



L2 Mandarin Development during Study Abroad

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(Chair: Dr Mairin Hennebry)**

Abstract

This study presents data from a set of 10 adult English university learners of Mandarin measured before and after ten months studying abroad (SA), using three written and four speaking tasks to track and compare linguistic changes in grammatical development and oral fluency (Freed et al. 2004, Pallotti 2009).

Written tasks were measured for grammatical accuracy, total length, and morpheme development (targeting *de*-possessive, *de*-relative, *shi*-copula, and *le*-perfective). Oral proficiency was measured to test improvement in fluency and accuracy. Information was also gathered on language contact by measuring hours and type of language use during SA. Writing scores showed little change, other than greater use of *de*-relative by the end of the SA period. Oral proficiency scores showed more consistent significant improvement ($p < .05$), supporting existing findings on the value of SA. However, more fine-grained analysis showed that all measures varied greatly by task, and were very variable across the group, indicating SA may not be the key to general linguistic success as sometimes claimed.

Our study highlights the value of longitudinal SLA-motivated studies of language learners moving between instructed and immersed contexts, but also notes the lack of standardised linguistically-informed measures to elicit reliable evidence of development in instructed L2 Mandarin (Du 2013). We will address how further teaching-based research is needed to clarify some of the methodological and pedagogical issues involved in analysing systematic development in instructed L2 Mandarin.

References:

Du, H. (2013). The development of Chinese fluency during study abroad in China. *The Modern Language Journal* 97(1): 131-143.

Freed, B., Segalowitz, N. & Dewey, D. (2004). Context of learning and second language fluency in French. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 26 (2): 275-301.

Pallotti, G. (2009). Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency: Defining, refining and differentiating constructs. *Applied Linguistics* 30: 590-601.

About the speaker

Clare Wright has worked in a variety of international settings since graduating from Cambridge University, retraining as a teacher of English for Academic Purposes in 1997. She ran academic English programmes at Brunel, Durham and Newcastle Universities before gaining her MA and PhD in Applied Linguistics at Newcastle University, and becoming Director of Newcastle's MA programme in Applied Linguistics and TESOL in 2012. Clare is now Director of Research for the Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics at University of Reading, Co-Director of BilingualismMatters@Reading, and is a founding member of the University's Research Centre for Literacy and Multilingualism. Clare's research investigates linguistic, cognitive and contextual factors of bilingualism, with special interest in how working memory can aid L2 development, as featured in TESOL Quarterly and other publications. Current research projects include use of digital technology in MOOCs for international students, and building global student competence in international study settings.

~ All are welcome ~

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