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# Analysing Results of the Practical Examination in English — A Voice on Modularity in FL Acquisition

## 1. Introduction

The paper provides an analysis of results of the practical examination in English taken by first-year university learners studying English philology. Looking at the extent to which the outcomes from the grammatical, lexical and pronunciation tests correlate with one another, the researcher touches the matter of modularity in foreign language (FL) acquisition. An attempt is also made to discuss the issues of how the knowledge and command of the three aspects determine the level of productive skills.

Finding out that the level of FL aspects and skills do not go hand in hand or that they correlate only weakly would be an indication that the aspects require some peculiar abilities and/or are determined by several factors (e.g. affective ones) to various extent. If this proves to be true, then we may suggest that to make teaching of those particular aspects effective, different and sometimes unique approaches and techniques, and special types of exercises should be applied in each case.

The publication begins with a short introduction to the concept of modularity in language acquisition. Then, the research design is described, i.e. the subjects of the study, the treatment offered during the courses in practical English,<sup>1</sup> the form and content of the subparts of the examination with criteria of assessment applied in each of them. What follows is the presentation and discussion of results (outcomes of the Pearson product–moment correlation). Finally, conclusions, with limitations of the study and a few practical implications are offered.

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to the course instructors for providing me with detailed information about the treatment offered during their classes and the form of examinations.

## 2. Modularity in language acquisition

The concept of modularity in language acquisition is connected with the question of whether and to what extent language develops independently of general cognition, and if there is some degree of independence among language aspects and abilities. Answers to these questions have been provided by observing three groups of subjects, i.e. exceptional first language (L1) users with “severe cognitive deficit” (Skehan 1999: 218), exceptional second language (L2) learners, and unsuccessful learners.

Data coming from retarded L1 users prove that syntax develops “fairly autonomously” from “semantics, the general expression of meaning, or communication” (Skehan 1998: 219). For example, six-year-old Antony with IQ of 50–56 used language that was “complex syntactically and morphologically” (*ibid.*: 219). However, when his semantics was concerned, it was far below the average level. His choice of words was often inappropriate; he displayed basic comprehension problems which were word-based. The language of Laura and Rick — retarded adolescents — was analogous to Antony’s (Curtiss 1988 in Skehan 1999).

When FL learning context is concerned, it is already Carroll and Sapon (1959) who stressed that the four abilities of aptitude are independent of one another. Thus, according to them, one can reveal e.g. a high level of phonetic coding ability but lower levels in grammar sensitivity or memory abilities. The analysis of capacities of exceptionally talented FL learners showed that they possessed “unusual memory abilities, particularly for the retention of verbal material” (Skehan 1999: 233), more specifically for coding, storage and retrieval of lexis.

On the other hand, very poor FL learners proved to represent a very low phonetic coding ability. Interesting data have been provided by Sparks and Ganschow (1993), who found out that poor FL readers owe their difficulties to phonological coding difficulties.

Today it is suggested (Skehan 1999) that modularity in L2 acquisition is related to the stages of information processing. While input and memory/output are “qualitatively different from general cognitive abilities,” “central processing does seem to have most in common with general learning abilities” (Skehan 1999: 233).

## 3. Research design

### 3.1. Subjects

The subjects of the research were 28 randomly chosen first-year students of the Department of English Studies, University of Wrocław. All of them were native speakers of Polish. None of them had spent a longer period of time abroad. Most of them had paid short visits to the UK or US lasting from a few weeks to three

months. The vast majority of the subjects were females. Males were represented by 8 subjects. Some were day (N=13) and others — extramural learners (N=15). Since all of the subjects were admitted to study in this institute, we may assume that their level at the beginning of the academic year was at least upper-intermediate, with some day students revealing a somewhat higher level and some extramural learners — lower level. Among the courses they were obliged to take were several in practical English, aimed at raising their level in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, writing, and conversation skills. At the end of the academic year (in June 2009) all of the learners took an oral and two written exams, whose forms will be presented and results analysed in a more detailed manner below.

### 3.2. Treatment — course descriptions

In the case of all practical courses of English, the classes took place once a week and lasted 90 minutes in both semesters. Sometimes the day and extramural students were taught by the same instructor, as in the case of pronunciation and conversation classes. Although the writing and grammar courses at the day and extramural studies were ran by different teachers, they had similar forms and same content. The situation with the vocabulary course was yet different, and will be described below.

