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Further Evidence for the Developmental Stages of Language Learning and Processability

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Few, if any, researchers would deny the existence of the developmental stages of language learning. However, there are questions about the applicability and the importance of the stages in pedagogy. Up to this point, these questions regarding the ESL (English as a second language) stages have never been addressed in a Japanese post-secondary educational context. This study is the only one of its kind to measure the developmental stages of a group of Japanese university students and to provide the learners with intensive instruction to see how much/if any changes are made to their interlanguage due to the instruction. As predicted by Pienemann's Teachability Hypothesis (1992), only the learners who had met the prerequisites for instruction could acquire the grammatical points which were instructed. The results of this study point to the need among TESOL (Teaching English as a Second or Other Language) instructors to teach students only slightly above their current language levels.

Keywords: developmental stages, Teachability Theory, grammar, SLA (second language acquisition)

Introduction

Developmental Stages of Second Language

SLA (second language acquisition) research suggests overwhelmingly that language learning is a developmental process, which cannot be consciously controlled or predicted by teachers or learners (J. Willis & D. Willis, 2001, p. 179).

There is a large amount of evidence supporting the notion that language learning for speakers of any language is systematic, irrespective of whether it is a first or second language (Pienemann, 1995, 1998; Heinsch, 1994; Doughty, 2003; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). The grammar and syntax of second languages seem to develop in stages which are compatible to first language acquisition order. Although grammar is but one component of language learning, it is a fundamental one. Contributions to the notion that language learning is systematic have come from research conducted in various fields, such as speech processing, SLA, the study of language change and variation, and the study of pidgin and Creole languages. While these studies showed that some amount of variation occurred in language learning, they strongly pointed to the idea that language is learned in sequences, which have been defined by Johnston (1985) as "developmental stages".

According to the definition of developmental stages, it follows that new linguistic information can only be acquired if the prerequisites have been met beforehand. Such linguistic information focuses primarily on grammatical knowledge, with word order forming only one part of such knowledge. In short, language is a

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series of building blocks.

Applicability of Developmental Stages

Notwithstanding the skepticism of some people (such as Sheen, 2000; O'Neill, 2002), the existence of developmental stages in the acquisition of foreign language has been widely accepted. However, one of the most debated aspects of SLA in the past 25 years has been the applicability of the developmental stages to second language teaching (Heinsch, 1994; Pienemann, 1995; Devitt & Sterelny, 1999; Jansen, 2005). Pienemann (1984; 1989; 1998; 2005; 2007), is a pioneer in this field.

While information concerning a learner's developmental stage as defined by Pienemann allows us to know whether individual learners have acquired the relevant processing prerequisites (that is, the learner has overcome the maturational and frequency constraints of his/her current stage and can now advance to the following stage), it further hints to instructors that the stages, as linked to grammatical knowledge, serve as guides concerning which grammatical stage to address. That is, following the creation of a well-tested and evaluated set of developmental stages, Teachability Theory allows instructors of language to know not only what grammatical elements to teach, but also when teaching them, assuming that the current stage of the learner is known (Pienemann, 1984; 1987; 1989; 1992). It should be noted that some critics believe that the developmental stages created by Pienemann only deal with syntax and morphology, and therefore, only give a partial view of acquisition and should not be applicable to pedagogy (for example, Hudson, 1993; Bachman, 1990; Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982). While it may be true that the developmental stages only provide a partial view of language acquisition, it does not mean that they should be ignored (Doman, 2007). An understanding of the developmental stages provides invaluable knowledge into how languages are learned and how to gear materials to the levels of learners when they are better equipped to accept new language patterns into their interlanguage.

Developmental Stages of English

In the original study of German word order, five developmental stages involving three basic rules were concluded. After GSL (German as a second language) stages had been established, developmental stages for ESL were proposed on the basis of Johnston's (1985) study of ESL (English as a second language) development and variation. Johnston (1985) claimed to have established six developmental stages for English, which are detailed in Table 1.

