Effects of Task Repetition on Learning ‘Le’ in L2 Chinese

Abstract:

Following the theoretical framework of form-focused instruction and core principles of task-based language teaching, this study is designed to investigate the effects of task repetition on learning Chinese particle *le* among a group of low-intermediate learners of Chinese as a second language at a North American university.

The Chinese grammatical marker *Le* is one of the most challenging items to teach and to learn in L2 Chinese classrooms largely due to the complicated interplays between *le* as a form (or forms) and its multiple functions at the lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels. Over the years, *le* has drawn substantial interest in the fields of Chinese linguistics and Chinese applied linguistics. Research of such sheds much light to our understanding of its linguistic meanings (e.g., Li & Thompson, 1982) and possible learning difficulties (e.g., Duff & Li, 2002; Wen, 1997), based on which some pedagogical suggestions have been put forward (e.g., Ke, 2006; Teng, 1999). Nevertheless, few empirical attempts have been reported on how *le* could be taught more effectively and efficiently. Yuan (2012) employed a series of consciousness-raising tasks to teach *le* and reported some promising results. This study is aimed to continue this attempt by investigating the effects of task repetition on learning *le*.

Forty-two participants of low-intermediate proficiency participated in the study and were divided into three groups in accordance with the classes they were enrolled: 1. Task-repetition group, 2. Non-task-repetition group, and 3. control group. All the three groups took a pre-test, immediate post-test and delayed post-test on three uses of *le*: sentence *le*, verb *le* and set pattern *le*. Between the pretest and experimental treatment, all the participants self-taught the target forms followed by a questions and answer session conducted by the researcher. It was followed by a task implementation stage in which Group 1 performed the same task twice, Group 2 one time and Group 3 performed a meaning-focused task. The task employed for the study is a dictoclass task that was embedded with the target form in an effort to elicit the use of the target forms when performing a narrative task at the next stage of the task implementation. The participants took an immediate posttest right after the treatment and a delayed posttest two weeks later, two of which were similar in content and in design with the pretest. Additionally, the participants took an oral elicited imitation test to gauge their ability to use the forms in a spontaneous situation. The results of the tests were entered into SPSS for a series of paired t-test calculations and will be discussed against the findings of previous research. Qualitative data collected from the notes of on-site observation and questionnaires will also be used to interpret the statistical results.

References (selected)
Duff, P. and Li, D. (2002) ‘The acquisition and use of perfective aspect in Mandarin’ in Rafael Salaberry & Yasuhiro Shirai (Eds.), *The L2 Acquisition of tense-