#### 3.2.1. The course in phonetics

First of all, it is important to explain that prior to the course of phonetics the subjects lacked competence in this aspect<sup>2</sup>. During their earlier learning experience, practice in pronunciation was limited to repetition exercises, while correction of their mispronunciation took place only when the erroneous forms hindered communication.

Before the actual course began every student had been recorded, so that both the instructor and learner knew what areas of pronunciation needed to be improved by them and what norm, i.e. Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA) their accent seemed to be closer to and, therefore, could be chosen to be further worked on. In most cases it appeared that the subjects were not aware of their problems in pronunciation, which proved that little attention had been paid to this language aspect during their prior education.

Each student was provided with a syllabus and informed about the purpose and content of the course, the order in which sounds were to be practised, the form and terms of oral and written tests, materials that would be used, and criteria according to which they would be evaluated on tests and at the end of each semester.

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<sup>2</sup> All the information about prior learning experience was gathered with the use of an introductory questionnaire and during one-to-one meetings with the phonetics instructor.

The first semester of phonetics was focused mainly on English consonants, while the second — on vowels. Each time a new sound was taught, its place and manner of articulation were provided by means of various techniques appealing to different modalities and senses of the students, e.g. visual representations of the articulators, oral explanations or applying hands and fingers to show their position and movement, and finally, comparison to Polish counterpart sounds. It is important to stress that in the theoretical part of the class the inductive approach was used, i.e. the learners tried to observe and come up with their own hypotheses about how particular segments in English are pronounced and how they differ from Polish counterparts. It is only after such a theoretical introduction that practical phonetics began. It took the form of reading and repeating single words, sentences, dialogues in which a particular segment was of major concern, and thus appeared several times in various contexts.

The exercises were conducted individually, in pairs, groups and lockstep. The training was mainly based on the book authored by Ponsonby (1987). Any time the sound seemed to be too far from the correct version, the instructor encouraged self-correction and provided the proper form that was to be repeated. The tasks from the main handbook were frequently supplemented with game-like activities from other sources (e.g. Hancock 1995; Vaughan-Rees 2003), songs, and presentations of students.

Additionally, some part of each lesson (15 to 20 minutes) was spent on transcribing the most difficult vocabulary items that appeared in the particular unit of the book (Ponsonby 1987), which the learners would then have to transcribe during the written tests.

It seems worth adding that since the students were allowed to choose either RP or GA, the features of the two norms were presented in a detailed manner in the first semester, and consistency in using one of them was required both in articulation and in written transcription tests.

When homework is concerned, the learners were encouraged to practise reading the words and dialogues aloud, and to transcribe the difficult new vocabulary items.

Both the day and extramural students were taught by the same instructor (the author of this paper). Despite the small discrepancies in the level between the two groups of students, the courses had the same content and form.

### 3.2.2. The vocabulary course

When extramural students are concerned, they were not provided with a separate vocabulary course. Instead, regular work to do at home at individual basis was set by their instructors of grammar and writing. The learners were obliged to study this aspect with the use of a handbook — Misztal (1994).

The vocabulary in the book is organized according to topics “concerned with everyday practical and social situations” (Misztal 1994: 6), such as money

and banking, clothing, shopping, health and medicine, sports, just to mention a few. The lexical items are introduced and practised through various techniques, among others: “multiple-choice, gap-filling, word-formation, cross-word puzzles” (ibid.: 6). As the author of the book explains, some exercises allow to extend passive vocabulary via recognition tasks, while others are aimed at improving active vocabulary, providing practice in production. The tasks are based on “problem-solving, grouping words, pictures, sentence-building, ordering, reading, opposites, synonyms, errors, and so on” (ibid.). In the introduction the reader is also taught some metacognitive strategies to help him make his learning more effective. The key to all the exercises placed at the back of the book allows the learners to study on their own.

To motivate the students to work systematically, there were regular tests, each covering three units, which took place either during the grammar or writing class. In this manner the subjects covered the material from the whole book.

The day students attended a 90-minute vocabulary class each week. Most of the topics that were covered during the course were the same as those that the extramural learners studied. Besides doing different written exercises from various sources (e.g. Wellman 1992; McCarthy and O’Dell 2002), the students were provided with an opportunity to use the new vocabulary productively performing short communicative tasks. Students’ progress was assessed on a regular basis via brief tests taken a few times in each semester.

