Effect of Adjunct Questions on L2 Reading with Low Level Chinese Learners

Reading in a second language is a complex process involving not only the lexical and syntactic decoding but also meaning construction and interpretation (Bernhardt, 1991; Grabe, 2009). L1 reading studies have shown that adjunct questions in the text are beneficial for comprehension through indicating important information necessary for the mental representation of the text (Callender & McDaniel, 2007) while L2 research on adjunct questions yielded mixed results (Al-Shehri & Gitsaki, 2010; Brantmeier et al., 2011). Researchers also reported that assessment type interacted with adjunct questions (Callender et al., 2013). So far the research on the effectiveness of adjunct questions on L2 reading measured by different types of assessment was restricted to intermediate and advanced learners. The investigation of the effectiveness of adjunct questions on L2 reading comprehension measured by different assessment techniques among low proficiency learners will deepen the understanding of the role of adjunct questions in reading process, gain insights into the design of reading assessment, and provide pedagogical implications on the application of adjunct questions to L2 reading instruction.

The present study examined the mediating effect of assessment type on adjunct questions among English-speaking low proficiency Chinese L2 learners through two experiments. In experiment 1, 18 learners were divided into two groups, with one group reading a text with adjunct questions and the other reading the same text without adjunct questions. The comprehension test took the form of multiple choice and cloze. In experiment 2, 16 learners were also randomly divided into two groups reading a text, one group with adjunct questions and the other without. The comprehension test was a written recall. The facilitating effect of adjunct questions was found in both multiple choice and written recall but the effect was not evident in cloze. It suggested that adjunct questions enhance comprehension among low proficiency level learners and both multiple choice and written recall positively respond to adjunct questions while cloze is not such a sensitive assessment. L2 instructors are advised to consider adjunct questions as a technique in improving low level learners’ comprehension and use different assessment methods to evaluate comprehension.

References
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