

Critical Review on “Form-Focused Remedial Instruction: An Empirical Study” and “Acculturation to English by An Ethnic Minority: The Language Attitudes of Indian Adolescents in A Hong Kong International School”

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Abstract: This article abbreviatedly introduced the main idea of the research done by Chan and Li, which explored how effective the oral remedial instruction with the consciousness-raising method is. The research was completed with several control groups through pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test. Although the research confirmed that the consciousness-raising approach could benefit for second language learners to notice their morpho-syntactically well-defined errors, there exists some shortcomings which could be improved to enhance its objectiveness and comprehensiveness of it. Meanwhile, the former article was also compared with the research completed by Patri and Pennington, which explored various teaching methods through fundamental experiments, because they both utilized Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) in their exploration of second language acquisition and made control experiments and made the comparison to find out whether their differences are significantly relevant. The combination of basic language teaching theory and research with the utilization of statistical analysis software, the representativeness of the research methods with experiments, and the integrity of the procedures of the experiment and research made these two articles worthy of further analysis, discussion, and comparison. This paper analyzed the research with critical review in terms of both its advantages and disadvantages, and the data got with SPSS were also evaluated.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the long-term development of communicative language teaching (CLT) [6] theory ever since the 1970s when it was proposed for the first time, many scholars and educators have tried to adopt and develop it with students to improve the effectiveness of the class. Ju [3] claimed that CLT had a distinct influence on language teaching either theoretically or practically. Therefore, many language teachers tend to apply CLT theory to their classes to explore new things. A form-focused instruction and specified explanation of grammatical rules seem to be more effective than the general methods of language study people used to maintain based on communicative language teaching (CLT) theory as the results of recent Second Language Acquisition research.

The main purpose of the article *Form-focused remedial instruction: an empirical study* is to prove the effectiveness of the remedial instruction based on a consciousness-raising (CR) method through an experiment with the use of SPSS to analyze the data got from the it [1]. The article *Acculturation to English by an Ethnic Minority: The Language Attitudes of Indian*

Adolescents in a Hong Kong International School focused on the language learning attitude of a minority group in Hong Kong to explore the influence of their attitude toward language acquisition [5]. The comparison of these two articles is worthwhile considering that the combination of basic language teaching theory and research with the utilization of statistical analysis software, and the data they got from experiments were calculated and analyzed with SPSS, which represented that their research explored the analysis of social phenomenon with statistical methods. Meanwhile, the representativeness of the research methods with experiments, the integrity of the procedures of the experiment and research, and the general mistakes made during the control experiment are worth to be further analysis and discussion.

2. REVIEW OF THE ARTICLE: “FORM-FOCUSED REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY”

2.1. General Information of the Article

In the article *Form-focused remedial instruction: an*

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empirical study, Chan, Alice Y. W. and Li, David C. S. chose secondary school students in Hong Kong and university students at the City University of Hong Kong as the subjects who are divided into experimental and control groups, and taught them “*concern/concerned*”, “*on the contrary*”, and “*pseudo-tough movement*” respectively to prove the effectiveness. In the process of teaching, the experimental group is treated with an exact CR method in comparison with the control group which is taught with a slight CR method. Moreover, “*pre-test*”, “*post-test*”, and “*delayed post-test*” are used to measure the extent that which students acquire the lexicon use, the effectiveness of the CR method in second language acquisition, and the correlation among them. Based on the statistics and analysis, Chan and Li concluded that “the consciousness-raising approach to remedial instruction using explicit, form-focused negative feedback has great potential for helping learners in their second language”.

2.2. Experiment Design in the Article

During the experiment, the authors considered the different frequencies of word use and decided to make secondary students study only “*concern/concerned*” and “*pseudo-tough movement*”, whereas making the university students study only “*concern/concerned*” and “*on the contrary*”. According to the authors, both the experimental groups in secondary school and university followed the “*proceduralized steps*” and “*reinforcement exercises*” with “*contrastive differences*”, “*algorithmic instruction*”, and “*explicit rules*”; in contrast, the control group was only provided with “the error and the correct model being pointed out” and “textbooks”. Three tests with similar question types were designed to evaluate students’ progress. Taking the short time lag between “*post-test*” and “*delayed post-test*” into consideration, “*delayed post-test*” was designed with “*a contextualized question*” to test students’ performance of the CR

approach. Students’ scores were analyzed with T-test and two-way ANOVA in SPSS, and the “*p-value*” got from the comparisons among the three tests indicated the significant correlations between the CR method and the test scores, i.e. students taught with a rigorous consciousness-raising method tended to perform much better in the “*post-test*” and “*delayed post-test*” than in the “*pre-test*”, which according to Chan and Li, also proved that consciousness-raising approach is effective for second language learners.