It can be seen from Table 1 that learners first acquire single words and formulae in stage 1. In stage 2, they can organize these words into clauses and form simple sentences using the canonical order of SVO (Subject + Verb + Object). In this stage, morphology is also introduced into learners' interlanguages. These include free morphemes such as possessive pronouns and bound morphemes, such as past "-ed" and "-ing" vebs. Plural nouns can also be formed in stage 2. At stage 3, agreement between words in the noun phrase is noticed. The possessive "-s" and the plural "-s" are introduced at this time. The syntax of the clause begins to develop in the fronting of words, such as in adverb fronting and "do" fronting. At stage 4, learners are able to move beyond SVO structures and can form questions with verb-subject word order. At stage 5, wh-questions are acquired. Negation is also acquired at this stage. As subject-verb agreement is developed, the acquisition of third person singular nouns is possible. At the sixth and final stages, learners can produce inversion which enables them to use statement word order in subordinate clauses.

Drawing upon evidence from the L1 (English), Pienemann (1995) posited canonical order the word order

of sentences in a language, such as SVO (Subject + Verb + Object) for English, SOV (Subject + Object + Verb) for Japanese, and VSO (Verb + Subject + Object) for Arabic (Bever & Townsend, 1979), and initialization/finalization adverb presupposing (Neisser, 1967) as axiomatic principles in the processing system. He then hypothesized that L2 learners develop through gradual and increasing complex modifications of these principles, resulting in a series of observable developmental stages, definable by the appearance of linguistic rules in strict order. They also consider that once a learner's stage has been determined, teaching is possible and productive. Instruction will be beneficial if it focuses on structures from "the next stage" (Pienemann, 1998, p. 25). In such assumptions, Pienemann (1998) defined not only what should be taught, but also when it should be taught.

Table 1

Developmental Stages of English Word Order

Stage	Syntax	Example	Morphology	Example
6	Cancel inversion	I asked if he could come home.		
5	Do2nd question = question with auxiliary "does" after a wh-word	Why does she read?	3SG-s = Third person singular "-s" morpheme is placed on the verb	She drives a red car.
	Aux2nd = question with an auxiliary other than "do" after a wh-word	Where are you going?	Adverb-ly	Ran slowly
	NegDo2nd = negative statement in which the auxiliary "do" agrees with the subject	He does not like it.		
4	Yes/No inversion = yes/no question in which there is inversion of the auxiliary and the subject	Have you seen her?		
	Copula Inversion = question with the copula verb "to be"	-Is she at home? -Where is she?		
3	Fronting = an adverb, wh-word, noun phrase or "do" is placed at the beginning of a sentence	-Today he stays here. -Where you go? -Cheese I like. -Do she go home?	Possessive "-s" = the -s morpheme is placed on the possessor noun	Pat's cat
	Neg + V = a negator is placed before the verb	She doesn't ask.	Plural agreement = the plural "-s" morpheme is placed on the noun in a phrase with a plural determiner	Two cats
2	SVO? = the word order of subject, verb and object or complement as a question, i.e., with rising intonation	You want coffee?	Past "-ed" = the past "-ed" morpheme is placed on the verb Possessive pronoun or adjective	-She played (a game). -My mother came to Australia.
	SVO = the word order of subject, verb and object or complement as a statement	I want coffee	Pl"-s" = the plural "-s" morpheme is placed on the noun	The flowers are nice.
1	Single words and formulae	-Hello. -How are you?		

Note. Source: Pienemann, 1995.

PT (Processability Theory)

PT provides a wider theoretical context for the Teachability Hypothesis (Pienemann, 1984; 1992; 1998). PT predicts that stages of acquisition cannot be skipped through formal instruction and that instruction is only beneficial when it is targeted at structures from the next stage of the developmental sequence (Pienemann, 1998; 2005; 2007). Since all processing procedures underlying a structure are required for the processing of it, then

the learner would simply not be equipped to produce a structure that they were unable to process. These are the underpinnings of the PT, under which the Teachability Theory is a subset (Pienemann, 2005).

In PT, Pienemann (1998; 2005) claimed that learners proceed through five stages of processing before development is complete. The stages were created from previous work in processing combined with principles of LFG (lexical functional grammar): (1) lemma access; (2) the category procedure; (3) the phrasal procedure; (4) the S-procedure; and (5) the subordinate clause procedure (if applicable).

