



## Vocabulary studies and language learning psychology: towards greater interdisciplinary collaboration

**EuroSLA funded workshop** hosted at the University of Nottingham, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Programme (**presentations highlighted in bold will be streamed online**)

8.30-9	Registration
9 – 9.10	Welcome & overview of the day
9.10-10.00	<b>Plenary 1, Prof Stephen Ryan (Waseda University)</b> <i>“We don’t talk anymore: Building a dialogue between the psychology of language learning and SLA”</i>
10.00-10.50	<b>Plenary 2, Dr Bea González-Fernández (University of Sheffield)</b> <i>“Normalising interdisciplinarity between L2 vocabulary studies and language learning psychology: Rationale, challenges and future directions”</i>
10.50-11.20	Coffee break
11.20-12.10	<b>Plenary 3, Dr Bérénice Darnault (Université Bretagne Sud)</b> <i>“Enhancing pedagogy through interdisciplinary collaboration: Implications and opportunities for SLA theory and practice”</i>
12.10-1.10	<b>Short talks showcasing existing/in progress interdisciplinary work in this space</b> (15 minutes + 5 minutes clarification questions)  12.10–12.30: <b>Abdullah Albalawi (presenting author), Gareth Carrol &amp; Petra Schoofs</b> (University of Birmingham) <i>“Do more frequent quizzes lead to more vocabulary learning?”</i>



	<p><i>The effect of quiz frequency and individual differences on out-of-class flashcard learning</i></p> <p>12.30–12.50: <b>Clark Yian Wang</b> (University of Edinburgh) <i>“Chinese ESL learners' strategies for vocabulary production in interpersonal messaging”</i></p> <p>12.50–1.10: <b>Norbert Schmitt</b> (University of Nottingham, Emeritus Prof) <i>“Vocabulary and Motivation: Reflections on an Early Collaborative Research Project”</i></p>
1.10-3.30	<p>Lunch &amp; networking/themed group discussions led by short talk and plenary speakers</p> <p>Lunch: 1.10–2.10</p> <p>Networking &amp; themed group discussions: 2.10–3.30</p>
3.30-5	<p>Roundtable discussion and Q&amp;A: Led by two invited discussants, Dr Paweł Szudarski (University of Nottingham) and Dr Ikuya Aizawa (University of Nottingham), and plenary speakers</p>
5-5.15	<p>Closing</p>



## Plenary abstracts

### **We don't talk anymore: Building a dialogue between the psychology of language learning and SLA**

**Prof Stephen Ryan, Waseda University**

Discussions of variation in how individuals navigate the various challenges associated with learning an additional language have changed significantly over time. In the first part of this talk, I offer an historical overview of key developments in these discussions with a view to contextualising the recent emergence of a person-centred approach to research into the psychology of language learning. Person-centred accounts of language learning developed in reaction to a narrowly defined research agenda confined to linear, causal investigations of the effects of individual difference variables, such as motivation, anxiety, or cognitive styles, on language learning outcomes. In rejecting simplistic linear accounts of language education, person-centred research aims to look beyond the language learner and consider the whole person, embracing the complexity and unpredictability of the language learning experience. In general, this has been a positive development, but one unfortunate consequence has been a lack of dialogue with mainstream SLA research; there are times when research into the psychology of language learning seems to exist in something of an echo chamber. With this in mind, in the final part of the talk I offer suggestions as to how a productive dialogue with mainstream research can be fostered.

**Stephen Ryan** is a Professor in the School of Culture, Media, and Society at Waseda University in Tokyo. He has been involved in language education for over 25 years, and for most of this time has been based in Japan. From his career beginnings in the classroom as an English language teacher, Stephen's interests have revolved around language learning psychology. He has published widely in this area, including the award-winning *Exploring Psychology in Language Learning and Teaching* (with Marion Williams and Sarah Mercer) and *The Psychology of the Language Learner Revisited* (with Zoltan Dörnyei). His research and leadership have been instrumental in the crystallisation and development of the field of language learning and teaching psychology, including as President of the *International Association for the Psychology of Language Learning* and as a founding editor of the *Psychology of Language Teaching and Learning* book series (with Sarah Mercer) published by Multilingual Matters.

