

THE ROLE OF INTERACTION IN LEARNING CHINESE LANGUAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CHINA

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Abstract

This is a qualitative case study which used interviews and observation to investigate the role of interaction between international and Chinese students with regard to Chinese language learning. It was guided by Long's Interaction Hypothesis and Swain's Comprehensible Output. The findings revealed that English was a dominant language of communication for the students which reduced emphasis on Chinese language learning. However, a few students who used Chinese as a medium of communication had positive results in their learning of oral Chinese but not in the reading and writing of Chinese characters. These findings suggest the importance of an integration of both oral and written conversational interaction in learning and mastery of the four skills of Chinese language. The findings of this study may be applicable to the learning of other languages similar to Chinese, which do not use the Roman alphabet.

Key words:

China, second language learning, interaction, foreign language learning, comprehensible output, comprehensible input.

1 Introduction

Language is an essential tool for human communication and interaction. We communicate our ideas and express our feelings through the use of language, either verbal or nonverbal. In addition, language is not only an instrument of communication, but an instrument of power which implies that people use language to make themselves understood, get a feeling of belonging and get power to interpret their world (Bourdieu, 1977). In this regard, people need to be familiar with the language of the particular society in which they exist, in order to facilitate communication and understanding.

With the above consideration in mind, SN University (Pseudonym) has Chinese language learning programmes for international students. There are different arrangements depending on the requirements of the students' programmes of study. For example, there are students who study Chinese language as their major; there are those who study an intensive one year Chinese language course as a pre preparatory for their majors taught in Chinese language; and there are those who learn Chinese language for everyday communication purposes as their majors are taught in English.

Students in the later programme attend Chinese class once per week for about two hours for the duration of one semester. This counts for the approximately 60-hour beginner's Chinese language course which equips them with minimal linguistic skills (Zhu, and Ma, 2011). This implies that, international students in the full English instruction programme can barely communicate in Chinese language as they are not fluent in Chinese language. Language limitations create communication barriers which in return limit the international students from engaging in certain activities or visiting certain places on their own, thus limiting their ease of adaptation to life in China (Lan, 2014; Lawani, Gai, and Titilayo, 2012). Failure to adapt to life in a certain place can cause psychological problems that may affect concentration on studies.

Since language learning is not only a cognitive activity, but also an interactional activity (Swain & Lapkin, 1998 as quoted by Alkhateeb, 2014; Albakri, n.d; Wang, 2010; Mackey, 2002), interaction related aspects of the international students with Chinese students is of paramount importance. A lot of studies have reported the positive impacts of interaction related aspects with reference to the classroom interaction between students and their teachers (Velga & Kotz, 2013; Hall & Walsh, 2002; Wang, 2010; Lan, 2014), with little consideration of interaction of language learners with native speakers, especially friends or fellow students. In addition to this, research and publications on teaching and learning Chinese as a second language is still minimal even though, there is a rapid development of this promising field as the learning of the language is becoming popular (Li, 2008; Xu, 2010; as quoted by Lu,2014).

With the above dimensions in view this case study aimed at finding out how the interactions between international students who are taught in English and Chinese students, facilitate Chinese language learning. The results of this case study ascertained the influence of the oral conversational interactions in learning Chinese and other languages around the world which do not use Roman alphabets like Japanese, Russian, Arabic, Thai, Khmer, Amharic, and the like. Consequently, this study contributes to the literature on the role of written and oral conversational interaction for effective language learning and mastery of the four language skills which are listening, reading speaking and writing.

2 Interaction and language learning

Interaction in this study refers to all kinds of social relations, contact and communication between international students and Chinese students whether individually or in groups. The main key phrase here is the communications that take place among individuals. Interaction is believed to be the key to second language learning as it provides the opportunity for a language learner to be familiar with the sounds and rules of language in a real conversational environment. This implies that, language learning and acquisition is a result of interaction between learners' mental abilities and the linguistic environment (Albakari, n.d). Interaction facilitates second language learning through establishing a

connection between exposure to the targeted language (Input), production of language (Output), and feedback that comes as a result of interaction (Gass and Selinker, 2008); Mackey, 2002). Once a learner is exposed to a target language, it is expected that practice using the new language and the feedback from conversational partners will help to emphasize the gap between inter-language and the targeted language.