In stage 1, lemma access, a particular lemma (the meaning of a word plus its syntactic information) in the lexicon is activated. Only single words or short strings will be produced by learners at this stage, and the learner must rely largely on non-linguistic strategies, such as gestures and facial expressions, for communication. No information about syntactic category (noun, verb, etc.) is available at this stage, so that it is impossible for the learner to create phrases. No matching of features (such as subject-verb agreement) is possible at this point.

In stage 2, each lemma can be associated with categorical information (noun, verb, etc.). At this stage, learners may map words directly from conceptual structure into strings, but, because phrasal categories are not yet available, these strings are "flat", i.e., there is no hierarchical structure. The result is that all strings will follow canonical word order. At this stage, PT can only operate on elements within a single phrasal category, since nothing else is available. For instance, featural information can be exchanged regarding plurals and possessive pronouns.

In stage 3, the category information stored with each lemma (e.g., noun) can serve as the head to a phrasal category (e.g., noun phrase). At this stage, there is now enough memory space to perform operations. However, only operations which affect structures at the beginnings, and ends of sentences are possible, because these positions are salient and universal, that is, they require no language-specific processing and therefore, little memory space. At this state, phrases are available for the exchange of featural information, so that an adverb or other element (such as an auxiliary) can be moved to the beginning of a sentence.

Stage 4 introduces sentence-internal operations, however, only operations that are "anchored" by initial or final positions will be possible, due to working memory limitations. Morphological marking may be present for the first time at this stage, but it must be local (within a phrase), for example, articles may be present, but agreement marking will not, and word order should be target-like.

In stage 5, complete sentence-internal operations are possible, in fact, linguistic processing has become automatized enough to provide plenty of working memory space for all necessary operations to take place, including those that operate between phrases. At this stage, all morphological marking should be present, even when it requires relations between phrases, as agreement does marking.

In stage 6, a procedure is added that applies only to subordinate clauses. This procedure will operate differently cross-linguistically. In English, it operates on wh-noun clauses. Note that in English these clauses use wh-words without the usual auxiliary inversion that takes place in questions. Because this procedure requires "canceling" a procedure acquired earlier, it is thought to be particularly difficult for learners. Note that being at the final stage implies that all the other stages have been passed through, that is, there is no way to miss a step or backtrack.

This proposal is not uncontroversial. Some researchers have argued that the order of acquisition for a variety of languages fails to follow the predicted hierarchy. For instance, Alhawary (2003) demonstrated that the acquisition of noun-adjective agreement and the acquisition of subject-verb agreement by English-speaking

learners of Arabic do not follow the order of development predicted by PT. Similarly, Farley and McCollam (2004) argued that learners of Spanish produce forms in a somewhat different order than that is predicted by the theory. Dewaele and Veronique (2001) also argued that PT is not adequate to account for the acquisition of gender in learners of French. Their study shows that intra-clausal gender marking is not acquired earlier than inter-clausal gender marking, contradicting the theory.

Another issue raised by researchers is that PT, while making generally correct predictions, may still be inadequate to account for many aspects of acquisition. This conclusion is reached by Glahn et al. (2001), who analyzed the production of adjectives and subordinate clauses in second language learners of Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish. Glahn et al. (2001) concluded that their data do not directly contradict processability. Yet, at the same time, they argued that there are other factors which need to be considered to account for learners' development, such as discourse and conceptual factors.

The Significance of Relative Clauses

Relative clauses were chosen as the grammatical points for instruction for this study, as a greater number of students generally seemed to be using them incorrectly based on observation (Doman, 2009). A relative clause is a subordinate clause that modifies a noun. For example, the noun phrase "the man who wasn't there" contains the noun "man", which is modified by the relative clause "who wasn't there". In many languages, relative clauses are introduced by a special class of pronouns called relative pronouns. In the previous example, "who" is a relative pronoun. We use relative clauses to provide extra information. This information can either define something (defining clause), or provide unnecessary, but interesting, added information (non-defining clause). Relative clauses can be introduced by:

(1) a relative pronoun: who (whom), which, that, and whose;

(2) no relative pronoun, but starting with "A";

(3) where, why and when instead of a relative pronoun.

