

THE ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE INSTINCT AND CREATIVITY IN L2 QUESTION FORMATION BY BULGARIAN YOUNG LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

The study of second language acquisition (L2) mechanisms of children carried in the last 20 years (White, 1998, 2003; Epstein, Flynn and Martohardjono, 1996; Cook, 2003; Hawkins, 2001) has been focused on the exploration of the availability and functioning of the built-in language faculty (i.e. Universal Grammar; UG) in the attainment of the target language features. At the same time research in the field of error analysis and interlanguage (Meisel, 2011; Flynn and O’Neil, 2012; Saviile-Troike, 2006) claims that creativity is an essential component of the resetting of the parameters of the L2 grammar. The paper, therefore, attempts to clarify the link between UG (i.e. the Language Instinct) and creativity in order to provide a better understanding of their role in the process of L2 acquisition. This proposal is examined in the light of the findings of a 5-month study of English language question formation patterns by 30 8-9-year-old Bulgarian young speakers of English as L2 conducted between January and May 2014. The empirical evidence collected from the L2 oral productions of the study subjects and the data from a diagnostic test comprising of the key question types practiced by the young L2 speakers during the study period demonstrates that creativity is an essential strategy used by the L2 learners in cases of language deficiency, while the language instinct accounts for the L1 interference. However, further research with more participants from different linguistic backgrounds is necessary for the generalization of these findings.

KEYWORDS

L2 questions, creativity, universal grammar, Bulgarian young learners of English

INTRODUCTION

The body of knowledge which gives an account of the ways in which children acquire a foreign language (L2) develops intensively after the foundation of psycholinguistics as a scientific discipline in the 1950s. Since then there has been a steady increase in the theoretical and practical contributions related to the study