2.1 Interaction hypothesis and language learning

The earlier version of Interaction hypothesis of second language acquisition/learning emphasizes that language competence is facilitated by conversational interaction as it makes input comprehensible through modification (1985, as cited by Fang, 2010). Built on Krashen's input hypothesis, Long stresses that comprehensible input is an important factor for second language learning and that the fluency in output will occur naturally after the competency in comprehension (Wang, & Castro, 2010; Thu, n.d; Krashen (1985) as cited by Al Khateeb, 2014; Loschky, 1994; Fang, 2010).

Later on, Long (1996; as cited by Thu, n.d; and Wei, 2012) recommended an updated version of the Interaction hypothesis which is emphasizing negotiation for meaning as a condition that facilitates second language learning by enabling learners to obtain both comprehensible input and negative feedback. Negotiation promotes modifications which facilitates language acquisition through the connection of input, internal learner capacities like attention and output in a productive way. It can be seen that interaction hypothesis emphasizes much on the role of input over output in learning a second language.

However, although input is necessary, it is not sufficient for second language acquisition. In this stance, the role of output for learners to practice their language, and notice the gap between their interlanguage and targeted language cannot be ignored (Swain, 1985 as cited in editorial, 2002; Ellis, 1991). Output facilitates integration of new linguistic knowledge and features while comparing with their own output, as well as comprehending the new input through negotiation and modification of meaning thereby enhancing language proficiency.

2.2 Conceptual framework

This case study is based on ideas from Long's interaction hypothesis and Swain's comprehensible output in second language learning. Based on literature, input and output work in a connected way to facilitate the learning or acquisition of a second language. The two components in oral and written practice form a basis for conversational interaction and facilitate second language learning (Thu, n.d; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

The following conceptual framework consists of two major components which are input and output, and together they complement each other to form a basis for language learning through conversational interaction. Input involves activities that support reading and listening skills of language through which a learner is exposed to grammatical rules and sounds of the targeted language. On the other hand, output is the learner's production of language through speaking or writing after exposure to the targeted language in addition to feedback opportunities from a native speaker or an expert of the targeted language in order to negotiate meaning.

Input and output are interlinked and interrelated components which work together in the language learning process. The area between input and output is referred to as language proficiency which has been strengthened by the practise of input (by listening and reading) as well as output (by speaking and writing). The practice should provide the opportunity to exercise the four language skills in oral and written settings. Below is the pictorial presentation of the conceptual framework.

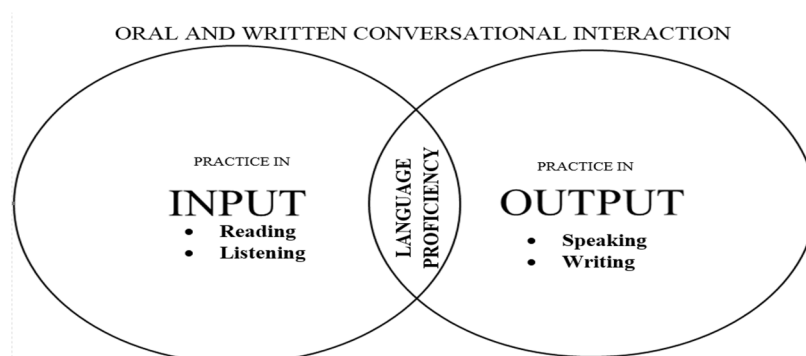


Figure No 1: The Conceptual framework of oral and written conversational interaction as a basis for second language learning

3 Objectives and research questions

The main objective of this case study was to ascertain the influence of interactions in relation to learning Chinese language between the international students in full English instruction programmes and Chinese students at SN University (Changchun- China). The following were research questions which guided the study to reach the above objective:

- How do international students (in full English instruction programmes) perceive the level of their Chinese language?
- How do interactions with Chinese students help them to learn Chinese language?

