

Abstract

This longitudinal study investigates the role of motivation played in second language (L2) learning in Swiss German children. Specifically, the internal organisation of motivation in children, the relationship between motivation and subsequent English ability, predictors of subsequent English ability and distribution of different error types were examined and discussed.

Data of 78 children were included in factor analysis, and all other analyses included 62 children who remained until the end of the study. Children's prior English ability in third grade was evaluated by a series of vocabulary tests while their subsequent English ability in fourth grade was assessed by a one-minute picture description task and the errors were coded.

Liking for English, *Perception on English learning* and *Practical use of English* were the three major motivational factors identified in the study. Prior English vocabulary ability in third grade was found to be a significant predictor of children's subsequent English ability in fourth grade, in the aspect of number of English words spoken. The motivational factor *Practical use of English* was found to predict significantly the number of English words spoken in children in fourth grade. In addition, among the different types of errors, transfer errors were found to be the most prominent type, and the incidence of errors on average was closely related to children's average order of morpheme acquisition.

Several exploratory analyses were also conducted. Parental support in L2 learning was found to be negatively correlated with English ability. Also, some incidences of error types were correlated with each other. All findings and their implications were discussed.