Even though the test scores of control groups in university were higher than that of experimental groups, Chan and Li claimed that this phenomenon was caused by the fact that “the control group was divided into two small subgroups”, and therefore, students in the control group could pay more attention to the lexicon they needed to acquire during the experiment, which could also be considered by the authors as a “more intensive treatment”. Although the students in the secondary school tend to forget some exact use of “*concern/concerned*” in the “*delayed post-test*”, there was enough evidence to prove that it is effective for L2 learners to study with the consciousness-raising method based on form-focused remedial instruction.

2.3. Experimental Design and Results

Before the whole experiment, the questionnaires of the pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test on the question authors tried to explore were designed and sent to students who took part in the test separately. The standards of the three various tests were designed and scored for the data used in SPSS. The results got from the pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test were input onto the SPSS and made a detailed comparison. The authors also adapted a two-way ANOVA test to work out the interaction effects of different tests and different groups. And the various scores got with SPSS were illustrated as followed.

Table 1 Comparisons of *p value* in secondary school got from SPSS

			Mean	Std. Deviation
Total score	Pair 1 (N=233)	Gain	71.97*	43.80
	Pair 2 (N=228)	Gain	70.66*	53.34
	Pair 3 (N=227)	Loss	0.40 (ns)	36.15
Scores of pseudo-tough movements	Pair 1 (N=233)	Gain	8.10*	6.00
	Pair 2 (N=228)	Gain	8.29*	6.54
	Pair 3 (N=227)	Gain	0.15 (ns)	3.75
Scores of <i>concern</i> and <i>concerned</i>	Pair 1 (N=233)	Gain	8.62*	7.14
	Pair 2 (N=228)	Gain	7.06*	7.16
	Pair 3 (N=227)	Loss	1.44*	5.40

*p = 0.00, ns = not significant

Resource from: Chan, A. Y. W., & Li, D. C. S. (2002). Form-focused remedial instruction: an empirical study. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 12(1), 24–53. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1473-4192.00023>

Table 2 Comparisons of *p value* in university got from SPSS

			Mean	Std. Deviation
Total score	Pair 1 (N=32)	Gain	51.44*	45.70
	Pair 2 (N=36)	Gain	53.84*	45.48
	Pair 3 (N=31)	Gain	0.63 (ns)	23.76
Scores of pseudo-tough movements	Pair 1 (N=32)	Gain	6.59*	6.12
	Pair 2 (N=36)	Gain	10.75*	8.92
	Pair 3 (N=31)	Gain	1.50 (ns)	4.00
Scores of <i>concern</i> and <i>concerned</i>	Pair 1 (N=32)	Gain	9.58*	6.99
	Pair 2 (N=36)	Gain	9.51*	6.45
	Pair 3 (N=31)	Loss	2.43*	8.15

*p = 0.00, ns = not significant

Resource from: Chan, A. Y. W., & Li, D. C. S. (2002). Form-focused remedial instruction: an empirical study. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 12(1), 24–53. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1473-4192.00023> and university were equal.

2.4. Dialectical evaluation and reflection

Despite the effective improvement of the use of the CR method in Second Language Acquisition proved by Chan and Li, there are several points for them to make their study levelled and their data and analysis more reliable and scientific.

2.4.1 Number Chosen of the Subjects

Firstly, Chan and Li chose about 80 university students and approximately 230 students in a secondary school as the subjects. The university students are too few compared with those secondary school students, which means that the statistics Chan and Li got from the university lack representativeness. Moreover, the secondary school students are chosen from different levels, but the authors did not make a comparison among the students' levels, and they were not mixed to guarantee the representativeness and randomness of the experiment, either.

Secondly, the age range of the subjects could be younger in the experiment because university students are considered to be a little “older” to improve their L2 owing to their fossilization in Second Language Acquisition. It would be difficult for university students to change their lexicon use in a second language. According to the critical period hypothesis, which claims that the best period for people to acquire a second language is before their puberty [4]. Thus, it is reasonable to say that the experiment would have better results to prove the effectiveness of the CR method if they had chosen younger subjects.

Lastly, gender is another effect on Language Acquisition, however, the authors of this study took no consideration of gender. The results of the experiment could be more specific if the authors had mentioned that the amounts of males and females in the experimental and control groups, and their proportions in secondary school

2.4.2 Experimental Types

Another key criticism of this experiment is that the error types selected in the experiment are too few to prove that the CR method is effective and appropriate for all the lexicon and grammatical instructions in Second Language Acquisition. Even though the authors illustrated the reasons why they chose “concern/concerned”, “on the contrary”, and “pseudo-tough movement”. To make the experiment and the study apply to more areas and make it has greater applicability, the authors are suggested to take more words or contrasts during their experiment.

