

Executive functions predict individual differences in second language phonological processing

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It is common knowledge that people differ considerably in their ability to learn new languages, especially in the area of phonological processing (speaking, listening). Cognitive and first language skills – among others – have been shown to predict differences in second language performance; yet little progress has been made in identifying specific predictors of phonological processing or acquisition. In addition, such findings still have to make their way into models of language processing or acquisition.

In this presentation, I will describe research conducted in my lab in the past few years, as well as recent joint work with collaborators, about the potential role of executive functions (including the role of attention, inhibition and working memory) in predicting phonological processing in a second language.

I will present data from perception and production tasks across various areas of the phonological grammar, and will also discuss recent findings that suggest that executive functions can interact with language exposure and learning patterns to differentially influence L2 phonological processing.