



Foreign Language Aptitude Revisited Again

Professor Peter Skehan, University of Auckland

'Classical' foreign language aptitude assumed the existence of a specific ability for language learning which was analysable into distinct components, e.g. phonemic coding ability, memory, language analytic ability. This viewpoint, useful for predictions of success and some suggestions for instructional methods adaptation, languished when perceived as detached from communicative language teaching. More recently however there has been a resurgence in interest in aptitude, and this lecture will review these developments. There will be four major sections. First, new developments in understanding foreign language aptitude components will be explored. These include reinterpretations of phonemic coding ability as a dyslexia-related coding deficit; of language analytic ability through methods of using current SLA theories, i.e. processability theory, as the basis for designing aptitude tests; and working memory. The second major area concerns linkages to putative SLA stages and processes, and it will be argued that such processes offer a much better framework within which to locate different aptitude tests. The third area focuses on aptitude in relation to a critical period, high level achievement, and language attrition. It will be argued that even existing aptitude measures reveal that high level achievement and lack of attrition are connected to high foreign language aptitude, and that therefore, aptitude has to be considered as fundamental in accounting for language learning success. This leads to a fourth and embryonic area – to recast aptitude work through the distinction between implicit and explicit learning, and to consider whether aptitude tests need to incorporate separate measures of capacity for each type of learning.



Speaker's Profile

Peter Skehan is Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Auckland. He is interested in second language acquisition, especially task based performance and instruction, language testing, and foreign language aptitude.





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Date: 7 September 2011 (Wednesday)

Time: 6.30pm – 7.30pm (Refreshments from 6pm)

Venue: Lee Wing Tat Lecture Theatre (LT-D)

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Registration

1. Please put a "X" in the appropriate boxes and fill in the information required.

We will attend the public lecture on **7 Sep 2011**.

No. of participants: _____

We need parking space on your campus.

Car plate no. : _____

2. Contact Person:

Name: _____

Email Address: _____ Tel. No.: _____

Organization: _____

Admission is on a first-come-first-served basis and will be confirmed by email.

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