

Meta-linguistic knowledge, language aptitude and foreign language proficiency.

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A study is reported in which a relationship between foreign language aptitude, implicit knowledge of L1 grammar and L2 English proficiency is investigated. The main aim of the study was to see if there are any differences in the relationship among the three variables across two groups of learners chosen for the study.

The study was carried out on two different groups of L2 English learners. One group (N=245) consisted of higher secondary school learners, whereas the other (N=120) was made up of first-year undergraduate students of English. Among other things, the main difference between the two groups was the amount and quality of L2 instruction they were exposed to. The following tools were used to acquire the data for the study: a battery of tests to measure FL aptitude (including a grammatical sensitivity measure) and a year final L2 proficiency test including both the assessment of written and oral language.

Several research questions were pursued in the study following the suggestions made by Steel & Alderson 1994, Robinson 1997, Ellis 2005 and others which pointed to the need for more primary research on the effectiveness of FL/L2 instruction. Firstly, it was hypothesized that, irrespective of the instructional experience, there is a relationship between the extent of L1 meta-linguistic knowledge as measured by a grammatical sensitivity task and the learners' L2 English proficiency as measured by course-final grades. Secondly, it was to be seen if this performance was significantly different for the two learner-samples studied. Thirdly, the relationship between meta-linguistic ability and the components of L2 English proficiency were investigated to discover finer-grained patterns of correspondence between L2 learning success and learners' aptitudinal profiles. The results of the study are interpreted against the concept of explicit/implicit learning dimension and some pedagogical and methodological implications are suggested.

References

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