3.1 Significance of the study

The results of this case study ascertained the influence of the interactions and suggest how the opportunities for interaction can be used by international students (in English instruction programmes) to improve their Chinese language levels. It also contributes to the body of literature on learning Chinese language, since research and publications on teaching and learning Chinese as a second language is still minimal compared to the rapid development of this promising field of Chinese language learning (Li, 2008; Xu, 2010; as quoted by Lu, 2014). In addition to that, it contributes to the body of literature on the role of both oral and written conversational interaction in learning languages which do not use roman alphabets like Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Thai, Khmer (of Cambodia), Arabic, Amharic(of Ethiopia), and many more languages with similar attributes.

4 Methodology

As a form of naturalistic inquiry, this study employed the case study design to find out the role of interaction between international students (English instruction programmes) and Chinese students in learning Chinese language. Case study approach was considered to be appropriate for this work because it is useful to study things in details, looking at processes and relationships of various parts that lead to a certain outcome (Denscombe, 2007).

Semi structured interviews and observation were used sequentially to collect data from participants. Interview was considered to be useful in order to get in depth information and different experiences from individuals. Some guiding questions were administered during the interview, though the focus was on the detailed and elaborate responses provided by the interviewees. Moreover, the sequence of the questions was flexible depending on responses from the interviewees and probing questions were asked accordingly. The interview time ranged from 10 to 24 minutes per respondent, making an average of 15 minutes per respondent. The interviews with 13 respondents were audio taped with each respondent's permission except for one respondent, who refused to be recorded and so, the researcher had to take notes.

Later on one of the researchers visited analytical chemistry laboratory to observe interaction processes among international students (in English instruction programmes) and Chinese students for an hour. This was useful to countercheck discrepancies if any, between what respondents said and what they actually do (Green, 2007 p.20). The laboratory was a convenient place for observation since this case study was conducted during the winter period when people rarely intermingled in public open spaces. In addition, the chosen category of international students does not share classes with Chinese students.

4.1 Context of the study

This study was conducted at SN University in Changchun city, Jilin Province, which is situated in the North Eastern part of China. According to the International Students Office (ISO) personnel, the university had 1006 international students from 103 countries for the academic year 2014-2015. Among these students there were about 100 students in the full English instruction programme at the faculty of education and faculty of science (MA and PhD levels). The programmes that are taught in English include Master and PhD programmes in Education, Chemistry and Biology.

4.2 Population and sampling procedures

Population of the study was international students who were doing their majors with English as the medium of instruction. Purposeful sampling technique was used to draw sample from the chosen population. In purposeful sampling the selection of the units is based on prior identified criteria for inclusion (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009 p. 343). In line with this study, the criteria that were considered were year of study or stay in China, and programmes with English as the medium of instruction.

4.3 Sample size and demographic data

A total of 14 participants were interviewed of which eight were males while six were females; their ages ranged from 24 to 31 years. All participants reported that exposure to Chinese language learning began in China. Participants and their number in brackets were from the following countries: Pakistan (2); Sudan (3); Cyprus (1); Cambodia (2); Thailand (1); Tanzania (1); Guinea Conakry (1); Kenya (1); Benin (1) and Malawi (1).

Regarding their duration of stay in China, three of the participants had been in China for about four months, these were first year students. The other two participants had been in China for two years and four months, these were PhD students who spent two years for the MA study and came back for their PhD. The remaining nine participants had been in China for a year and four months, these were sophomore master's students. In terms of the programme of study, eight participants were

from the sciences while six were from the field of education. The eight from the sciences included two PhD and six Master's degree candidates while the six from education included five master's degree candidates and a senior scholar.

5 Findings and interpretation

Audio tape interviews were transcribed and analyzed through the use of thematic analysis. A thematic analysis is one that looks across all the data to identify the common issues that recur, and identify the main themes that summarize all the views you have collected (Green, 2007 p.23). Observation information was also analyzed in relation to the themes that emerged during the interview. Emerged themes are presented with extract words from participants. Names that are used to identify participants are pseudo names in order to protect their identities based on ethical considerations.

