

Affective and Cognitive Variables and the Acquisition of EFL

Magda Pašalić

University of Split/ Split, Croatia

Key words : second language acquisition, cognitive variables, affective variables, beliefs about foreign language learning, success in foreign language learning

ABSTRACT

Research trend in the SLA changed in the last two decades. It focused more on how students acquire foreign languages and which factors influence that process and less on various teaching methods. This paper is supposed to contribute to reaching a more detailed answer to the question why some students accomplish a language task successfully and some achieve poor results. It has been established that many variables, cognitive and affective ones, influence the ability to acquire foreign languages (e.g. language aptitude, learning strategies, beliefs about language learning).

Beliefs about language learning, frequency of using learning strategies and their correlation with beliefs as well as with the success accomplished in learning English among Croatian students was analysed in this paper. Our subjects were the I. and II. year students of the Faculty of Economics in Split, University of Split.

According to research data, which will be included in the paper, statistically significant correlation was established between majority of beliefs included in BALLI questionnaire, used to gain data on students' beliefs, and success in FL. This proved the hypothesis that beliefs correlate with success in FL. We established that there are beliefs which are accepted in our as well as in other socio-cultural communities (e.g. beliefs that there are people who are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language and that it is easier for children to learn a foreign FL).

Our results proved that success in EFL correlates stronger to beliefs than to learning strategies. Statistically significant correlation was established only between cognitive learning strategies and success in EFL. The strongest correlation was established between beliefs and cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies. The research results will hopefully raise awareness of the importance of analysed variables among teachers of foreign languages.