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Title: Towards a combined account of individual differences in both L1 and L2 acquisition

Abstract

Hundreds of empirical studies of the last fifty years have provided ample evidence for (1) large differences in L1 proficiency among L1 users, (2) large differences in the attainment of L2 proficiency among L2 learners, and (3) the apparent impossibility of adult L2 learners to acquire a ‘native’ control of their L2. These observations still stand in need of an adequate explanation. *BLC Theory* offers a framework, aimed at understanding these three interrelated issues, while simultaneously defining an agenda for theoretically informed future research. There are two main constructs in BLC Theory. The first construct is called *Basic Language Cognition* (BLC), that is the knowledge and use (during listening and speaking) of high-frequency elements of the oral language, shared by all adult L1 users (native speakers), regardless of age, literacy, or educational level. The second construct is called *Extended Language Cognition* (ELC), that is the knowledge and use (in listening, speaking, reading, and writing) of frequent and less-frequent elements of language. In this presentation, I will briefly present BLC Theory, along with seven empirical claims. I will focus on possible ways of falsifying these claims, as an agenda for future research. I will also explain why BLC Theory must be placed under the umbrella of the meta-theory of language as a complex adaptive system. Workshop participants potentially interested in BLC Theory are encouraged to read – ahead of my presentation - a short text, entitled *BLC Theory in a nutshell*, which can be downloaded from the opening page of <http://www.uva.nl/profile/j.h.hulstijn>.