5.1 Emerged Themes

Themes that emerged can be categorized as low and high proficiency levels in Chinese language, strategies used to cope with language and communication barriers, interaction processes, improvement and assistance from Chinese students as well as the use of English versus Chinese language to communicate with Chinese students. In addition to those are attention when learning Chinese language and challenges in learning Chinese language.

5.1.1 Respondents' Perceived proficiency Level in Chinese Language

Results show a mixed proficiency level of Chinese language among respondents. Four of them described their level of oral Chinese language as good and that they could communicate with few barriers. All these participants had been in China for more than one year, two of them were sophomore master's students and the remaining two were PhD students. Below are some of their verbatim statements:

"...for oral Chinese, it is ok...the problem is in reading and writing, I cannot..." (Ally).

"...my Chinese is not so good, not so bad, but at least I can communicate..." (Amir)

The remaining 10 respondents confirmed that their Chinese language was still of low quality as they could only construct few sentences in Chinese, although they could bargain and shop at markets and other places by themselves, as well as asking for directions. The words that they used to describe their proficiency level in Chinese language were words such as, 'poor' 'low' 'little' 'intermediate' 'elementary', and 'beginner'. Below are some of their verbatim extracts regarding this:

"...my Chinese language is still poor ..." (Hadija).

"...I have made some progress as I can speak a few sentences, although not fluently. ...I can bargain as well as do some shopping on my own..." (Surat).

The situation was different for reading and writing skills. All of the respondents, except for one who was taking an extra Chinese course, confirmed that they could read less than 100 Chinese characters and that it has been very problematic writing, as they said that they could not write Chinese characters at all. Below are some of their words referring to this:

"...for oral Chinese, it is ok...the problem is in reading and writing, I cannot..." (Ally).

"...I can read some characters...may be 30 ..., writing is difficult for me because Chinese characters ... are like drawings and to me they all look similar..." (Sorphone).

This implies that there are some students who have satisfactory vocabularies to engage in daily oral conversation in Chinese language, but also there are those who still have low proficiency thus that they cannot engage in conversations. Those with poor proficiency level in Chinese language have memorized some useful words and they can construct a few simple sentences to bargain and ask for directions. In addition to that, respondents have poor reading and writing skills compared to oral and aural comprehension except for one respondent who was attending extra Chinese language class.

5.1.2 Strategies to cope with language and communication barriers

Following the limitation of language for most of the respondents, there are strategies that they use whenever they face communication breakdown. Those strategies with their frequencies in brackets are, the use of body language (4); the use of translation application on their cell phones (2); the memorization of a few useful words/sentences (1), and asking a friend who can speak Chinese to assist (6).

“...when I have a problem,I ask a friend who can speak Chinese to help, on my own it is difficult...”(Hadija).

“...Even at the market I use the small Chinese that I have, but sometimes communication breakdown happens and I have to use my mobile phone translation application... although it is still not easy...”(Asha).

“...Sometimes I use non-verbal communication” (Surat).

“...I have memorized some names of the dishes that I like so when I go to the restaurant I only request for those kinds of food that I like...”(Rajeev).

Most participants in this case study prefer assistance from friends who speak Chinese language than other strategies like memorization of some useful words and sentences, body language and online translation application. Relying on translation assistance from a friend reduces the drive for, and focus on language learning. On the other hand, this limits them from producing language (output) based on what they had learnt in Chinese language class (input) in order to negotiate for meaning and acquire new vocabularies.

5.1.3 Interaction Processes with Chinese Students and Perceived Influence

Apart from other social interactions with Chinese student, all 14 participants of this case study, confirmed to have had at least one Chinese friend. In addition, Master's and PhD students from the faculty of science confirmed to have had oral conversational interaction with Chinese students with whom they shared laboratory rooms and facilities. The situation was a little bit different for students from the faculty of education, since they did not share class sessions with Chinese students, they interacted with them as well as their friends at sports and play grounds (for those who were interested in sports), and through other social gatherings. Regarding the issue of assistance from Chinese students, all participants agreed that Chinese students were ready to assist them in Chinese language learning. Although all of them felt that they were improving in the language learning, they were not satisfied with the pace of their progress, except for one respondent who expressed satisfaction with his oral Chinese proficiency level. Below are some of the extracts:

“...my Chinese has improved very well ...I have a lot of Chinese friends, I think it is good for oral communication...” (Ally).

