Effects of Consciousness-Raising on Teaching ‘LE’ to L2 Chinese Learners

Abstract:
This presentation will report an experimental study investigating the effectiveness of consciousness-raising application on teaching Chinese particle LE to a group of low-intermediate learners of Chinese as a second language at a North American university. Consciousness-raising is a pedagogical option that encourages learners to discover the rules of a difficult linguistic form in question. The rationale behind the approach draws partly on the hypothesized role of explicit knowledge as a facilitator of implicit knowledge of the target structure, and partly on the claims in the psychological literature that learning is more significant if it involves in greater depth discovery learning and processing on the part of learners through problem solving. The target structure of the study, the Chinese particle LE, is one of the most challenging items to teach and to learn in L2 Chinese classroom, if judged by the criteria proposed by Harley (1994) on problematic linguistic forms for L2 learners, due to its complicated interplay between form and function at lexical, syntactical and discourse levels.

The study is a within-subject design composed of a pre-test, immediate post-test one week after the treatment, and delayed post-test two months later. The interventional treatment was three consciousness-raising sessions administered between the pre-test and two post-tests. The participants were 10 low-intermediate learners of Chinese that had completed two-year Chinese instruction in a regular Chinese program that met three times a week. The results of the three tests were entered into SPSS for a series of paired t-test calculations. The statistical results revealed a significant gain of the participants’ command of the tested rules of LE between the pre-test and two post-tests. In the discussion section of this presentation, the statistical results will be compared, analyzed and evaluated against previous studies on LE and theories on explicit/implicit instruction in second language acquisition, which will form a basis to draw conclusions on the effects of the consciousness-raising option in teaching difficult structures to L2 learners in general and teaching the Chinese particle LE in particular. The oral interviews conducted before and after the treatment will also be used to explain the statistical results. The findings of the study will shed some light on learning and acquiring LE of L2 Chinese learners whose mother tongue is English.

References (selected)