### 3.2.3. The course in grammar

The first semester of the grammar course was devoted, among others, to the following issues: parts of a sentence, parts of speech (closed-system items, open-class items), the noun phrase (plural forms, gender, the possessive case, types of nouns), articles, determiners and pronouns, adjectives and adverbs. In the second semester the following matters were practised: the simple sentence (clause patterns), the complex sentence (nominal, adverbial clauses), verbs and the verb phrase (regular vs. irregular, finite vs. non-finite forms, primary auxiliaries), review of tenses, participles, gerunds and infinitives.

The class consisted of a theoretical and practical part. The theory was usually presented inductively, i.e. the students were provided with several examples on the basis of which they were encouraged to infer a rule governing the language. In the second part of the lesson the grammatical items were practised with the use of numerous pen-and-pencil exercises, such as matching, multiple-choice tasks, gap-filling, odd one out, putting the verb in the proper form, translation. The tasks were done in various grouping arrangements, i.e. individually, in pairs and collectively. The learners were obliged to practise the grammatical issues at home by doing similar sets of written exercises. In each semester there were a few students’ presentations, in which the material was usually introduced deductively.

In each semester there were three tests on particular aspects of grammar, and one final test on all the information provided during the whole semester. The form and terms of tests were provided to the students at the beginning of the semester.

#### 3.2.4. The course in writing

During the course in writing the following issues were covered: how to organize one's writing, stages in paragraph writing, using dictionaries and thesauri, paragraph structures, run-on sentences, paragraph cohesion and unity, comma splices, sentence coordination, transition words and phrases, dangling modifiers, subordination, emphasis and inversion.

The class time was devoted to studying the theory provided on handouts supported by several clear and concise examples, and then to applying the theory in practise by doing various exercises at sentence and paragraph level, such as restructuring, finishing sentences, finding and correcting mistakes, just to mention a few. Every week the students were required to write a paragraph, trying their best to follow the rules learnt during the lesson. Additionally, every second week the learners wrote short theoretical tests on the aspects of writing discussed earlier.

#### 3.2.5. The course in conversational skills

The course was aimed at developing students' ease, confidence, fluency and accuracy in speaking. The last component refers not only to being linguistically correct (proper choice of vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation), but also to using proper register and style. Each lesson was devoted to one topic (e.g. geography, family, animals, physical appearance, food, keeping fit, death). To engage the learners in talking, four or five different activities were used. In each lesson a short vocabulary exercise appeared, often in the form of a warm-up. The remaining activities required talking in pairs or groups by, e.g., being involved in a role play, or participating in whole-class discussions. The students were reminded about the requirements of the oral examination and taught strategies that might be useful during the exam and when carrying out a conversation in real life (e.g. how to manage when one seems to have little to say about a particular topic).

When assessment is concerned, the learners took one vocabulary test each semester. Additionally, they were evaluated for their speaking skills during a one-to-one meeting with the teacher (in the winter semester) and discussions in pairs (at the end of the summer semester), whose form and assessment criteria were analogous to those used in the oral examination. The learners were always provided with feedback, learning what should be further worked on.

What needs to be added is that the instructor used continuous informal assessment, i.e. while monitoring the students during their pair work or group discussions he would take down all the mistakes and good points of individual learners and then

share his observations with them. He would then give the students time to review and practise the problematic aspects and comment on the progress two or three weeks later. It was made clear to the learners that no or little improvement (making the same mistakes with the same frequency) would result in lowering the mark at the end of the semester.

The materials used during this class came from various sources, the Internet being just one of them. Many of them were designed by the teacher, others were suggested or prepared by the students.

It is worth adding that, unlike in the case of other practical courses, this one was taught by an American native speaker of English.

### 3.3. The description of exams and assessment criteria

#### 3.3.1. Evaluation of pronunciation

To measure the level of pronunciation after the whole academic year of studying phonetics a few tests were designed and taken at the end of June. Test 1 consisted in reading a list of 36 words commonly mispronounced by Poles. It is important to explain that the list was read by the subjects for the third time, since it was also a component of testing before the course of phonetics and after the first semester of learning. In Test 2 the participants were to read another list of 36 words. This time these were difficult vocabulary items that the students practised during the second semester and that appeared on the written transcription test.

