

EXPANDED LITERATURE REVIEW ON SECOND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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Abstract: This expanded literature review explores three quantitative studies that examine key factors influencing second language (L2) proficiency: cognitive aptitude, interactional competence, and learner autonomy. Santizo (2017) investigates the relationship between language aptitude and oral proficiency across four languages, revealing that this correlation varies depending on language complexity. Roever and Ikeda (2020) examine interactional competence, emphasizing its crucial role in managing conversations and enhancing overall communicative proficiency. Faiz (2020) explores learner autonomy, finding a strong positive correlation between independent learning and success in Arabic reading and listening. Together, these studies demonstrate that successful language acquisition depends on the integration of cognitive abilities, social communication skills, and self-directed learning. The review also reflects on the use of reporting verbs, hedges, and boosters to convey degrees of certainty and emphasis in academic writing, following Hyland's (2008) framework. This analysis highlights how linguistic choices in academic discourse contribute to clarity, balance, and precision in presenting research findings.

Keywords: language learning; second language acquisition; language aptitude; interactional competence; learner autonomy; language proficiency; oral proficiency; receptive skills; self-directed learning; academic writing; reporting verbs; hedges and boosters

Introduction: Language learning is a complex process that involves many factors, including cognitive abilities, social interaction skills, and self-directed learning. Understanding these different factors can help us see what contributes to success in learning a second language (L2). This review looks at three studies that focus on different aspects of language proficiency: Santizo (2017) explores the relationship between language aptitude and oral proficiency, Roever and Ikeda (2020) study the role of interactional competence in language proficiency, and Faiz (2020) examines how learner autonomy impacts achievements in Arabic reading and listening. Together, these studies show that cognitive abilities, communication skills, and independent learning are all key to successful language acquisition.

Each study investigates language proficiency, but from a different perspective. Santizo (2017) focuses on oral proficiency, exploring how language aptitude essentially, how well a person can learn and process language affects their ability to speak in different languages. Santizo looks at four languages: French, Indonesian, Tagalog, and Arabic, using standardized tests to measure aptitude and speaking ability. Roever and Ikeda (2020), on the other hand, focus on interactional competence. This is the ability to manage conversations, use language in social contexts, and navigate communication breakdowns. Their study shows how important these skills are for overall language proficiency. Faiz (2020) explores learner autonomy, which is a learner's ability to control and direct their own learning process. Faiz examines how these impacts reading and listening proficiency in Arabic learners, showing that those who are more autonomous tend to perform better. Each study, therefore, highlights different ways in which learners can improve their language proficiency.

Literature review: All three studies use quantitative methods to gather and analyze their data. Santizo (2017) uses standardized tests the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) and the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) to measure how aptitude correlates with oral proficiency in different languages. The results show that this correlation varies: French and Tagalog learners show a moderate correlation between aptitude and proficiency, while Indonesian and Arabic learners show little or no correlation. This suggests that language complexity might affect how well aptitude predicts speaking ability. Roever and Ikeda (2020) use interactional tasks to measure how well learners manage conversations and interact in different contexts. They find that learners with stronger interactional competence are more proficient overall. Faiz (2020) uses surveys and performance assessments to measure autonomy and its impact on reading and listening skills. He finds a positive correlation: learners who show more independence and self-regulation perform better in these areas. The use of quantitative methods allows these researchers to draw clear conclusions about the factors that contribute to language proficiency.

All three studies highlight the role of individual learner characteristics in language learning. Santizo (2017) focuses on cognitive aptitude, which refers to a learner's natural ability to learn and process languages. The study finds that learners with higher aptitude tend to do better in speaking tasks, although the strength of this relationship depends on the language being learned. For example, French learners show a stronger link between aptitude and proficiency compared to Arabic learners. Roever and Ikeda (2020), on the other hand, focus on social and communicative skills, specifically how well learners can engage in conversations. Their study shows that learners who manage conversations effectively and respond well in social contexts tend to perform better in overall language proficiency. Faiz (2020) looks at self-regulation and independence, showing that learners who are more autonomous those who take control of their own learning perform better in receptive language skills like reading and listening. Together, these studies suggest that different characteristics, such as cognitive skills, social interaction abilities, and self-directed learning strategies, all play important roles in successful language learning.

Although all three studies address overall language proficiency, they also highlight the importance of specific language skills. Santizo (2017) focuses primarily on oral proficiency, investigating how language aptitude affects a learner's ability to speak and use spoken language. Speaking ability is critical for learners who need to communicate in real-world conversations. Faiz (2020), on the other hand, looks at receptive skills reading and listening and shows how learner autonomy can lead to better performance in these areas. By fostering independence, learners can improve their ability to understand written and spoken language. Roever and Ikeda (2020) focus on interactional competence, emphasizing the importance of conversational skills. Interactional competence involves understanding and managing conversations, which are essential for real-life communication. These studies together show that language proficiency involves a range of skills speaking, listening, reading, and interacting in conversations and that learners need to develop all of these skills for full proficiency.

