Measuring individual differences with the LLAMA aptitude tests

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There has been an increasing interest in the area of language learning aptitude and individual differences in recent years. This led to the creation of new online computerised tests like the LLAMA test suite (Meara 2005). Since 2005 the LLAMA tests have been increasingly used in published research but they have not been validated. Initial validation work examined features of the tests to establish if they were influenced by outside factors, e.g. L1, gender, age, education level (Granena 2013, Author 2014, 2015, 2016) and found that these variables accounted for only small amount of the variation in LLAMA scores. This study provides a small-scale investigation into the predictive powers of the LLAMA tests, i.e. do the LLAMA tests measure aptitude? We also examine whether aptitude, motivation, working memory or anxiety scores are the most accurate at predicting language test scores.

Fifteen beginner adult learners of Latin took the LLAMA aptitude tests, the Language Learning Orientation Scale questionnaire (Noels et al 2004), an online measure of working memory storage and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horowitz et al 1986) as well as a background questionnaire. The learners were followed throughout their first year of learning Latin. For their class, they took a Latin test every 3-4 weeks resulting in 4 tests between Oct-Dec (term 1) and the same is scheduled for Feb-May (term 2).

Spearman’s correlations from term 1 were calculated for each of the LLAMA components and the working memory task. The results show that LLAMA D (implicit learning measure) significantly correlated with the Latin test results at time 1 (r=.595, p<.010) but the vocabulary learning task (LLAMA B) significantly correlated with the time 4 (r=.644, p<0.05). Further factor analysis will establish if aptitude or the other measures can predict test scores.

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