Our paper reports on a quasi-experimental intervention study carried out in 12 beginners’ classes of German for adult migrants. Its aim was to find evidence of effects caused by chunk-based and fluency-oriented activities used regularly in the experimental classrooms over the 10-14 weeks of an intensive course.

The study is rooted in language pedagogy (e.g. Lewis’ “Lexical Approach”, and Nation’s ”fluency strand” of good language programs), but it also revolves around key concepts from applied linguistics, such as chunks, constructions, accuracy, fluency and implicit teaching.

Six pairs of classes were matched based on information available the first day of class in order to form an experimental and a control group. Both groups worked according to our concepts for the whole course duration. Textbooks were adapted for the experimental group in such a way that chunk-based activities replaced all activities dealing with grammar and isolated words. Repetition tasks were added for fluency practice.

The data that emerged from the study include interviews with teachers, background data on the learners, as well as longitudinal data from oral and written language tests at two timepoints.

Our talk will provide an outline of the study and then focus on the oral test components and the corresponding quantitative test data.

The main results seem to confirm the Tradeoff Hypothesis (Skehan, 2009): more fluency and less accuracy gains for the experimental group; vice versa for the control group. The difference in fluency was found in speech rate measures based on a production task. The accuracy measures were based on productions from an Elicited Imitation task. No differences were found between the groups as far as content and functional adequacy were concerned, but the control group performed significantly better when accuracy and precision were considered. The results will be discussed along with possible consequences for teaching practice.

Keywords: implicit/explicit teaching, accuracy, fluency, migrants, chunks.