

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**Acquisition of artificial grammar amongst adults who are  
challenged in mastering of English as a foreign language**

**Noy Fried**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for The  
Master's Degree in the School of Education, Bar-Ilan University

## **Abstract**

Human ability to acquire a second language is characterized by a large variance: On one pole of the linguistic ability scale, are located some people with a difficulty of language acquisition. Those people demonstrate low levels of talking, reading and writing. They are sometimes diagnosed with dyslexia, or deficiency of a specific language acquisition. On the opposite pole, are located some high-skilled multilingual people, having high capabilities in mother tongue language, and no problems in second language learning. Alongside the wide linguistic scale, are located some people, who have managed to reach standard level of mother tongue knowledge but have difficulties in second language learning. Implicit learning skills, amongst the two latest groups (Standard level Students of first and second language, and standard first language students, with difficulties in second language) – are in the focus of our present research. Thus, two groups have been tested by Artificial Grammar learning (AGL). This was done by applying two different research paradigms: Explicit task level (Implicit or Explicit level) and Verbal task level (Verbal or Non-Verbal task level). The uniqueness of this research lies in the testing of explicit versus implicit learning progressions, in the auditory modality amongst low level students versus high level students of second language. Therefore, the question raised is whether the essence of coping with verbal stimuli brings about hardships of regularities learning and grammatical rules acquisitions, or is the hardship more primal. Is it associated with regularities assimilation even when not verbally imparted? The results point out that students with difficulties to learn second language do not show significant knowledge gaps associated with first language learning of rules. However, they

present differences when trying to acquire artificial grammar regularities. The main differences of the artificial grammar lie in the method of instruction used. Hence, the research has shown the significant advantage of implicit instruction, amongst significant gap, in regard with ordinary developed students, as to implicit learning rule acquisition. This seems to be a by-product of a primal difficulty in spontaneous rule identification. The results show, however, that no importance has to be attributed to the stimuli kind (Verbal or Non-Verbal) in regard with the ability to predict rule study within both populations. That is probably because this ability is independent of any linguistic mechanism or otherwise. This ability is inherent and enables an easy learning of various grammatical and statistical rules. Moreover, the implications of the present research indicates that promoting second language in low level students, becomes more effective when primal law and regularities consolidation is applied, regardless of the stimulus kind. This ability has to be explicitly studied as early as possible to establish learning improvements throughout linguistic study, or otherwise.