THE CONTRIBUTION OF LANGUAGE APTITUDE AND PERSONALITY TRAITS TO LANGUAGE LEARNERS’ PERFORMANCE ON TASK

In this talk I first briefly review the studies that have investigated the role of language aptitude, and then focus on personality as a variable which has often been ignored in research on language learning. My interest is in examining the influence of these two individual difference factors on learners’ interactional behaviour during the task, i.e. how they impact on learner’s performance on tasks. I will report on a study with twenty relatively advanced students, English majors (CEFR level B2-C1), Croatian native speakers, who completed the LAMMA aptitude tests (Meara, 2005) and the NEO Five-Factor Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992), and carried out two types of tasks (a problem solving and a dictogloss), each performed in a group of four and in pairs. Each individual performance was closely examined in terms of the number of turns taken, the number of negotiation moves, semantic expansions, the quantity and the quality of recall items (in dictogloss) and the contribution of new ideas (in problem solving). The correlation between these variables and the students’ individual characteristics in aptitude and personality points to some interesting associations between the aspects of aptitude, extraversion, and conscientiousness on the one hand, and the interactional behaviour in two different types of task with a different group dynamics on the other hand.