“...listening to audio Chinese lessons is not helping much...I used that but I recorded no improvement until when I started to interact with the Chinese face to face for conversation....I improved...”(Anuur).

“...I don’t think that I am improving in the way that I wanted ...” (John).

“...they encourage me, they help me even when I have some problems with my Chinese assignments, and they teach me ...Yes they are helpful...” (Joyce).

“...I make friends with Chinese students, not only for practicing Chinese but sometimes for cultural exchanges... like food,...and from this context, we learn language...”(Sorphone).

With reference to the above verbatim quotations from some respondents, it is obvious that they interact with Chinese students. There is a positive result of international and Chinese students’ interaction in learning oral Chinese language because all participants reported a certain degree of improvement though minimal in the case of twelve out of the fourteen respondents. In addition to that, Chinese students are ready to assist in the Chinese language learning process. However, following the different system of characters in Chinese language, reading and writing skills are not easily acquired through oral conversation. This suggests that reading and writing Chinese characters require deliberate efforts rather than oral conversational interaction.

5.1.4 Language of Communication with Chinese Students (English versus Chinese)

Participants reported the use of both languages, English and Chinese when communicating with Chinese students. However, some participants especially those with fluency in Chinese language, confirmed to have used more Chinese than English when communicating with their Chinese friends. They said that sometimes it just happened automatically that they spoke in Chinese. Besides, even their friends were more comfortable with Chinese language than English. Below are some of the verbatim responses on this:

“...of course we prefer Chinese to English ...although sometimes we mix Chinese with English...” (Ally).

“...sometimes we use English, but with those who do not speak English well we use Chinese... I think those who do not speak English well are the best to interact with and learn Chinese...”(Anuur).

The remaining participants, especially those who did not have a good command of the Chinese language, confirmed to have used the English language approximately for 70% more than the Chinese language. To them, the dominant language of communication with their Chinese friends was English, with few Chinese words or sentences. The main reason that was provided is the low proficiency level of their Chinese language, with insufficient vocabularies and the passion to practice oral English, since most of the participants in this case study came from countries where English is a second/ foreign language. Related to that, Chinese students also wanted to improve their fluency in English through practice with international students. Below are some of their verbatim responses:

“...I always use English to communicate with ...Chinese students...” (Rajeev).

“...we speak English as they are trying to be fluent in English and they are using that opportunity to practice with me, approximately 75% of our conversations are in English and the remaining 25% in Chinese...” (Joyce).

“...since I can speak English, I prefer to speak English ...” (Natpa).

“...my English is not good, so I also enjoy speaking in English as it also helps me to improve my oral English.... English is more beneficial...” (Asha).

With reference to the above verbatim responses from respondents, fluency in Chinese has implication on the language that is used between International students and Chinese students. The more the vocabularies one has, the more the passion to speak in Chinese language, in other words, the international students had insufficient input to engage in daily conversation with the Chinese students. It is clear that the International students had limited chances to have oral and written conversational interactions with Chinese students in Chinese language. This has some implications on the practice that is required to connect input to output for successful language learning.

5.1.5 Attention to learning Chinese language

The issue of attention and interest to learning Chinese language also emerged among participants. Those who demonstrated an interest to learn the language with a positive view had some improvement at a satisfactory level. They proved to pay much attention in learning new vocabularies for daily or future use. For example one of the respondents said:

“...if I hear someone talking, I ... trying to understand, sometimes guessing the meaning of new words...that helped me to acquire a lot of Chinese vocabularies... it is helpful, since I am living in China, and without the knowledge ... my life would have been complicated...” (Ally).

“...in a foreign country, you need to learn the language to make your life much easier so that was my motivation to study Chinese, and beyond that learning Chinese right now is like ...a good qualification...” (John).

