First Language Effects on the Learning of Grammatical Gender in a Second Language

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Some languages contain categorization systems for nouns called grammatical gender, while others do not. Learning a second language with grammatical gender can pose different obstacles for individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. This study aims to address two questions:

> 1. Does having grammatical gender in one's native language make it easier or harder to learn gender in a new language, compared to not having grammatical gender in one's native language?

> 2. Do explicit and implicit training methods differ in their efficacy for teaching grammatical gender in a new language, and does this differ depending on whether or not one's native language has grammatical gender?

To achieve these aims we use a between-groups design, training English and French native speakers on a small artificial language that has a gender system wherein half of the nouns have the same lexical gender as in French, and the other half have gender that conflicts with French. Half the participants in each native language group received explicit training; the other half implicit training. Using a match/mismatch paradigm paired with EEG, we compare participants in each language group and training group on their ability to learn grammatical gender in the artificial language.