Enhancing the metalinguistic awareness in primary-school children through explicit language reflection

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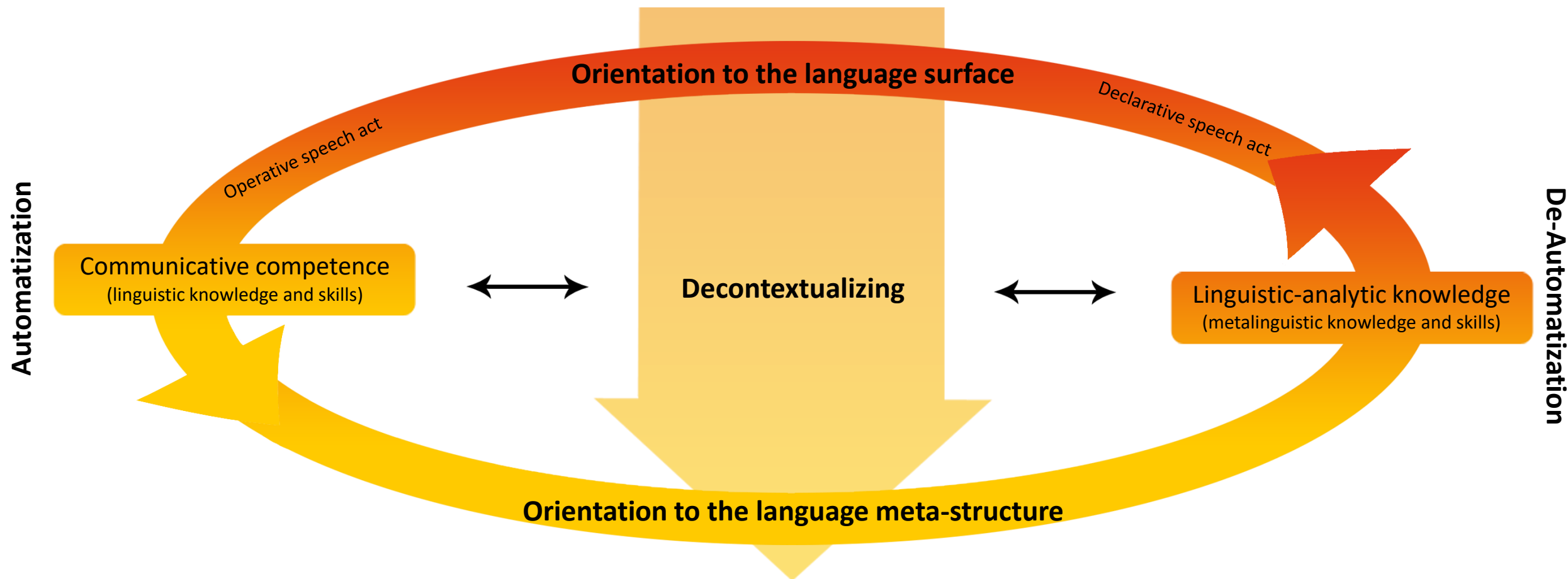
Outline

- Theoretical Background

- Overview of the Research

- Project „MoreLanguages"

  - Design & Purpose of the Study

  - Methods

  - Preliminary Results

- Perspective

Metalinguistic Awareness...

...is defined as the mental ability to comprehend the structure and function of language/s in order to use it/them for appropriate linguistic behaviour (Wildemann et al., 2016).

Children raised in multilingual contextes develop specific metalinguistic abilities, which result in an increased language awareness (Bialystok, 1991, p. 134).

A Construct of Metalinguistic Awareness

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung

Orientation to the language surface

Operative speech act

Declarative speech act

Automatization

De-Automatization

Communicative competence
(linguistic knowledge and skills)

Decontextualizing

Linguistic-analytic knowledge
(metalinguistic knowledge and skills)

Orientation to the language meta-structure

(Wildemann et al., in prep.)

Explicit Language Reflection…

… occurs on different levels (see also Krafft, 2014):

-Morpho-syntactic (word formation & sentence structure)
-Phonologic (pronunciation)
-Pragmatic (speech act)
-Lexical & Semantic (terms & meanings)

… leads to improvements in language skills and metalinguistic awareness (Hyland, 2003; Siepmann, 2007).

