Presentations

Three studies on learning to learn in Finland: Anti-Flynn effects 2001-2017
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Finland is known for its high-performing educational system, but local assessments have shown that performance has declined during the past decade. We report the results of nationally representative learning to learn assessments, in which 15-year-olds took an identical test in the same schools (N schools = 82, of which 43 in CBA group, N students = 7000-9000/cycle) in 2001, 2012 and 2017. The results show that the level of both domain-general cognitive performance and learning-related beliefs dropped dramatically from 2001 to 2012, but the negative trend has stopped since then. For learning-related beliefs, the 2017 results were approaching the 2001 baseline level. The findings indicate that we may not be dealing with a true Anti-Flynn effect, but the decline can possibly be explained by reduced motivation and effort in assessment and schooling.

Is there such a thing as a general learning potential for English as a foreign language (EFL)?
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In the past, little attention was paid to the question about the generality of students’ learning potential (LP) as established with the help of dynamic assessment tests. The current research was conducted in the context of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) high school exams. The research questions were: 1) To what extent a new computer-based version of oral proficiency exam is suitable for identifying students’ EFL LP, and 2) is the students’ LP established with the help of dynamic assessment of their oral proficiency a better predictor of their subsequent EFL reading and writing than their static oral scores? 80 students (38 boys, 42 girls) received a dynamic assessment of their EFL oral proficiency in a pre-test – mediation – post-test format. Six months later the same students took a standard EFL reading and writing exam. The results indicate that computer-based oral exam is suitable for the dynamic assessment purposes. The mediation produced significant gain (d = 0.86) and generated a sufficiently wide range of LP scores. The correlations between oral LP scores and both reading (r=0.42) and writing (r=0.45) are significant and much stronger than the correlations with the static oral pre-test. Oral LP scores explain about 20% of the variance of reading and writing scores.

Comparing Finnish and Hungarian fourth grade students’ inductive reasoning skills
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International large-scale assessments usually focus on specific domains, and there is less emphasis on general reasoning skills. However, comparison studies on general reasoning skills could generate deeper understanding of the nature of the differences between the participating countries. In our case, in PIRLS and TIMMS fourth-grade assessments Finland outperforms Hungary in reading and science. As inductive reasoning has been considered as one of the fundamental thinking processes and it is strongly connected to learning potential, the aim of the study is to compare Finnish and Hungarian fourth-grade students’ inductive reasoning skills. The sample for the study was drawn from fourth grade students (average age=10 years, N=832 for the Finnish sample, males 48.2%; N=9017 for the Hungarian sample, males 50.5%). Online inductive reasoning tests were administered containing figurual series and figurual analogies (28 items, Cronbach’s alpha=.92 in Finland and .88 in Hungary). Data administrations were carried out via the eDia system in schools, on tablets in Finland, on computers in Hungary. There were no significant differences between the two countries in the achievement of inductive reasoning. Results suggest that the differences between Hungary and Finland in reading and science of PIRLS and TIMMS probably do not originate in students’ inductive reasoning skills. Hungary may have difficulties in how to utilize students’ learning potential in knowledge building. Further research is required to investigate these hypotheses, especially because our results cannot be generalized in a strict sense due to differences in the sampling processes.

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