The creation of initial learner varieties under controlled input conditions

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For this study, groups of novice child and adult learners of Polish with L1 Italian or German were exposed to a series of monolingual and interactive input sessions without access to meta-information about the target language. Learners individually retold a story after 14 hours of target language contact. The presentation focuses on form–function associations in the learners' production data and compares them to properties of the input the learners were exposed to. In addition to support for input-driven factors, there was evidence for a uniform syntax, for individual creative constructions, and for reinterpreted morphological variation. Findings revealed differences due to learners' age but not their language background. The results will be discussed in relation to the predictions of the usage-based approach and the learner-varieties approach to second language acquisition.