Three meta-analyses (Norris and Ortega, 2000; Ellis, 2002; Spada and Tomita, 2010) report a statistically significant relationship between explicit language reflection and the learning outcomes of foreign-language learners.

Example of a task to explicit language reflection

"False friends"

- *How are the words pronounced?*

- *What do they mean?*

➔ Language reflection task on phonological and semantical level

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MehrSprachen

FIT FÜR MEHR SPRACHE(N) IM DEUTSCHUNTERRICHT
–Arbeitsblatt 19: Falsche Freunde–

"Falsche Freunde"

Du kennst ja schon Wörter wie „Laptop", „Champignon", „Bonbon", „Kindergarten" oder „Butterbrot". Sie sind in verschiedenen Sprachen ähnlich und haben auch die gleiche Bedeutung.

Vielleicht erinnerst du dich ja noch daran. Hier ein paar Beispiele:

Бутерброт [buterbrot]
Butterbrot

laptop
Laptop

champignon
Champignon

© MehrSprachen

Overview of the Research

Many international studies on L2- and L3-acquisition underline the advantages of explicit language reflection (a.o. Abu Radwan, 2005; Burgess & Etherington, 2002; Hyland, 2003).

Only a few *studies* focus on teacher trainings and reveal the relationship between *Teacher Language Awareness,* teaching behavior and (meta)linguistic competences of multilingual students (see also Andrews, 2007; 2009; Young, 2012).

However, the results are inconsistent, which is why Andrews (2007) suggests: „[...] more research that might shed light on this relationship" (p. 179)

The results outlined here were gained mainly in foreign language research. Whether they are valid in German context is still unclear and should be investigate in our study "MoreLanguages"

„MoreLanguages"

- Experimental study on multilingualism and multilingual education

- Three data measurement times (pre – post – follow-up design)

- Level-nested participants

    - N = 34 primary-school teachers

    - N = 509 primary-school children

- Teacher training on the use of multilingualism in German language classes

Purpose of the Study

… is to promote and investigate language reflection in German lessons.

… is to find out, whether primary-school children may profit from such lessons and therefore increase their metalinguistic awareness.
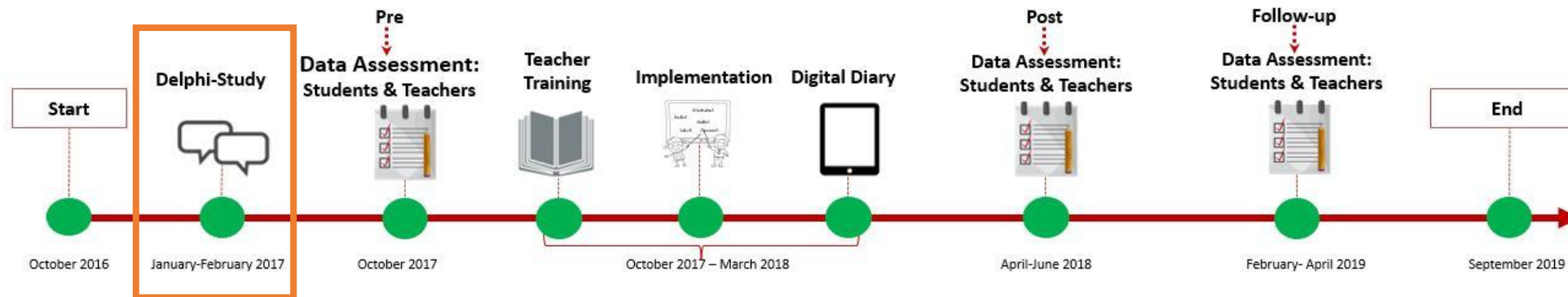
Methods

Participants

	Experimental group	Control group
Primary-school teachers	N = 18 (M=10.22*; SD=8.85; 94.4% female)	N = 16 (M=12.09; SD=10.77; 82.4% female)
	receive training on the use of multilingualism in German classes	conduct classes as usual (without any training)
Primary-school children	N = 277 (M=8.78**; SD=0.48; 49.3% female)	N = 232 (M=8.72; SD=0.41; 48.3% female)

* Age (years)
** Professional experience (years)