In the case of both tests the students were credited with 1 point for each word properly pronounced.

In Test 3 the subjects read a monologue (borrowed from Mortimer 1989) that allowed the instructor to assess the pronunciation of various aspects. Due to the fact that the text was not known to the learners, that no time was allowed for preparation and practice, and that monitoring and controlling pronunciation was the most difficult of all three tasks, it is these results that provide us with the most important data.

When evaluating the pronunciation of the subjects in Test 3 an atomistic approach was used. Each student was credited from 0 to 3/4 points for the majority of segments that were practised during the course (9 consonants and 10 vowels). The points were distributed depending on how frequently the subjects pronounced particular segments properly.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the subjects could lose points for errors made in other areas than segments, such as word stress or lack of linking and fluency in reading. Finally, it is also consistency in using RP or GA that was evaluated. Each instance of not being consistent resulted in taking away a point. Consequently, the maximum score for Task 3 was 30 points.

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<sup>3</sup> To see which particular sounds were evaluated and the exact system of distributing points refer to Baran-Lucarz (2010).

### 3.3.2. Evaluation of grammar and vocabulary

The attainment in the two aspects — grammar and vocabulary — was measured with the use of a multiple-choice test. While 50 questions were designed to measure the level in grammar, the remaining 50 focused on vocabulary. In each question one answer from among the four provided was correct. Each answer was worth 1 point.

The whole test lasted 120 minutes. In the case of day studies, the content of the test corresponded to the issues covered during the two courses — course of grammar and of vocabulary. The form, duration and range of vocabulary tested in the exam taken by extramural and day students were analogous. However, in the case of the extramural exam, the vocabulary part was designed by two teachers — the teacher of writing and of grammar, since it is at the two courses that individual vocabulary practise was set and tested.

### 3.3.3. Evaluation of writing skills

The writing examination lasted 120 minutes. The students were provided with a one-page-long text which they were to summarize. To make the process of assessment as objective as possible three steps were taken. First of all, the exam sheets were coded. Secondly, the summaries were checked by two examiners independently. The final mark was an arithmetic mean of the points provided by the two judges. Finally, an atomistic approach in assessment was used, i.e. points were given for specific components, e.g. summary relevance (identification of the main idea, identification of the arguments, objectivity, proper method of summarizing), discourse organization (topic sentence, text coherence and cohesion), grammar (no mistakes, no contracted forms, appropriate use of articles, appropriate use of tenses, varied structures — inversion, emphasis, subordination, coordination, modifiers), vocabulary (appropriate register and style, range of vocabulary, no wordiness, appropriate and exact language, consistency in British/American vocabulary), punctuation and mechanics (appropriate use of commas, appropriate use of other punctuation marks, appropriate use of hyphenation, appropriate use of mechanics, consistency in British/American punctuation). For each component the students were credited with 2 to 5 points. Receiving 2 points for one of the components resulted in failing this part of the exam. The points for all the elements were summed up and converted into final grades.

### 3.3.4. Evaluation of conversational skills

The oral examination had the form of a discussion carried out in pairs. The students pooled a topic from among many and were given time (about 10 minutes) to prepare individually for the talk. The examinees could reject the topic of their first choice and pick another one, which this time they were obliged to discuss.

After the preparation time the students were to talk to one another for about 8 minutes, with as little intervention of the judges as possible. They were assessed

by 3 examiners (teachers of their practical English courses), who focused on their interactive and conversational skills (the ability to express clearly their ideas, initiate the talk, react to interlocutor's opinions, easily take turns), fluency, and accuracy in all language aspects (grammar mistakes and range of structures, vocabulary range and errors, pronunciation accuracy at word and segmental levels, consistency in using one of the norms, i.e. RP or GA, intelligibility). The assessors would take notes both of the erroneous forms and of good language samples. After listening to 4 pairs they would share their observations and decide on a mark for each examinee.

It is vital to add that the form and requirements of the examination were well known to the students since the beginning of the second semester.