2.4.3 Control Group Chosen

Moreover, at the beginning of the experiment, Chan and Li illustrated that the control group was designed to follow only the “correct usage of the target lexicon-grammatical item” with seldom help from teachers. However, the students in the control group have little interest in the study and the teachers also considered it a lack of research ethics. Therefore, they change the teaching model in the control group in which students can receive some teacher guidance and have specific illustrations. Even though the changes during the experiment were to follow the research ethics, it did not follow the initial design of the experiment and made the statistics of the control group and the comparison between the experimental and control groups unreliable.

2.5. Conclusion

Despite all the shortcomings above, Chan and Li’s study explored a new field of consciousness-raising study in Second Language Acquisition. With their experiment, they proved that the consciousness-raising approach tends

to help language learners when they acquire their L2. Moreover, the approach could especially help them to notice those morpho-syntactically well-defined errors in the target language. And their analysis with SPSS to deal with the data they collected from the experiments is a good method to do statistical analysis and comparisons, which is worthy of further exploring and being utilized in other experimental statistics.

3. REVIEW OF THE ARTICLE: ACCULTURATION TO ENGLISH BY AN ETHNIC MINORITY: THE LANGUAGE ATTITUDES OF INDIAN ADOLESCENTS IN A HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

3.1. General Information of the Article

People's ethnic identity strongly affects their attitudes towards learning out-group languages and acculturation to the majority social groups. Gudykunst and Schmidt proposed that "language and ethnic identity are related reciprocally" in 1987 and they also claimed that the attitudes and usage of language could be influenced by ethnic identity [5]. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the study of the correlations between ethnic identity and language attitudes is helpful for educators to understand the importance of students' ethnic identity in their Second Language Acquisition.

3.2. General Information of the Second Article

The article *Acculturation to English by an Ethnic Minority: The Language Attitudes of Indian Adolescents in a Hong Kong International School* is a comparative study written by Patri and Pennington, who chose forty students in an international school from middle-class, educated families as the subjects to investigate their attitudes towards English in comparison with local students in Hong Kong with a revised questionnaire based on Pennington and Yue's study on Chinese students' language attitudes in 1994. The authors analyzed the means and the standard deviations of the statistics they got from the questionnaire and compared their data with Pennington and Yue's, and then they generalized the results and concluded that Indian adolescents, whose ethnic identity is stronger, have more positive attitudes towards English study than Hong Kong teenagers.

3.3. Experiment Design in the Article

At the beginning of the whole study, the authors firstly illustrated the correlations between the social identity of a minority group and their attitudes towards acculturation and assimilation by the majority culture in which they were surrounded and the relations between group identity and in-group people's language attitudes. Patri and Pennington also claimed that the reasons they chose Indian adolescence in Hong Kong as the subjects were to

figure out whether the predominant language of immigrant groups in Hong Kong would be English or Cantonese and to remedy the lack of language attitudes in Hong Kong Indian community. Based on the studies of Indian immigrants made by the former experts, Patri and Pennington claimed that Indian immigrants with strong ethnic identities were supposed to have identification with English. The designation of the whole research was followed in the next part, in which the authors mainly illustrated the subjects and the method of their study. Furthermore, the results they gained were analyzed with means and standard deviations and compared with Pennington and Yue's study. In the discussion part of this article, the specific comparisons between Indian and Chinese adolescents' attitudes towards English study were illustrated and the reasons for the formation of this phenomenon were further explained. At the end of the study, Patri and Pennington concluded that Indian adolescents who tended to consider English as a representative of power and prestige had a greater interest in English compared with Chinese adolescents, who were lack of motivation and confidence in conversing English with others. Moreover, the mother tongue of Indians was more like a symbol of emotion, in contrast, Cantonese was more of a functional value for Chinese students. Furthermore, some of the shortcomings of this study had also been proposed in the conclusion by the authors themselves.

3.4. Dialectical evaluation and reflection

Even though this study made by Patri and Pennington could remedy the shortcomings of former research, some critical points still exist which can help the study be more scientific and objective.

Firstly, the subjects the authors had chosen were too few and the statistics collected by them lacked representativeness relatively. The subjects of the research were forty boys and girls studied in an international school from middle-class, educated families which indicates that the backgrounds of these Indian students may influence their attitudes towards English study and the accuracy of the statistics. Normally, English is the medium of instruction in international schools because English has been considered a *lingua franca* worldwide for a long time. Besides, international schools are full of students from various countries and thus, English used as the instruction language can help students to communicate much more effectively, and in this way, Indian students in international schools tend to be more positive to study English. Middle-class, educated family represents the stability of students' life and they would be more secure in their native culture which leads them to have less fear of assimilation and acculturation [2]. Since this research was compared with the study of Chinese students done by Pennington and Yue, the subjects of which were chosen from different schools, the subjects of this research should also have been chosen from various schools to improve the representativeness of this study and to make the comparisons between the two studies more objective. Therefore, it is reasonable to claim that it would be much

better if the authors could enlarge the size and the variety of their subjects.