Measures

Primary school teachers	Primary school children
Demographical data (Pre) – self-report data	Demographical data (Pre) – self-report data
Attitudes to multilingualism (Pre, post & follow-up) – self-report questionnaire	General cognitive ability (Pre) – test (CFT 20-R)
Experiences with multilingualism (Pre, post & follow-up) – self-report questionnaire	German language abilities (Pre) – profile analysis (Tulpenbeet)
Motivation to teach (Pre, post & follow-up) – self-report questionnaire	Metalinguistic awareness (Post & follow-up) – elicitation method (M-SPRA)
Language reflection in German lessons – weekly digital diary	Motivation (Pre, post & follow-up) – self-report questionnaire (NFC-Kids, SESES-S)

Start

Delphi-Study

Pre
Data Assessment:
Students & Teachers

Teacher Training

Implementation

Digital Diary

Post
Data Assessment:
Students & Teachers

Follow-up
Data Assessment:
Students & Teachers

End

October 2016

January-February 2017

October 2017

October 2017 – March 2018

April-June 2018

February- April 2019

September 2019

Guidelines of the Teacher Training

Flexibility	Teacher should let go of control and be open to try new methods and to use multilingualism in German lessons
Student-orientation	Teacher should be aware of the students' multilingualism and use their languages in the German classes
Teacher Language Awareness	Teacher should be able to reflect on the language/s
Practicability	Materials and methods on the use of multilingualism should require little time and costs
Resources-orientation	Materials and methods should grasp students' languages and use them for language comparisons and reflection
Integration in the language lessons	Materials and methods should be used during the regular German lessons and on long term

Goal of the Teacher Training

… is to provide teachers with materials and methods, which may be used in multilingual classes and integrated in regular language lessons.

## Making Language a Subject of Discussion and Comparing Languages, by …

… including more languages in the German lessons

… discovering similarities and differences between languages

… understanding multilingualism widely:

- Dialects
- Heritage language of children in the class
- Other foreign languages

Developing Metalinguistic Awareness, by …

-talking about language/s

-analyzing language/s

-reflecting on language use

-being aware of language structure

-thinking about language functions

-developing language knowledge

Promoting Language Skills

… of ALL children, no matter their origin or their initial language abilities
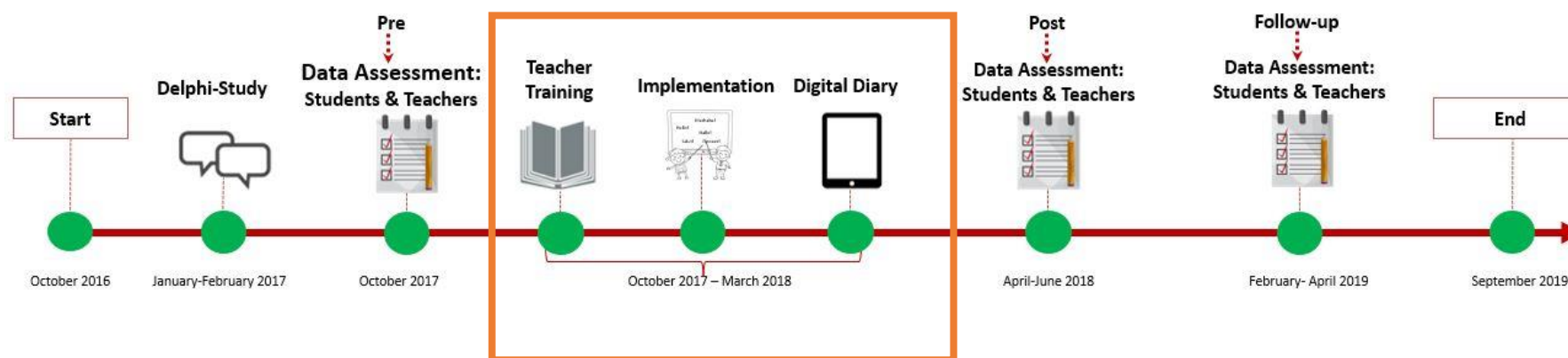
Evaluation through participants:

1. Organisation of the training
2. Theoretical background
3. Methodological background
4. Requirements on participants
5. Provided materials
6. Training's atmosphere
7. Motivation on participation
8. Motivation on further work with materials
9. Students' motivation through materials
10. Use of tablets
11. Support through the training team

Training Evaluation

Bar	Value
1	3,85
2	3,62
3	3,46
4	3,46
5	3,31
6	3,92
7	3,69
8	3,77
9	3,77
10	2,15
11	3,92

