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Trends in current L2 Chinese Research - implications for Study Abroad

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Current issues

- L2 Mandarin still understudied but catching up (CLT): in 2012 over 320,000 students from over 180 countries (Wright and Zhang 2014)
- Range of studies - Study Abroad (SA)
- Focused on students
  - Differences in settings - short courses to full degrees
  - Differences in student backgrounds - heritage vs Asian (character-based languages) vs western learners
  - Range of methodologies - corpus vs small-scale
  - Very few specific linguistic analyses
  - Mainly descriptive

Language development during Study Abroad?

- Robust assumption that Study Abroad fosters oral proficiency (esp fluency) over grammatical development in many SA studies
- Few models of L2 Chinese development to compare
- Elicitation tasks not standardised

RQs

- What effect does Study Abroad have on grammatical development?
- What effect does Study Abroad have on oral fluency?

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Study Design

- Ten English intercalatory (3rd year) students at a UK university, using battery of written and oral tasks
  - Tested Time 1 (summer exams, end year 2)
  - Tested again Time 2 (repeat of summer exams at start of year 4)
- During immersion - diary data for snapshots of usage during SA (requested by email 3 times throughout year)
- Writing tasks: 1 dialogue, 1 descriptive letter; 1 out-of-class essay about life in China
- Speaking tasks: 1 monologue on prepared topic, 1 unseen picture description, 1 role play from known options, 1 free

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Measures

- Writing:

Timed tasks: Overall rating for accuracy

Untimed task: Length (total number of characters) and morpheme development- simple (*de*-possessive), complex (*de*-relative), discourse-governed optional (*shi*-copula)

- Speaking:

Split out by task (approx 2 minutes per task)

Measures: Output, Lexical diversity (G), Mean Length of Run, Hesitancy (repairs, filled pauses), Articulation Rate, Phonation/Time ratio, Mean Length of Pause

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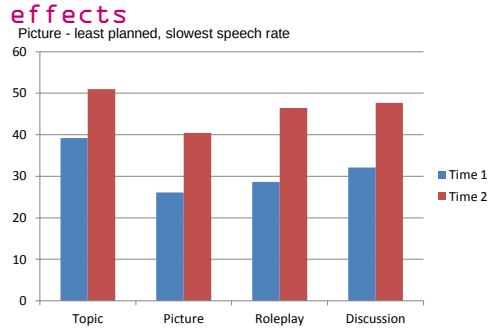
Writing - task effects

Little change overall in combined timed tasks, very variable in length, decrease came from lower average scores on dialogue at time 1.

Clearer evidence of improvement on third untimed task score in terms of increased overall length and reduced range (but ns).

Some evidence of development: significant changes in de-poss and de-rel ($p<.01$); low production of shi-morpheme with little change. But limited analysis due to low numbers of morphemes.

Speaking improvement - task effects



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Discussion of results: Effects of SA on L2 Chinese development?

- General support that immersion facilitates oral proficiency (Freed et al 2003), though limited, task-constrained and depended on how oral proficiency (e.g. fluency) was measured - problems in measuring "word"
- Some evidence of hierarchy of grammatical development, and that optionality is late mastered

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Speech data - task effects

- Output/turns - increased on all tasks over time, but only sig on Task 1 (topic monologue)
  - "benefit" of preparation of structured task
- Mean length of run - increased on all tasks
  - Least on Task 4 (free dialogue)
  - Task 2 the longest overall
  - Dialogues shorter- why?
- Art R - increased on all tasks
  - Least in Task 1 (prepared monologue)
- Pausing - all shorter and fewer by Time2
  - task 2 longest, 4 least change
  - More relevant for dialogue - very challenging to code!

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Clear task effects on language development, esp in monologues

- Task differences significant at Time 1, beyond speech rate
  - Sig correlations with grammatical accuracy for G, PTR, MLR, MLP at Time 1, Task 1
- Tasks 1 and 2 not sig different by Time 2 (though e.g. output > in task 1)
  - Dialogues less clear - tasks 3 and 4 not diff at either time, apart from Output and Num Pauses)
- Suggestion: Time had more impact on Task 2 - e.g. hesitation, pausing

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Speech fluency development contd

- Immersion chiefly aids unrehearsed monologic speech
- Task 1, planned, uses recited short grammatical phrases
  - Creates advantage on many measures at time 1; can yield even more output at Time 2
- Task 2, spontaneous, produces longer runs (+ higher G, more function morphemes esp by time 2 = more complex), more hesitation, pausing
  - Disadvantage at Time 1, less by Time 2
- **Dialogue task effects?**
  - Task 3 hardest
  - Pausing in both Task 3 and 4 generally lower than in monologues, speakers focusing at pragmatic focus, keen to keep discourse going
- Performative vs. creative competence in monologues (Wright 2014)

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Conclusion - more research needed!

- Significant improvement in fluency over time
- Significant differences by task reduced by Time 2
  - SA favours creative competence compared to performative competence, in monologues, less clear in dialogues
- Evidence of grammatical, phonological and lexical improvement (more research needed)

Questions - theoretical and methodological

- systematic linguistic development
- links to fluency
- baseline vidence from large corpora needed

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THANK YOU!

谢谢

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