Using relative clauses frequently causes considerable concern for non-native speakers of English—so much, so that they are often avoided completely (Doman, 2009). However, they exist for an important reason. In English you cannot pre-modify important nouns very much—that is, you cannot place complex modifications before the noun. You have to put such modifications after the noun, and that is what relative clauses are for. In some languages, like Japanese, you can pre-modify a noun in an extensive and complex way but this is not possible in English as examples in Table 2 show:

Table 2

English vs. Japanese Word Order

Key noun	Relative clause	Main clause
People	who live in downtown areas	are often very poor.
The Japanese transliteration of this would be:		
Adjectival clause	Key noun	Complement
In downtown areas living	people	often very poor.

Thus, the basic difference regarding relative clauses in English and Japanese is that in English the relative clause is usually placed after the noun that it describes, while the Japanese equivalent must be put before it. This requires Japanese students learning English to think backwards in the way that they structure their sentences in English.

A second problem which Japanese speakers face when using relative clauses in English is the use of the relative pronoun. There is no relative pronoun in Japanese, but there are a variety in English (such as “that”, “which”, “who”, etc.). In addition, the English relative pronoun is often deletable in many cases when it is in the initial clause, is the object of a verb, or is in a stranded position. However, Japanese feel unsure about when to use it, according to personal correspondence with many Japanese English teachers.

Methodology

Research Question

The following question was explored in this research: Is instruction that is targeted to the next stage in L2 learner’s development more effective than instruction which targets a more advanced stage?

Participants

The learners observed in this study are the first-year Japanese university students at a women’s college in Tokyo. Thirty-three students in two intermediate conversation classes were initially observed and interviewed. Among those, 20 students were chosen for this study. The students were chosen based on the variety of the stages that they were profiled at and their willingness to participate in observed instruction. They are all between the ages of 18 to 24 and are studying in the Department of International Culture at the college. All have acquired English exclusively through formal instruction. None of them have been exposed to English in an immersion setting or have the advantage of using English frequently outside the classroom. Therefore, they lack the benefit of naturalistic learning. The fact that the participants are learning English in a formal setting allows research into the applicability of the developmental stages into classroom learning, as most of the evidences prior to this for the developmental stages has come from learning English naturalistically.

Based on the results of a TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) Bridge test administered at the beginning of the school year, the learners were streamlined into the middle among three groups. They had been studying English since junior high school (approximately six years), and had been taught English mainly by Japanese teachers of English, although sometimes with the assistance of a native English-speaking assistant language teacher. However, there is a point that needs to be mentioned here, and it is the fact that all of them speak Japanese at home with their parents and at school with their friends. English is a foreign language for them. Japan is an EFL situation. This is opposed to the backgrounds where most of others researches on the developmental stages have taken place, largely in ESL situations.

Research Method

Relative clauses fall into the developmental stage 6. As can be seen from Table 3, among the 20 learners, 13 of the learners were at stage 5, which indicated that they should be ready for acquiring stage 6 sequencing through instruction and practice. Five of the learners were tested into stage 4, indicated that they should not acquire the language, according to the Teachability Hypothesis (Pienemann, 2003), no matter how much instruction or drilling was done. On the other hand, two of the students showed that they had acquired relative clauses, and so the purpose of using them in this study was to see if the instruction had any negative effect on them. Acquisition of relative clauses was determined by the two learners using expressions with relative clauses accurately and fluently.

The 20 students were given practice and instruction in relative clauses for one week, one hour per day. The

instruction was intensive, as Ellis (2005) found that there were both pros and cons regarding intensive grammar instruction.

Table 3

Learners and Their Errors

Errors student	A: Omission of RP	B: Wrong RP	C: Overuse of object pronouns	D: Overuse of subject pronouns	E: Incorrect usage after pronouns	F: Wrong use of "that"	Total	Percentage (%)
A	3	2	2	2	1	0	10	10
B	2	0	1	1	1	1	6	6
C	2	2	0	0	1	0	5	5
D	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
E	3	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
F	0	1	2	0	1	0	4	4
G	1	1	1	1	0	1	5	5
H	2	2	1	1	1	0	7	7
I	1	0	2	1	0	1	5	5
J	2	2	0	0	2	1	7	7
K	4	1	1	0	0	0	6	6
L	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	3
M	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	3
N	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
O	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2
P	3	2	1	1	0	0	7	7
Q	1	1	0	0	1	1	4	4
R	2	1	1	1	0	0	5	5
S	2	2	1	0	0	0	5	5
T	4	2	0	3	0	0	9	9
Total	36	21	14	11	9	5	100	100
Percent (%)	36	21	14	11	9	5	100	100

Note. RP = relative pronoun.