➡ Effectiveness of the teacher training on primary school children's metalinguistic awareness (Mai-June 2018)
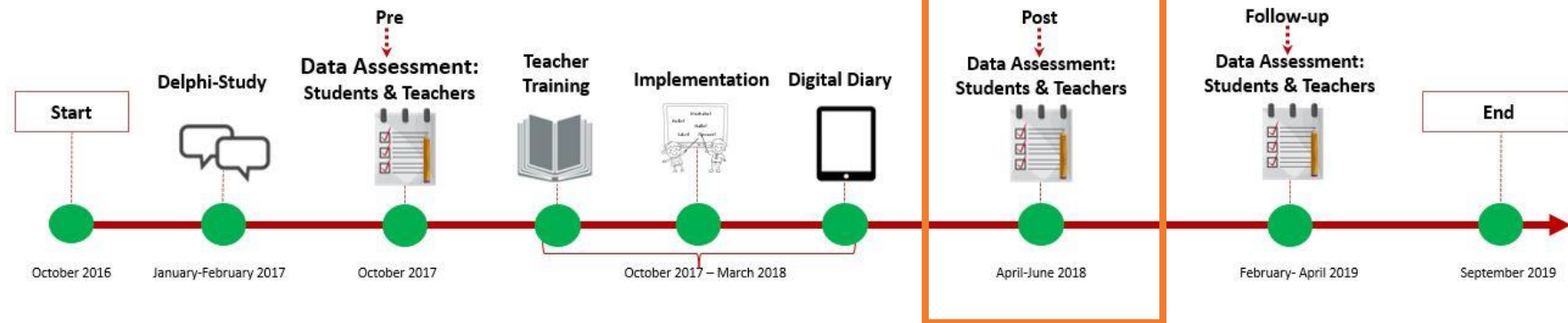
Assessment of metalinguistic awareness – elicitation tool „M-SPRA"

- Multilingual Software „**My first stories**"
- Story „Maddox, the Magician"
- Languages: German, English, Russian, Turkish, Spanish
- Guided Interaction (no assessment of language skills)
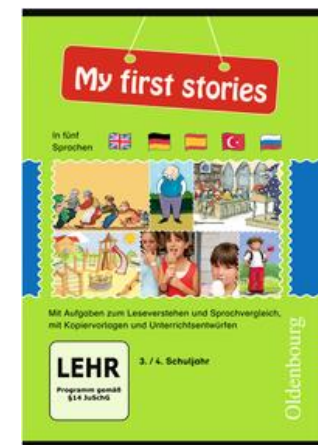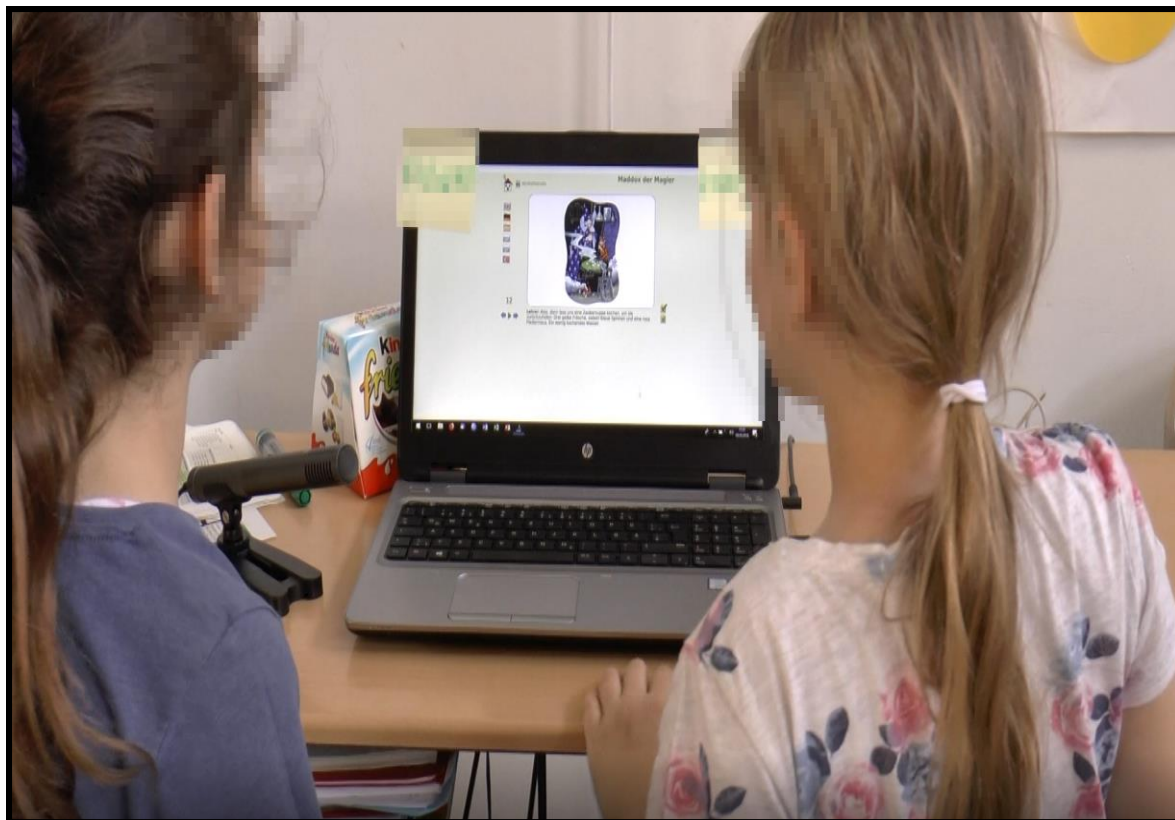- **Five prompt interaction-sequences that guide children to reflect on language/s**

