Effects of Dictogloss on L2 Chinese Output in Quantity and Quality

听写—写作对汉语二语输出质与量的影响

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Abstract

In the field of second language acquisition, researchers have long recognized that input alone is not sufficient for acquisition. Output (or pushed-output/comprehensible output) and the manipulation of output is a necessary acquisitional step to “force the learners to move from semantic processing to syntactic processing” and “toward the delivery of a message that is not only conveyed, but is conveyed precisely, coherently, and appropriately.” (Swain, 1985). Swain claims three functions for output: noticing function, hypothesis-testing function, and metalinguistic function. Though some research findings have been reported on the three functions of output in the field of second language learning and acquisition, few empirical studies have been published in the context of teaching/learning Chinese as a second/foreign language.

This presentation will report a study investigating the effects of ‘pushed-output’ in the form of dictogloss (dictation/composition) on L2 Chinese output following the theoretical frameworks of output hypothesis (Swain, 1985, 1995) and sociocultural theory (Lantoff, 2000). Thirty-seven first-year L2 Chinese learners from an American university participated in the study. They were divided into a control group and experimental group performing a production task based on a passage orally delivered by the instructor. While the participants in the control group performed the task independently, the participants of the experimental group were required to perform the task in pairs and allowed to discuss between each other. The outputs of both groups were coded and compared in terms of quantity (fluency), complexity, and accuracy.

The statistical results reveal that the experimental group outperformed the control group in syntactic accuracy and complexity while the control group outperformed the experimental group in fluency. Further analyses illustrate that weaker students gain more from collaborative work than better students in accuracy and complexity. Observations documented on the participants’ interactions during the task performance will also be presented to complement the conclusions drawn from the statistical results. Pedagogical implications will be suggested at the end of the presentation.