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The Influence Of L2 Note-Taking Technique On EFL Learners In Listening Academic Lectures

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Abstract: EFL teachers are confronted with difficulties in preparing students for study in a foreign language academic environment where lectures are one of the predominant forms of educational organization due to the internationalization of education and, as a result, the rise in the number of academic mobility programs. Given that one of the most challenging components of learning a foreign language is listening comprehension, the challenge of teaching academic listening comprehension and note-taking has taken on particular importance in the modern approach of teaching foreign languages. As more research about taking notes in classrooms has been published, note-taking has come to be seen as a crucial academic skill for language learners. Students can select between their first language and second language when listening for the purpose of comprehension. This study on lecture notetaking emphasizes the insufficiency of research regarding the processing of L2 lecture information by foreign language learners, outlines accepted principles of good notetaking and suggests further research to evaluate the utility of these principles and to explore further L2 lecture information.

Keywords: note-taking, academic listening, higher education, EFL students, listening comprehension, teaching foreign language

Introduction

In the academic sphere, although a variety of different instructional methods have been available to teachers for years, academic lectures have been the basic model of learning at universities, especially at the undergraduate level. As English is the predominant language of instruction in most of higher institutions specialized in learning foreign languages, many international students, most of whom are nonnative speakers of English experience some challenges of listening to academic lectures delivered in English and taking notes in L2 when they come to the university and while obtaining advanced studies. For those students who are attending lectures given in their native language (L1), taking notes is the habitual action. Many second language (L2) students appealing to this strategy when faced with the task of listening to a lecture that is given in a language other than their native language. Therefore, the second language academic listening has aroused the interest of educational researchers who have accomplished different approaches to investigate a wide range of issues concerning the comprehension of academic lectures. The basic approaches include discourse analysis of academic lectures, ethnographic studies employing observation, assessment, and evaluation of second language listening comprehension (Xie, 2002).

Learning how to listen and take notes in L2 is conceived to be "a question of academic survival" for those non-native English speaking students who tend to obtain

academic degrees in English-speaking universities (Dunkel & Davis, 1995). As a consequence, most L2 textbook writers have released audio and video materials to help non-native students improve their ability to listen and take notes. Therefore, a review of these materials reveals the variety of instructional approaches that help L2 students develop their academic listening and notetaking skills, and suggests a considerable amount of interest in providing pre-university ESL and EFL students with experience in acquiring spoken and listening academic discourse. Hence, The aim of this review is to investigate the relationship between taking notes and second language academic listening comprehension.

Literature review

It is widely known that listening is a process of receiving and analyzing an acoustic signal. When the acoustic signal is received, it demands real-time evaluation. This process requires psychological, cognitive, and linguistic interactions. The meanings of words may be represented syntactically, semantically, phonologically, or by any combination of these. Hence, listeners have to make use of linguistic knowledge to identify the meanings. The size of the information that is processed while listening comprehension depends on the learners' knowledge of the language, background knowledge of the topic, and ways that the information is presented. According to (Bejar, Douglas, 6 Jamieson, Nissan, Turner, 2000) three types of knowledge can be identified: situational knowledge (SK), linguistic knowledge (LK), and background knowledge (BK). Consequently, the general conclusion might be that listening comprehension is "the different types of knowledge are accessed in real time as the incoming signal is processed by specialized receptive and general cognitive processes. The consequence of this stage is a transformation into a series of propositions (PR) of the incoming acoustic signal (Bejar, Douglas, 6 Jamieson, Nissan, Turner, 2000, p.2).

Applied linguists tend to believe that the principles that are employed in reading comprehension also could be applied to general listening comprehension. Lund (1991), in a comparative study of second language listening comprehension, claimed that "in spite of the differences between reading and listening, the general processes do seem to be similar. When listeners were able to recognize appropriate key ideas, proficient listeners differed in the same way that readers differed from less proficient listeners (p.201).

Recent researches show that second language academic listening comprehension has its own distinctive features. Some of the variations between conversational listening and academic listening, according to Flowerdew (1994), are variations in degree, whereas others are differences in style (p. 11). He summarizes four categories that include the degree of context information, the ability to distinguish between what is important and what is not important, and the use of turn-taking, as well as the amount of implied meaning or actions of indirect expression.

It is evident that academic lectures require certain knowledge, which to a large extent, involves the participation of background knowledge of listeners. In addition, academic lectures contain some features of spoken language that are packed with

continuity, repetition, asides, according to Xie (2002), which requires listeners to be able to discern the main and minor points, to discern primary ideas, and to support ideas and information. . He stated that academic listening emphasizes the exchange of information or propositional meanings while general listening comprehension emphasizes implied meanings (p,12)

Flowerdew (1994) addresses many special abilities with regard to the "differences in type," such as the ability to concentrate on and comprehend long periods of speech, the ability to integrate knowledge obtained from other sources, and notetaking is considered one of the most essential skills for understanding lectures. When a listener takes notes, he has to identify the information, interpret what he heard, identify main points from supporting materials, and make the decision on how and when to employ this information. As Xie (2002) stated "notetaking is a culmination of different skills, an embodiment of cognitive and social affective activities. The involvement of special skills to identify and comprehend main points as well as the requirements of background information and the difference in turn-taking make lecture comprehension distinctive from general listening comprehension". Therefore, these features can constitute the frame of academic lecture comprehension, meaning that in theory notetaking could be widely utilized in academic listening comprehension.

