How to assess the development of emergent L2 Finnish writing skills?

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In Finland, the Finnish application of the language proficiency scales of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001) is used as the base of evaluation in the end of integration training at all levels, even in the language and literacy training of non-literate adults. For this purpose, the most notable shortcoming of this application is the lack of descriptions below the lowest level, A1.1, implicating that the learners below this have no language skills at all. Nor are there other tools precise enough for the assessment of these learners.

The aim of this paper is to describe the features of emergent writing skills below A1.1 based on a case study, and to discuss the challenges related to the assessment and evaluation of these skills. The case study was conducted in 2010–11, and the data consist of four written language tests taken by one non-literate participant during language and literacy training of ten months. The findings suggest that learning to write in ten months is something of a challenge for an adult who has to start from the very beginning with a language whose spoken skills she is learning simultaneously. In this case, the language being orthographically transparent seems to help only slightly. The presentation will show that the participant’s writing skills did develop over time both in accuracy and in the number of produced words, but the production of sentence-like strings containing e.g., verb stayed very low (cf. Aitchison 2012). Because of the nature of the study the findings cannot be extrapolated though.

References:


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