Adult Learners’ Implicit Grammar Acquisition by Repeated Retrieval-Based-Learning Method

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This case study is to examine L2 adult learners’ accessibility to implicit grammar knowledge through repeated retrieval-based-learning method. The experiment aim to make the subjects learn certain grammatical knowledge L2 implicitly, retain it in a long term, and easily apply the tacit grammatical knowledge to other grammatical structures. At the end of the whole month, we conducted a retention test to assess their retention of sentences.

Methods

For a month, four native speakers of Korea read 48 English sentences in a study trial with self-paced, moving window method. After reading, they solved comprehension problems for screening out reading without understanding. Finishing the study trial, they went through an immediate test trial which was grammaticality judgement test. They judged the grammaticality of each sentence and answered with “y” for only grammatical sentences in a go/no-go sense. Half of the stimuli were from the original stimuli set and the others were ungrammatically manipulated. They did not receive any feedback if they were right or wrong since it was an implicit learning method. This study and test block repeated four times a day, for four days. On the fifth day, they took a delayed test, which was to measure their explicit, implicit, and lexical processing knowledge. Explicit knowledge test was to figure out if they remember the sentences from the study sentence set. The aim of the implicit test was to examine if they could fill out missing spells from a word if they were exposed to a sentence only for 400ms. If they still have an implicit memory, they would remember the words from acquired sentences more than newly presented sentences. Finally, lexical processing test measured if they can transfer their grammatical knowledge to other syntactic rules even though they were not trained with the specific grammar rule.

Results

Even though there were neither semantic nor syntactic feedback, participants tended to comprehend the sentences as they go through repetitive reading. Their correct response of their immediate test tended to increase as phases progressed. However, their reading time increased as they continued.

Discussion

Though correct response rate, explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge showed improvements, reading time and lexical processing (knowledge transfer) did not show much progress. It is assumed that those improvements were somewhat due to practice effect for the task. However, the fact that they answered better on the implicit test for the tested items even a month later, it showed repeated reading is helpful for learners. It was a small attempt to find a light to L2 adult learners to implicitly learn L2 grammar with just repetitive tests.

References


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