinal study was whether the differences in L2 knowledge at the outset would be maintained throughout the intensive experience, or whether the removal of the time-pressure factor, which characterizes drip-feed access, would enable the lower proficiency students to catch up to their peers. The results showed that, midway through their intensive programme, the lower-level students were already closing the gap, and by the end they demonstrated similar levels of knowledge of English on many of the tasks. The findings suggest that intensive L2 instruction may mitigate the role of individual factors (such as aptitude) on classroom learning at beginner level.

Whereas Chapter 3 shows the benefits of intensive instruction, Chapter 4 shows some of its limitations. In this chapter, Laura Collins, Joanna White, Pavel Trofimovich, Walcir Cardoso and Marlise Horst examine the distribution and the characteristics of two forms known to present learning challenges for francophone students of English: the simple past and the possessive determiners *his/her*. The analysis of a corpus consisting of transcriptions of video recordings of three teachers' input to 11- to 12-year-old francophone learners at four intervals of 400 hours shows that the target forms are rare in the aural input, occur in restricted lexical contexts and have low perceptual salience. A qualitative analysis of the pedagogical input reveals that text-based input and events that include the teachers as participants provide richer exposure to the target forms. In sum, the study signals that intensity alone is not sufficient and highlights the need for attention to target forms in the input that are challenging for second language learners.

The next chapter, by Joanna White and Carolyn E. Turner, looks at the nature of the language promoted in intensive programmes, specifically

language generated from oral assessment tasks. The study forms part of the Oral Proficiency Project that was planned to build a profile of the oral proficiency of students at the end of five months of intensive exposure, as well as to compare the oral performance ability of students in intensive English as a Second Language with that of students in regular English as a Second Language programmes at the end of elementary school. The chapter discusses the two-phase explanatory sequential mixed methods design of the study. It begins by reporting the results of the first, quantitative phase, which showed that the gain scores for students in grade 6 in intensive classes were significantly greater than for those in regular classes at the end of the year. It then goes on to present the qualitative phase results with a wealth of discourse examples from three oral tasks performed by students in intensive and regular classes.

Chapter 6, by Alex Housen, focuses on a different instructed learning context, that of the European Schools, which also provides higher intensity of exposure to the target language than typical FL instruction settings. The two empirical studies that are presented focus on how the outcomes of the L2 learning process, in the various contexts within the European Schools system and by various groups of European Schools pupils, are affected by the interplay between curricular factors and contextual, extracurricular factors. The results suggest that pupils in these multilingual schools reach global levels of L2 proficiency that are comparable to those attained in other models of bilingual education, although they also highlight an extensive range of variation in rate and outcomes that seems to depend on factors such as L1 background and the status and availability of the TL both within the schools and in their wider context.

The next two chapters provide the reader with analyses of learners' perceptions in relation to intensive exposure experiences. Chapter 7, by Carmen Muñoz, explores the significance that intensive exposure experiences have for learners through the analysis of their responses to a question in an oral interview concerning a turning point in their learning trajectory. The analysis reveals that in most cases turning points are identified in intensive exposure settings, especially in stays abroad but also at home, both in formal settings and in informal immersion environments created by learners themselves. The chapter also analyses the themes that emerge in participants' responses: agency, practice, language improvement and linguistic assimilation are illustrated with learners' accounts and linked to the different contexts in which they appear more frequently. These qualitative findings complement previous results that showed the significance of input for instructed learners in a quantitative manner, specifically through significant correlations between a number of input measures and language test scores.

In the next chapter, Elsa Tragant examines learners' perceptions in order to investigate the impact of an intensive experience abroad as reported by students in an Erasmus exchange programme. Her study focuses on the