

Astract

The present study explores the effect of accessibility to metalinguistic knowledge on performance of the second language (L2) production. Task performance is analyzed in terms of competition among fluency, complexity and accuracy. In a study based on 40 Cantonese learners of English, the increase in accessibility to metalinguistic knowledge can promote accuracy of their speeches with peripheral uses of target language yielding higher accuracy than prototypical uses. It is also found that when learners attend to one aspect of a demanding task, they find it hard to spare attention for another aspect. This study shows a trade-off effect between fluency and accuracy. These findings help to further our understanding of the relationship between metalinguistic knowledge and L2 oral output and are also of obvious pedagogic relevance.