

New Media and Old Challenges: Perception of non-native language in learning environments

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With the still increasing use of English as a Lingua Franca, we need to empirically investigate non-native writing, reading, and translation processes in different media. In the scope of a larger project, we first want to focus on the perception of written text by natives vs. non-natives. The fundamental question is if readers who have a very high foreign language proficiency process text in the foreign language similar to text in their native language or if there are still measurable differences.

In this talk, we will present findings of a pilot eyetracking study on the perception of German (original) and English (translation) text. Our participants are German native speakers and translation students who study English, so we can anticipate a high degree of language skills. They read extracts of two Digitalorials® (one in German, one in English) provided by the Schirn Art Gallery in Frankfurt for free online. The Digitalorials combine image, sound, and text to help the visitors prepare or revise the exhibition and is available for smart-phones, tablets and desktops. The participants' task is to prepare for a hypothetical test in German for a course in culture studies, which follows right after they have worked through the materials.

For non-native reading, our hypothesis are that

- a) fewer questions will be answered correctly,
- b) answering questions will take longer,
- c) the test preparation will take longer,
- d) fixation duration and fixation count on text will be higher, and
- e) more time will be spent on reading the texts than looking on additional elements

The analysis will help to evaluate the learning success in the native and non-native language. The data will be assessed statistically and the results will serve as the basis for future studies.