Some participants demonstrated less attention in the learning and usage of new words as they considered language learning only for its academic role, neglecting the social role of language. They forgot the newly learned vocabularies due to the lack of attention and interest they attached to the language learning process. Below are their words:

“...for second semester ... I felt like I got a lot of Chinese words, grammar, how to speak and express in Chinese but after that class, I forgot all...” (Natpa).

“...when I came ...I was interested in learning Chinese language, but I came to learn that it ...not really useful in my academic or working life...to me English is more beneficial than Chinese language...” (Asha).

The implication of this is that, those who paid much attention to listening skills had an opportunity to increase vocabularies (input) and improve their output. Those who placed much interest on the academic role of the language and neglected the social role of the language paid less attention on learning and practising new vocabularies and gave little concentration to Chinese language learning. Even what they got from class or through interaction with Chinese students was not processed permanently in their memories, to be recalled and used later.

5.1.6 Challenges in Learning Chinese Language

Learning Chinese language is not free from challenges for international students. Challenges that emerged from participants are the feeling of shyness to speak non-standard Chinese language,

limitation of time for practice, as well as difficulty in pronunciations and listening skills. Below are their words, regarding this:

“...I was a little bit shy ... because of the poor pronunciations, of course people will laugh at you if you are not pronouncing well. They laughed at me too back in those days ...now they are telling me...your Chinese language is good...” (Ally).

“...when you make some mistakes, sometimes they are trying to correct you but in a way that makes you feel embarrassed...” (John).

“...we are very busy at the lab... sometimes they teach me some words ...although I forget easily, may be because I don't have the time to practice...” (Surat).

These challenges have implications in the process of learning language. After one acquires or learns a lot of vocabularies (input), but has limited opportunities of practices (output), there is usually a decline in language proficiency. Limited time for practice, limits the oral and written conversation which would have provided the opportunity for negotiation for a learner to notice the deficit in vocabulary, sound, and grammar.

5.1.7 Information from observation

The Chemistry laboratory has some rooms which are allocated to students, depending on the supervisor. Thus students of one supervisor may share a specific room separate from others. About two to five students work under a supervisor. Two of the observed rooms had 3 students, and the other had 4 students. Each of the rooms had one International student. There were some cases of communication barrier due to the limitations of language between one international student and her supervisor, and between one International student and Chinese students who did not speak English proficiently. Body language was used to negotiate meaning and convey information in such situations. In addition, one of the Chinese students who could speak English assisted in translation of information between one of the international students and her supervisor. Both languages, English and Chinese were used although to a varied degree, as English proved to be dominant. This information is in line with the results obtained from the interview sessions.

6 Discussion, implication and conclusion

The main objective of this case study was to ascertain the influence of interactions between Chinese students and international students who were doing their majors with English instruction at SN University in relation to learning Chinese language. Main themes that emerged are; the level of Chinese language mastery of the respondents ; strategies used to cope with language and communication barriers; perceived role of interaction in learning Chinese language; language of communication with Chinese students (English versus Chinese); attention to Chinese language learning; as well as challenges in learning Chinese language. All these themes are related and explain the influence of interaction among international students (English instruction programs) as well as with Chinese students in relation to Chinese language learning.

Emerged themes suggest that language learning is not a onetime event; rather it is a process of interrelated components which are input and output. Input involves activities that support reading and listening skills of language through which a learner is exposed to grammatical rules and sounds of the targeted language. Output is the learner's production of language through speaking or writing, after being exposed to the targeted language. So, input and output work together to provide

opportunities for meaning creation in language learning, through engaging in written and verbal exchanges with native speakers or experts of the targeted language. Through the exercise of input and output, a learner receives feedback from interlocutor which requires attention for the successful modification of meaning to take place.

Based on the responses from participants involved in this interview, they all had interactions with Chinese students in different situations, however, that had little influence on most of them in learning Chinese language. Among the 14 participants, only four of them had good command of oral Chinese language and they were those who confirmed to have forced themselves to speak Chinese language(output), and tried their best to negotiate meaning from native speakers' through the use of body language and utterances as well as built up their vocabulary(input) through the whole process. This is similar to what was reported by Swain (1995), when she found out that, learners in their effort to understand second language learning are pushed in their production and may try out new forms to modify their language (p.559).