### 3.4. Presentation and discussion of results

The results of all the components of the practical examination in English and of the final tests on pronunciation were compiled at the beginning of July 2009. All in all, each student had a set of points from the three aspects and two productive skills, which were used for further analysis. So as to be able to answer the question whether and to what extent the subjects' levels and attainments in these language areas are related to one another after being provided with 9 months of intensive, regular practice and formal instruction, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients have been counted. Before applying this statistical tool, it was checked whether the four assumptions underlying the Pearson  $r$  (the scales assumption, independence assumption, normality and linearity assumptions) were met. Since none of them were violated, the actual calculations could be made, whose outcomes are displayed in the table below.

Table 1. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between FL aspects and productive skills

	GRAM	VOC	CONV	WRIT
GRAM	—	.08	.31	.30
VOC	.08	—	.50**	.62***
PRON T1	.46*	.16	.20	.20
PRON T2	.44*	.33	.43*	.23
PRON T3	.34	.27	.70***	.18
CONV	.31	.50**	—	.50**
WRIT	.30	.62***	.50**	—

df (N-2) = 26; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; GRAM — grammar; VOC — vocabulary; PRON T1 — pronunciation Test 1; PRON T2 — pronunciation Test 2; PRON T3 — pronunciation Test 3; CONV — conversational skills; WRIT — writing

When analysing the results provided above, let us first focus on the correspondence between the achievements in the three basic FL aspects, i.e. grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

#### 3.4.1. Correlation between grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation

First of all, it is interesting to observe that in this study no signs of relationship were found between the students' level in grammar and vocabulary. The results show that there is no statistically significant correlation between the attainments from these two tests. This might imply that different abilities are required and used to master these two language aspects.

The outcomes of the vocabulary test did not reveal significant and meaningful correlation with pronunciation, either. Such an outcome may be surprising at first thought, since the pronunciation of words and phrases is an essential part of the knowledge of vocabulary items. However, as described above, the vocabulary test used in this research did not measure this knowledge, neither productively nor receptively. Still, we may hypothesize that capacities to master the two aspects — vocabulary and pronunciation — are indeed independent of one another, i.e. one's vast range of vocabulary, easiness in understanding and memorizing meanings words carry may be far from the ability to pronounce them properly.

It is worth reminding that the form of the vocabulary exam allowed to measure exclusively the students' recognition skills and passive vocabulary. This capability may indeed have little correspondence with the actual articulation skills.

When the correlation between the subjects' results in the grammar exam and the pronunciation tests is concerned, the situation is yet different. This time the scores for pronunciation Test 1 and Test 2 were found to correlate moderately with results of the grammar test. Thus, we may conclude that the knowledge of grammar checked through a recognition multiple-choice test and the ability to pronounce vocabulary accurately in a task enabling easy monitor usage (reading lists of words) require at some point the same type of capability. It is possible that results in these two types of tests depend heavily and rely on one's memory abilities. However, the fact that only a moderate correlation was found proves that learning grammar and pronunciation require a different set of skills. The independence of the two seems to be proven by the lack of correlation between the results of the grammar exam and pronunciation Test 3. Since in this task monitoring pronunciation and controlling articulation is more difficult, and the level of accuracy in this aspect is closer to the level represented when being involved in oral communication, it is this test that brings the most valuable data.

#### 3.4.2. Correlation between FL aspects and productive skills

Let us now have a look at the relationship between the three language aspects and the productive skills.

Although grammar accuracy and the range of structures used was one of the criteria of assessment in the oral examination, the correlation between the results of the grammar test and conversational skills proved to be insignificant. This again might imply that recognition abilities and declarative knowledge, which a multiple-choice elicitation technique allows to measure, are independent from productive abilities and procedural knowledge. However, the results of the oral examination correlated moderately ( $r = .50$ ) with outcomes of the vocabulary test.

Interestingly, the outcomes of the Pearson product-moment correlations calculated between grammar and vocabulary knowledge and the writing skills were analogous to the results described above, with the influence of vocabulary on the grade achieved for the writing skills being stronger ( $r = .62$ ). This might be explained by the fact that in the case of writing the control and choice of vocabulary is easier than when speaking.

