



Meta-analytic Talk in Foreign Language Development

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Thanks to our PURM project's faculty sponsor at the Graduate School of Education, Dr. Paul McDermott, I, along with one other undergraduate research assistant, was able to work on Dr. Kara Moranski's research team. Our inter-university team consisted of Dr. Paul Toth of Temple University, along with one of his graduate research assistants and Dr. Moranski, along with her two undergraduate research assistants. Our study lay within the field of applied linguistics, and its goal was to identify and analyze meta-analytic talk in speech data collected from adolescent learners of Spanish. We are ultimately searching for any sort of correlation or lack thereof between peer interaction in classrooms and second-language learning.

Meta-analytic talk refers to instances in which learners discuss certain metalinguistic elements of the target language (vocabulary, grammar, etc.) in their native language (English). Current research shows that this type of metalinguistic talk has several benefits to language learners and can have implications for target-language use and accuracy, and we hoped that our study would support a similar hypothesis.

While I was not present for the genesis of the project, I joined the team during the second phase of research and was able to help by sharing my thoughts while we sought to develop a solidified coding scheme, learning and using *Transana*, a qualitative analysis software for text, still image, and video data, and editing and revising already existing transcripts before analysis.

This summer position was a learning experience for me in more ways than one. I became proficient in using a speech-analysis software that was previously alien to me. Because our Penn team worked in collaboration with a professor and his GA from Temple, I experienced cross-institutional collaboration in social science research. It was my first experience within the field of linguistics, and I really enjoyed learning to blend quantitative and qualitative methods to study human behaviors and learning processes. I worked hands-on with different people with different thoughts, but we compiled and utilized these diverse ideas in order to achieve a common goal.