Results

Instruction involved the following exercises: On day one, students were given an online test on relative clauses found at http://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/grammar/relative-clauses/exercises?07. This online test was chosen because it provided a range of contents for the students to use relative clauses in. There were 10 questions on the test, and the students were allowed 10 minutes to answer all of them. Prior to the test, no explanation was given by the teacher about relative clauses, but students were allowed to read the introductory information on relative clauses which accompanied the online test. Also, students could check their answers with the correct answers given on the website and read the rationale behind the correct answer.

According to Table 3, the results of the online test showed that students in this study answered 3−10 of the questions correctly, with 6.7 being the average for the number of correct questions. As expected, students D and N who tested into stage 6 answered all of the questions correctly. For the five students at stage 4 (A, J, K, P, and T), the average was much lower than that of the group, only 3.8 correct answers. Following the test, as mentioned, students were allowed to study the correct answers provided by the website and were given time to ask the author individually about items which they did not understand. Most of them realized before the end of

the exercise that the test was dealing with only relative clauses, and they were, therefore, able to concentrate on their knowledge of this grammar point.

Instruction on the second day involved the following: (1) detailing some examples of relative clauses on the board and initiating discussion about their differences; (2) having the students to finish the sentences for the examples written on the board to try to find their differences; and (3) assigning a worksheet for them to complete with their partners.

In the first part of the instruction, the following examples were written on the board with a short explanation about what type of cases each one represented in the sentence:

(1) The girl that came (subject);
(2) The girl that visited me (direct object);
(3) The girl that we talked to (indirect object);
(4) The girl that he sat beside (object of preposition);
(5) The girl whose mother died (genitive);
(6) The girl that he is smarter than (comparative).

The students were then directed to try to complete the sentences in their own words. It was obvious from the oral examples that students could comprehend how to use the relative clauses as the subject of the sentences, even though they often forgot to input verbs or necessary prepositions of location after the stemmed sentences to complete them. However, it became increasingly difficult for the students to make new examples as they moved down the list. Many of them tried to use the same sentences which other students in the class made, except by changing a word or two. They did not seem to understand the different functions that a relative clause has. Therefore, for further practice, they were allowed to work with a partner in completing the worksheet, so that they could work on being more creative in creating sentences using relative clauses. When it came to checking the worksheet, it became easier to determine exactly which kinds of errors the students were making with the relative clauses. Errors fell into the following categories:

(1) Error type A: omission of the relative pronoun;
(2) Error type B: wrong relative pronoun;
(3) Error type C: overuse of object pronouns, such as “them” or “it”;
(4) Error type D: overuse of the subject pronoun, such as after the word “who”;
(5) Error type E: incorrect usage after pronouns;
(6) Error type F: wrong use of “that”.

A variety of answers was typed up into a “find the errors” worksheet which was distributed on the third day of instruction and which occupied the entire class. Students had to identify the correct answers among the list and to correct the errors of the ones that were incorrect. They were then asked to write a correct sentence from the examples provided without looking at the paper, but solely using the oral clues given by the teacher. An example of this would be from number one, “Tom Cruise”, “actor”, and “is cute”. Information gathered from days two and three using the worksheet provides us with the data in Table 3, based on the first 100 errors found.

From Table 4, it can be seen that students in the lower developmental stages performed the worst on the worksheet. That is, students in stage 4—referred to as participants A, J, K, P, and T—accounted for 39% of the total number of errors. The two more advanced students—D and N—only had one error between them. Students grouped into stage 5, the majority of the participants, showed through this activity that they were on

the right path to acquiring the relative clause, a stage 6 function.