### **Normalising interdisciplinarity between L2 vocabulary studies and language learning psychology: Rationale, challenges and future directions**

**Dr Beatriz González-Fernández, University of Sheffield**

In the past decade, the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has seen a surge in articles advocating for transdisciplinary research to address the 'wicked problems' within the field. Despite recognising its importance, transdisciplinary work in SLA is, in many cases, seemingly out of reach within a research culture that remains fragmented and hyper-specialised. In this talk, I propose that interdisciplinary collaboration across related fields should first be normalised as the



standard approach to SLA research, establishing a foundation for future transdisciplinary efforts. I will focus particularly on the intersection of second language (L2) vocabulary acquisition and language learning psychology. Scholars and practitioners agree that vocabulary acquisition, as a complex and dynamic process, cannot be fully explained without considering learners' individual differences (ID). However, most L2 vocabulary research follows theoretical models of knowledge and development that are discrete and discipline-specific. When research addresses ID factors such as motivation, learning strategies, or working memory, these are typically treated as supplementary to the core vocabulary issue, rather than as a true interdisciplinary effort. As a result, the field continues to suffer from a restricted view of L2 vocabulary acquisition. I will argue for the need to foster meaningful interdisciplinary collaboration that enables a more holistic and integrated perspective on vocabulary learning. Drawing on my own research experience, I will reflect on the challenges and opportunities of such collaboration, and suggest future directions for more integrative approaches in L2 vocabulary and language learning psychology.

**Beatriz González-Fernández** is an Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics and TESOL at the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom. Her research interests include the conceptualisation, acquisition and teaching of vocabulary in second and foreign languages. In particular, she is interested in looking at how second or foreign-language users acquire the various aspects of depth of vocabulary knowledge, and how this data can inform second-language vocabulary theory, research and pedagogy. She has also researched the effect of app-based and classroom-based instruction on second language development more broadly. Her current project involves researching the acquisition of polysemy and homonymy in foreign languages under deliberate and incidental conditions. She has published in multiple avenues in the field, including Handbooks, academic books and relevant academic journals, such as *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *Applied Linguistics* and *TESOL Quarterly*.

### **Enhancing pedagogy through interdisciplinary collaboration: Implications and opportunities for SLA theory and practice**

**Dr Bérénice Darnault, Université Bretagne Sud**

In the evolving landscape of language education, bridging disciplines is crucial for developing effective pedagogical practices that can successfully address the widely recognized gap between research findings and teaching applications. This third plenary offers reflections and a call to action to investigate the intersections between research and pedagogy in second language acquisition (SLA) through interdisciplinary collaboration and the promotion of more informative, tangible and explicit content in academic communication. The talk will specifically examine how pedagogy is an area where the fields of vocabulary studies and language learning



psychology can improve, both independently and jointly. Drawing from my experiences as an early-career researcher, I will explore the often-overlooked and nominal mentions of pedagogical implications found within academic literature, both in journals' submission guidelines and in integrative research-led papers. By addressing key questions about the role and position of pedagogy in scholarly work, I will highlight how an integrated approach to action research can serve as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue between researchers, practitioners and the broader educational community. Ultimately, this session invites participants to reflect on their own practices and consider innovative strategies to enhance the ecological relevance of their research in language education while improving learners' experiences.

**Bérénice Darnault** is an early career researcher and holds a PhD in cognitive science and language from the University of Barcelona. Her current research focuses on the psychology of language learning, with a particular focus on lifelong learning and language teaching for learners over 65 years old. Her work explores the impact of motivation and long-term engagement of senior L2 users on language learning and well-being, as well as current educational practices within communities of language learners who remain active after retirement. Dr Darnault has been invited to share her expertise at several international conferences and workshops, and she is currently working on an upcoming book on motivation in language learning, which is set to be published by Multilingual Matters/Channel View Publications Ltd in 2025.