(Oldenbourg, 2013)

Elicitation-Setup

Example of an Interaction-Sequence:
Capital Letters

TA: Well! Ok! Now you can look in another language how many capital letters are there.

C1: This one?

C2: Let us take English!

TA: Right, you can take English.

(Children read the text.)

C2: There are three capital letters or four, if we also count the introduction word.

C1: Mhm (approval)

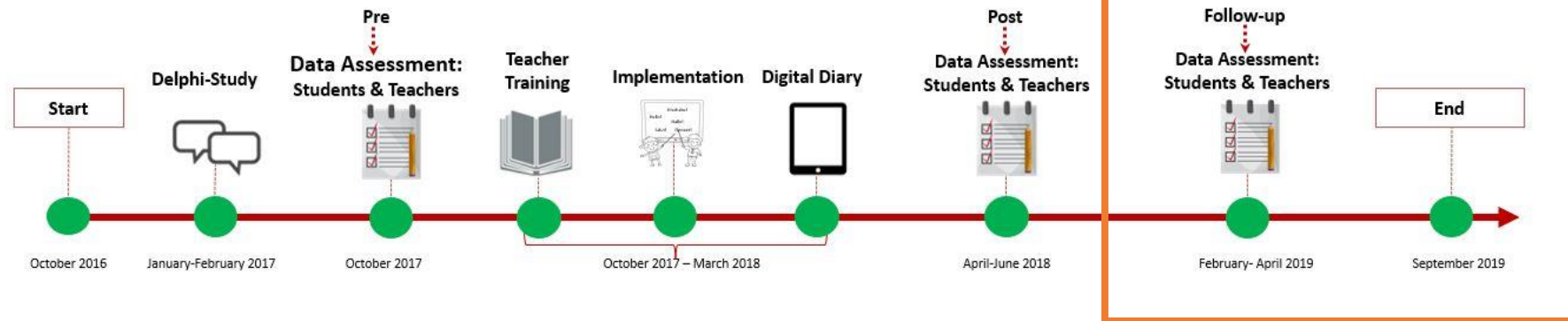TA: Mhm (approval). Why are here only few capital letters?

C1: Because here is "yellow", this means "gelb" (German word for yellow) and both are written with a lower case, but "spider" is "Spinne" (German word for spider) and in English it is written without a capital.

C2: Really?

C1: Yes!

TA: What do you think, C2?

C2: I think the same.

What we already know:

Empirical studies have already shown that multilingual children reflect on language/s more frequently and more elaborately than their classmates do, even after controlling for age, general cognitive ability and language abilities (Akbulut et al., 2017; Bien-Miller et al., 2017).

Expected findings on…

… whether explicit language reflection (promoted through the teacher training) enhances teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism and motivation to teach (more) languages …

… how the teacher training influences the use of language/s and multilingualism in German lessons …

… and whether students' metalinguistic awareness profit from such lessons.

Thank you for your attention!

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KoMBi-Page: http://www.kombi-hamburg.de/projekt.html?Id=66&lang=de

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