Methods

While authors have attempted to fashion better note-takers out of non-native speakers of English with different approaches and, no doubt, with varying degrees of success, the fundamental question remains: Is the facilitative effect of note-taking on the learning and recall of L2 lecture content currently confirmed by research?

An analysis of the literature on notetaking reveals the scarcity of research devoted to the investigation of L2 notetaking. Obviously, this area of research needs to be taken seriously into account by those who are trying to understand L2 information processing and the effects of notetaking in second-language lectures. Few research has appeared in the second-language literature, except for the empirical studies performed by Dunkel and Chaudron (1988). What sorts of studies then need to be performed on lecture notetaking, and what procedures should be followed in determining the usefulness of L2 notetaking for the processing of lectures? In L2 study on approaches to address questions about notetaking, Hartley and Davies (1978) outline the methodological division; the division divides the literature into (1) the naturalistic approach (e.g. the original lecture notetaking studies of the 1920s and 1930s) and the empirical experimental method (the methods in vogue in studies from the 1950s through the 1970s). The naturalistic approach involved analyzing data obtained in the field, using real lectures and course evaluations in live lecture scenarios (Crawford, 1925). Brief, neutral subject matter lectures presented via audiotape or videotape were used in the empirical investigations and the internal validity of the experiments was emphasized.

There are strengths and weaknesses of both study methods. In natural settings, it may be appropriate to further analyze variables defined as important to the

processing performance of note-takers in analytical studies (e.g. memory, aptitude, and language proficiency). Hartley and Davies (1978) argue that if L2 note-taking studies are to have external validity, naturalistic conditions, replications of various lectures and lecturers, and students who do not know that they are engaging in experiments must be included. As a result, further studies should involve the use of the ecological study model, including direct observation and maybe even case histories. Until there is a true mosaic of L2 notetaking results exists there is a great need for additional ecological and experimental evidence to be accrued regarding the benefits and liabilities of lecture notetaking for information processing. Although there seems to be a movement towards quantitative (empirical) research in L2 acquisition and classroom research (Chaudron, 1986), qualitative research performed in naturalistic lecture settings also seems to be called for. L2 study should use both qualitative and quantitative methods to pose and pursue answers to fundamental research questions, as Chaudron (1986) exhorts.

Results

Researchers also argue that note-taking is important, either because it is believed by students or because it can provide an approach to studying the cognitive processing black box (Ganske, 1981). In addition, writers of ESL materials and curriculum developers agree that notetaking is an necessary skill for L2learners to acquire, as demonstrated by the number of published textbooks aimed at improving the notetaking skills of ESL learners. While, as previously suggested, the content, emphasis, and method of these books differ, they incorporate many of the axioms of good note-taking in their educational designs. Many of these axioms were framed by intuitive principles and were set out in the literature's study guides and papers. Such guidelines have also been integrated into their teaching or the design of their classroom materials by teachers and materials authors. Although the guidelines have been written with L1 notetakers in mind, they also seem to be applicable to those teachers or material writers who aim to improve L2 learners' lecture processing and notetaking skills. The guidelines developed by Hartley and Davies (1978) indicate that teachers:

1. Show notetakers that various notetaking types are ideal for different purposes and subject matter. Apparently, good notetakers adapt their notetaking approaches to fit the lecturer's style, the purpose of taking notes, and the lecture's subject matter.

2. To make the perfect scaffolding and the bare bones facts of the lecture clear, use advance organizers or skeleton notes. Klemm (1976) argues that "By being less swamped with the mechanics of notetaking, students can think more about what is said; they are free to organize thoughts and to examine the lecture content." This use of skeleton notes and advance organizers can be especially essential for non-native speakers who struggle to understand the native speaker's language and assimilate the content. In addition, Hartley (1976) suggests that skeletal notes make it easier for students to note personal reference notes in the margins of the handout to ensure that specific information is documented correctly.

3. Allow enough time for students to take notes (i.e. refrain from requiring students, particularly L2 students, to take notes on long lectures that are densely packed with data, causing information overload). Samples of lectures should be graded in terms of duration and density of information and should contain examples of verbal fillers, false stops, reiteration and reworking of the lecturer's information. Dictation exercises should not be extended.

4. Encourage learners to take notes. Then review their notes and provide input to the students on how their notes can be improved. Feedback from the instructor can stress that students:

a. Use diagrammatic formats for layouts (e.g., the notes could be framed in a split-page style in a comparison-contrast section of the lecture, and key terms could be noted in a diagrammatic form).

b. Write down questions that emerge while they listen to them about the lecture details. They can later ask their professor or their peers for answers to their questions or for unclear pieces of information to be explained.

Conclusion

From the studies mentioned above, we can conclude that the ability to take notes while listening to a lecture is important and complicated. It is fair that note-taking is impacted by bilingualism, considering its relationships with different language skills. Several studies among second language (L2) students have aimed to shed light on note-taking activities in academic contexts. This small body of research has concluded that note-taking by improving their listening comprehension can facilitate the academic success of L2 students (Carrell, 2007). By looking at note-taking from a multi-component viewpoint, these results add to the literature exploring multiple variables underlying note-taking during university-level lectures. In addition, they shed light on the particular difficulties facing L2 students while taking lecture notes and can direct support centers in the creation of effective intervention programs at universities and colleges. The key ideas explored in lectures may not be documented by L2 students due to an inability to obey the speaking rate or poor comprehension of academic words in their second language. It is obviously necessary to improve this ability as a means of enhancing learning experiences and results among L2 students, given the known benefits of note-taking.

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