Secondly, the explanation of the results in this study is lack logic and the standard deviations calculated by the authors were not applied in the comparison. Even though the study had been claimed that it was based on the study of Pennington and Yue, it should have illustrated the numbers and different meanings they were attached to, in case the readers who had not read the previous study could not understand the meanings of the values, i.e. readers could not understand whether the higher value represents the more positive attitudes or not. Furthermore, the standard deviations were calculated by the authors, however, they were not further explained or compared with those in Pennington and Yue's research. It would make the analysis more specific and reasonable if the authors could have further illustrated the values rather than just listed them on the table. Further explanation and comparison could also make the research more logical.

Thirdly, the background information of the study was too lengthy, in which the objective and the significance of the study were not specific enough. The authors could have a general literature review or more detailed, specific, and targeted information on the study to make the background more informative. Moreover, people's language attitudes change along with the development of politics and the economy. Thus, it would be better for the authors to consider this point.

3.5. Conclusion

Despite the shortcomings above, this study is splendid in its analysis of the six different categories to represent the various aspects of English study, which made the analysis clear for readers to understand. The analysis is also informative for the after researchers who want to build a more positive attitude toward students' Second Language Acquisition based on the various aspects and categories analyzed by the authors, i.e. the after researchers can improve students' attitudes by increasing their interests, personal confidence, commitment, etc. in the target language and their ethnic identity as well.

4. COMPARISONS

4.1. Similarities

Even though the two articles involve two different experiments in terms of the subjects chosen, data collection, etc., they do share some similarities regardless of time and authors.

To begin with, the themes of both the research are mainly focused on the application of teaching methods in language teaching class, which means that teaching methods have drawn plenty of attention from many scholars and educators, among which linguists are the majority, and second language acquisition gradually becomes one of the main research fields of linguistics. Secondly, both the research utilized SPSS as the tool for data analysis and they took control groups for results comparison, which also indicated that SPSS is one of the

appropriate approaches for experiments on various teaching methods comparison.

4.2. Differences

There are lots of differences existing between the two articles, however, only those with representativity and unique from the other one will be illustrated in the following part.

To begin with, the authors of the essay *Form-focused remedial instruction: an empirical study* paid more specific and explicit attention to "remedial instruction" to start their experiment [1], whereas the authors of *Acculturation to English by an Ethnic Minority: The Language Attitudes of Indian Adolescents in a Hong Kong International School* held a more general point of view in the research and they valued the role of student in the class more than that of teacher [5]. Then, the aims of the two experiments are different from each other. The first experiment aimed at exploring and increasing the effectiveness of students acquiring knowledge, while the prime concern of the second experiment is the language learning attitude of students.

Table 3 Similarities and Differences

	<i>Form-focused remedial instruction</i>	<i>Acculturation to English by an Ethnic Minority</i>
Similarities	Subjects chosen	
	Data collection	
	Themes on second language education	
	SPSS applied for data analyzation	
Differences	attention on "remedial instruction"	more general on teaching methods
	increasing the effectiveness of students acquire knowledge	Exploring students' language learning attitude

*This table is made by the authors themselves.

5. CONCLUSION

From a general point of view, both the articles illustrated that the development of second language acquisition still exists lots of questions worthy of exploration, no matter in terms of various teaching methods and effectiveness, or terms of various roles of language education. They also indicated the importance of further exploration of second language acquisition, and it is a long-term development that needs scholars to devote themselves to the exploration of loads of fields, especially those with experimental research and statistical analysis.

However, the authors of both articles could get more reliable raw data for their further analysis if they change some of their experimental steps. Chan and Li could choose some younger subjects more randomly, considering the interference factor of gender during their research. If they add the error types in their experiment, their raw data could be more representative and reliable.

Moreover, they could use the same teaching mode in the control group regardless of students' attitudes to guarantee the controllable variable quantity. As for the second paper, Patri and Pennington could enlarge the number of the subjects they have chosen, to increase the representativeness of their results. They could also compare their results more logically with the using of the standard deviations that have been calculated. Furthermore, the background information of their research could be shortened and specified, besides, they could also take people's language attitudes various with the development of policy and economy into consideration. Thus, they could enhance their research's reliability and reasonability, making it more objective and representative.

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