When the degree of relationship between the productive skills and pronunciation is concerned, the results appear to confirm expectations. The points achieved by the subjects in the test that consisted in reading for the third time a list of words, which they were informed about and could prepare for, did not show any signs of relationship with speaking abilities. The pronunciation Test 1 measured mainly the ability to memorize for a longer term the pronunciation of vocabulary items, only a few of which might have been used by the students during the short oral examination. The correlation between speaking skills and pronunciation Test 2, in which the learners read for the first time a list of difficult words practised during the course that were not revealed to them, proved to be of moderate strength ( $r = .43$ ). Nonetheless, the strongest relationship was found between general pronunciation accuracy measured by Test 3 and oral productive skills ( $r = .70$ ). This observation might suggest that pronunciation determines not only the overall impression one leaves on the listener, but, first and foremost, it influences the level of intelligibility and comprehension skills. Moreover, the level of correctness in pronunciation shapes the speaker's confidence and willingness to talk, which might have also affected the high correlation coefficient.

Finally, as could be expected, the writing skills did not show any relation with pronunciation accuracy.

The statistically significant moderate correlation between the two productive skills ( $r = .50$ ) implies that there is a wide plateau where they overlap, being determined by the same basic linguistic knowledge (e.g. command of grammar and vocabulary). However, success in the two skills depends also on different language specific abilities and knowledge, just to mention discourse organization, mechanics and punctuation in the case of writing, and interactive skills and pronunciation in the case of speaking. Additionally, it must not be forgotten that the actual performance in writing and speaking differs in the possibility one has to monitor and correct one's output, and in the influence of the affective factors and ability to control them.

### 3.5. Observing selected subjects

When considering the matter of modularity and independence of FL aspects, it is helpful to look more carefully at particular learners. One of them, for example, in all components of the practical examination in English achieved rather poor results. For the vocabulary test she gained 50%, for grammar — 66%. Although she did well in the case of pronunciation Test 1 with a score of 78% when she could prepare for the task, having achieved feedback after reading the list twice already, Test 2 appeared to be far more difficult for her (44%). However, what evidently stands out is her very poor accuracy in pronunciation measured with Test 3. Despite the fact that she was provided with formal instruction, systematic articulatory practise, and consistent feedback, she managed to gain only 6 points out of 30, which makes 20%. When the written and oral exams are concerned, in both cases she was credited with the lowest but still satisfactory grade 3.0.

It seems that this case not only supports the hypothesis of the modularity in language acquisition, but also implies that poor learners might owe their difficulties with FL learning to poor phonetic coding abilities.

A very low level in pronunciation assessed by Test 3 (26%) was observed in the case of another student. As before, the participant did very well pronouncing the vocabulary items in Test 1 (94%). However, when not knowing what vocabulary items would appear on the second list, the performance was significantly lower (64%). Although the other aspects were at a higher level in recognition tests (58% was achieved for grammar; 64% for vocabulary), difficulties with controlling them in speaking, and the poor pronunciation accounted for his low mark at the oral exam (3.0). Finally, writing skills were credited with the mark 3.5.

An explanation for the above cases can also lie, as already stated above, in the fact that pronunciation skills unlike any others are heavily determined by several affective and personality factors, such as inhibition, anxiety, self-esteem, ego permeability, attitudes and motivation.

On the other hand, there were students whose situation was quite the opposite. For example, one of the examinees showed a high level in pronunciation (90% for Test 3), but a rather low level in grammar (58%) and vocabulary (62%). The writing skills were credited with a low mark (3.0), while speaking with grade 4.0. Besides the fact that the student declares a strong desire to speak with a good accent, she seems to find pronunciation learning easier than learning other FL aspects.

## 4. Conclusions

In the study the attainments and level in the three language aspects — grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation — did not go hand in hand, implying that they indeed develop in dissociation and require different specialized language faculties.

Moreover, the results of correlations calculated between levels of particular FL aspects and the productive skills support the importance of the lexical code, which is related strongly to memory abilities and the output stage of information processing. When speaking skills are concerned, it is pronunciation that was found to have the strongest influence on performance. This outcome appears to be in line with observations of poor FL learners and poor L2 and L1 readers, whose problems were due to low phonological coding abilities. Furthermore, pronunciation is sure to determine significantly listening skills, which unfortunately were not assessed in the practical examination. All in all, we may conclude that developing students' perceptive, articulatory abilities and phonological meta-awareness, should be considered an important part of FL learners' education.

Before closing the paper, it is worth adding that the data would be more valuable if more subjects were involved in the research, if all of them represented the same level, were taught particular practical courses by the same teachers with the use of the same techniques and materials. Finally, it would be interesting to compare the levels of various FL aspects applying tests based on other than only the multiple-choice technique.

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