## Short talk abstracts

### **Do more frequent quizzes lead to more vocabulary learning? The effect of quiz frequency and individual differences on out-of-class flashcard learning**

**Abdullah Albalawi (presenting author), Gareth Carrol and Petra Schoofs**

The testing effect suggests that there is an inherent advantage for testing on vocabulary learning and retention, compared to simply studying or revising (Karpicke & Roediger, 2008). However, it is unclear based on the available research how frequently tests or quizzes should occur for optimal vocabulary learning. The present study aimed to address this by examining the effect of quiz frequency (weekly, biweekly, monthly and no-quiz) on vocabulary learning (meaning recognition and meaning recall) over a school semester (eight weeks). Secondary school students ( $n = 76$ , age = 16-17) learned 120 target words using digital flashcards in naturalistic out-of-class settings using their personal devices. The study also examined the roles of motivation (Self-determination theory; Ryan & Deci, 2017) and self-regulation (Tseng et al., 2006) in gains. Results revealed three key findings. First, the groups who received quizzes showed significant vocabulary improvement on the posttest while the group who did not receive quizzes did not make any significant vocabulary gains. This finding suggests that supplementing out-of-class intentional vocabulary learning with in-class quizzes can be an effective vocabulary learning approach. Second, there were no significant differences in the learning gains between the three quiz frequency groups (weekly, biweekly and monthly), suggesting that more frequent quizzes do not necessarily lead to more vocabulary learning. Third, autonomous motivation had significant positive effects on meaning recall only while controlled motivation had significant negative effects on both meaning recognition and meaning recall. In contrast, self-regulation did not show significant effects. The individual differences analysis highlights the important role of motivation in out-of-class vocabulary learning, whereas self-regulation does not seem to have the same influence.

### **Chinese ESL learners' strategies for vocabulary production in interpersonal messaging**

**Clark Yian Wang**

Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) have received increasing research attention for decades, and have been demonstrated its effectiveness in improving learners' vocabulary learning and general language proficiency. Recent years have also witnessed a shift in VLSs research from investigating the effectiveness to exploring the specific process of how learners' employ VLSs, hoping to shed lights on strategy instruction to develop autonomous strategic learners. However, the majority of empirical studies have focused on vocabulary reception, which means



how lexical items are recognized, insufficient research attention has been given to vocabulary production, especially in pragmatic situations. The present small-scaled study designed an interpersonal messaging task for four advanced Chinese ESL learners to explore 1) what VLSs had been used by them to improve vocabulary production, 2) what factors could influence their selection of VLSs and 3) what strategic efforts they made to enhance VLSs use. Combined with the task, think-aloud protocol was used to gain an introspective view of how the participants employ VLSs and follow-up interviews were used to seek for clarification of certain strategic actions. The present study found that the participants' VLSs employment were influenced both by the interpersonal contextual factors and their own strategic efforts, especially metacognition activation, indicating that there is a dynamic interaction between learners, interpersonal contexts and VLSs use.

Research questions:

1. What strategies do Chinese ESL learners use to improve the production of the vocabulary in the instant interpersonal messaging task?
2. How do factors affect their selection of strategies for producing vocabulary in the task?
3. How do they enhance their strategy use in order to complete the task?

## **Vocabulary and Motivation: Reflections on an Early Collaborative Research Project**

### **Norbert Schmitt**

In the last two decades, the University of Nottingham developed a reputation for expertise in the fields of vocabulary studies and motivation studies. This was led by two professors: Zoltan Dörnyei and Norbert Schmitt. In the early 2000s, these two worked on a collaborative research project combining these two interests. This was one of the first extended projects to combine the two applied linguistics areas, and the results were published in the John Benjamins book *Formulaic Sequences*. This presentation will go back and reflect on the project, including its genesis, and the problems and solutions in setting up the various research projects with colleagues across the department. It will then look forward to discuss how future studies might be developed, based on the experiences of the 2004 project.