The explanation for the remaining nine participants who revealed that they had poor level of proficiency in Chinese language in addition to limited vocabularies and oral comprehension, can be attributed to the limited practice of the targeted language. They have limited conversational interaction with Chinese students in Chinese language, as they confirmed that approximately 70% of their communication with Chinese students was in English; and as a result they could compose only few simple sentences which were not sufficient for them to be involved in daily conversations. This is related to what Mackey (1999) reported that, a learner who actively participated in conversational interactions in a targeted language would receive the most benefit than those who did not participate; and the same impression was shared by Ellis (2008) that if learners do not receive exposure to the targeted language they will hardly acquire it.

On the other hand, the situation was rather complicated with regards to the reading and writing skills, as only one of all the participants confirmed to have had the ability to read and write Chinese characters. This reaffirms what was reported by Ye (2011) and Jiang and Cohen (n.d) that, Chinese character reading and writing are the most difficult skills for international students to learn. This implies that, the mastery of reading and writing skills demands more time for practice and memorization of those characters rather than depending on oral conversational interaction. This compares with what was reported by Ellis (1991) that, conversational interaction may facilitate the acquisition of only some structures but not others. The situation might be the same even to other languages which do not use Roman alphabet (Board of Education Commonwealth of Virginia, 2014).

According to Wang and Castro (2010), input in language learning is essential but not sufficient in language learning as output is required for learners to notice the gap between their inter language and target language. From this case study, it is obvious that most of the participants (10), lacked practice for establishing a connection between what they learned in Chinese language class (initial input), with real conversational situation (limited output). They confirmed to have used English at large when communicating with Chinese students. As a result, the proficiency of their Chinese language remains low, to the extent that it was difficult for them to communicate effectively in different situations.

The situation was different for four of the participants who confirmed to have interacted a lot with Chinese students, using Chinese language. This implies that they established a strong link between input and output through conversational interactions. This is in line with what was reported by Liming (1990) that output strengthens learners' awareness of their utterances and helps to assimilate comprehensible input in conversation. The same was suggested by Long (1996) that, interaction with native speakers is believed to provide the linguistic environment necessary to facilitate connections between input and output in a targeted language. That kind of interaction pushes learners to produce output which leads to linguistic development and improves accuracy over time (Nobuyoshi & Ellis, 1993).

This study recommends that, international students should use Chinese language in their daily communication to establish a link between input and output in order to improve their Chinese language. They should also bear in mind the differences between Chinese language and other languages in terms of reading and writing skills and thus invest time to practice those skills, because they are important for one's language mastery and for effective communication.

Not only that, but also language learners should have a clear goal for language learning and try to use the available linguistic environment opportunity to learn the targeted language. Lastly, international students should consider the social role of language and pay much attention to Chinese language learning for the smooth transition and adaptation to life in China.

For further research, there is a need to study the issues of motivation in the learning of Chinese language for international students of full English instruction programs. Factors affecting their motivation and interest in learning the language need to be revealed and addressed accordingly. In addition there is also a need to study the belief that international students hold regarding the learning of Chinese language.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that oral and written conversational interaction with native or proficient speakers in a targeted language provides a chance for the language learner to be familiar with the sound of the target language, rules of the target language and to have the time to practice the target language. Thus, a purposeful conversational interaction in Chinese language provides more opportunities in oral Chinese language learning, as the situation is different for the reading and writing skills, which require more in depth practice and drill in reading and writing.

Both input and output in written and oral forms are essential for the Chinese language learner to acquire the four skills of language. Output helps to modify input through meaning negotiation for which attention is required for learning new vocabularies and storing them for long term retention for further or future use. Input and output are interlinked to facilitate language acquisition. With this in mind, a language learner should have a clear goal about how to maximize the available opportunities in order to improve his or her speaking, listening, reading and writing of the target language when interacting with native or proficient speakers.

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