While the studies share a common focus on language proficiency, they differ in their approaches. Santizo (2017) focuses on cognitive aptitude and how it relates to speaking ability across multiple languages. The study finds that aptitude is an important predictor of oral proficiency in some languages (like French), but not in others (like Arabic), possibly because of differences in language complexity. Roever and Ikeda (2020), on the other hand, focus on interactional competence, arguing that this is a crucial component of language proficiency, especially for communication in real-world contexts. Faiz (2020) explores learner autonomy, showing that self-

regulation and independent learning strategies are key to improving receptive skills like reading and listening. Despite their different focuses, all three studies highlight important aspects of language learning cognitive abilities, communication skills, and self-regulation that contribute to language proficiency.

These three studies provide valuable insights into the factors that contribute to successful language learning. Santizo (2017) emphasizes the role of cognitive aptitude, showing that it influences oral proficiency in some languages but not others, suggesting that language complexity plays a role in this relationship. Roever and Ikeda (2020) focus on social and communicative skills, highlighting the importance of interactional competence in managing conversations and overall language proficiency. Faiz (2020) underscores the significance of learner autonomy, showing that self-directed learners tend to perform better in reading and listening. Together, these studies show that language proficiency is shaped by a combination of cognitive, social, and self-regulatory factors. By understanding these different pathways, educators and learners can better target the areas that will contribute to successful language acquisition, whether through improving speaking abilities, fostering better conversation skills, or promoting independent learning strategies. Roever, C., & Ikeda, N. (2024), said that "There is no doubt that learners with any proficiency level can interact but their ability to fine-tune and balance message delivery and social solidarity varies, and proficiency clearly has an impact"(p.695).

Reflection: In my literature review, I used 14 different reporting verbs and found them all referring to Hyland(2008), my course reading. The reporting verbs I wrote more than once include "explores," "examines," "finds," "shows," "focuses," and "highlights." These repetitions occur because these verbs capture different research actions such as investigating, observing, and analyzing various aspects of language learning. I made deliberate decisions to ensure variety in the reporting verbs while maintaining accuracy. For instance, I used "examines" when discussing studies that closely analyzed specific aspects of language proficiency. Similarly, "finds" was used when presenting conclusions drawn from research, as it conveys certainty about the outcomes of the studies. Repeated use of verbs like "shows" and "highlights" was necessary because the findings of different studies had overlapping conclusions, and these verbs clearly communicate that the studies presented evidence supporting their claims. Throughout the review, I also made use of hedges and boosters to manage the degree of certainty and emphasis. Hedges such as "suggests," "might," and "possibly" were used to soften claims that were based on correlations or where results were not definitive. For example, "suggests" allowed me to indicate that a study's findings point in a certain direction but aren't conclusive, especially when discussing relationships that vary across languages. I also used hedges like "tend to" and "might" to show that while there is evidence supporting a claim, it is not guaranteed in all cases. Boosters such as "shows," "highlights," "underscores," and "clearly" were used to assert stronger claims where the evidence was more conclusive. For instance, when summarizing Faiz's study on learner autonomy, I used "underscores" to emphasize the strong correlation between autonomy and language learning success. Boosters help reinforce findings where the studies provided convincing data. Some reporting verbs, such as "suggest" and "shows," can act as both hedges and boosters on their own. For instance: "Suggests" functions as a hedge by indicating that the

result is not definitive "Shows" functions as a booster, asserting that the evidence is strong and clear.

1. "Examines" (Reporting Verb): I used this verb when describing Faiz's detailed investigation into learner autonomy. It indicates thorough analysis without claiming certainty about the results, thus maintaining academic rigor.
2. "Highlights" (Reporting Verb): This verb was used to emphasize findings from Roever and Ikeda's study on interactional competence. By using "highlights," I conveyed that this aspect is a key takeaway from the research, focusing the reader's attention on its importance.
3. "Might" (Hedge): This hedge was used when discussing how language complexity could impact the correlation between aptitude and proficiency. By softening the claim, I acknowledged the possibility of other influencing factors and avoided overstating the conclusion.
4. "Underscores" (Booster): I used this booster to emphasize the strong correlation found in Faiz's study regarding learner autonomy and receptive skills. It helped to assert that this finding is particularly significant, adding weight to the claim.

The use of reporting verbs, hedges, and boosters helped me accurately communicate the degree of certainty, importance, and claims. Reporting verbs like "examines" and "highlights" ensured variety, while hedges like "might" allowed for cautious interpretation of findings. Boosters such as "underscores" reinforced key claims, making my writing more persuasive while maintaining academic integrity.

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