Table 4

Participants' Developmental Stages Prior to Instruction

Participants \ Stage	1	2	3	4	5	6
A				X		
B					X	
C					X	
D						X
E					X	
F					X	
G					X	
H					X	
I					X	
J				X		
K				X		
L					X	
M					X	
N						X
O					X	
P				X		
Q					X	
R					X	
S					X	
T				X		

Focusing on the errors the participants were making allows us to see how and when they might better acquire relative clauses. PT (Pienemann, 2005) is about emergence and mastery. However, before students can master a grammar point, they must first go through an IL (interlanguage) period of using the point incorrectly. Fluency and accuracy cannot be expected upon initial contact with a new form, thus having students make errors, having them noticing the errors, and finally having them correct the errors which are part of the acquisition process.

On the fourth day, students were involved in one activity combining two sentences to make one connected by a relative clause and an activity with cards that had to be arranged to make correct sentences using a relative clause. Both exercises were not so difficult for the students to complete with accuracy, but students seemed to have difficulty in duplicating the sentences orally at random request by the teacher without looking at the papers or cards. An example of the first activity required the students to combine sentences like "Bob is my best friend" and "Bob is the man standing over there". The second exercise had students to make 10 sentences using an arrangement of the following information printed onto cards and distributed to each pair of participants. It was much like a substitution drill.

Table 5

Exercise for Practicing Relative Pronouns

the teacher	scolded	the students	who had skipped class
the president	addressed	the citizens	who attended the debate
the police	arrested	the man	who stole the money
the nurse	confronted	the patient	who had not taken the medicine

This exercise (see Table 5) gave students the opportunity to practice the form of the relative pronoun "who" in the subject and in the object position. They were easily able to come up with many interesting combinations. Due to the ease of the activities and the inability to measure the students' abilities since they were working with partner, no statistical data was able to be accumulated on this particular day.

The review and follow-up practice are on the fifth day. In the first half of the class, students practiced in pairs making their own original sentences using relative clauses orally. In the second half, they were told to write a paragraph on "the most important person to them", trying to use as many relative clauses as possible. Data were gathered from the material from the second half of the class. It showed that on average students attempted to use only 3.4 relative clauses in their 30-minute guided writing. Among the 3.4 relative clauses, 3.1 of them were used correctly, suggesting that the instruction had been helpful to the majority of the students. Examples of some of the errors are as follows:

(1) My mother is someone that I love a lot;
(2) She gave me the watch which I am wearing it now;
(3) My cousin lives in San Diego, which located in California.

Data Analysis

The first assessment of the participants' acquisition of relative clauses was given two weeks after instruction ended, while the second assessment was given approximately one month after instruction. Assessments at these periods should provide us with some insight into the significance of this study on short- and medium- term acquisition.

The assessment procedure involved a one-on-one interview with the instructor, with a teaching assistant entering the interview data into the Rapid Profile (Pienemann, 2003) program simultaneously. Questions were generated around personal information and pictures provided by the instructor showing people involved in various activities, ranging from playing tennis to dancing at a disco. The elicited responses allowed the students the chance to provide a rich supply of language, including a large number of opportunities to use the relative clause, which was the focus of this experiment. The results of the assessments showed that targeted teaching had had an effect on learners who had been identified as being at the appropriate stage to be receptive to it.

The assumption behind this study was that students could only acquire language that they were ready for. It was predicted that participants lacking the prerequisites for acquiring the new grammar pattern chosen for this study, relative clauses, would fail to acquire it, while those who had fulfilled the prerequisites would be able to incorporate the new language successfully into their interlanguage. This prediction was strongly confirmed by the results.

Of the 20 participants, five tested into developmental stage 4, 13 into stage 5, and two into stage 6. The two students (D and N) appeared to not have been affected by the experiment of focus on form instruction on the acquisition of relative clauses since they had already appeared to have acquired this grammar point into their English. Nine out of the students at stage 5 not only acquired relative clauses, but also moved into stage 6 by the end of the second assessment (whereas only five had done so after the first assessment). The remaining four students at stage 5 seemed to have benefited from the form-focused instruction, showing slight evidence of some usage of relative clauses in the language that they produced during the assessments. However, the gains were not large enough for them to move from stage 5 to stage 6, the last of Pienemann's developmental stages on word order in English. Finally, none of the students at stage 4 (participants A, J, K, P, and T) was able to

move across the stages nor to acquire the language into their long-term interlanguage during the second assessment. Three of these students did show some short-term resilience towards the acquisition of relative clauses, but these same effects were not demonstrated during the long-term assessment.

Implications of Study

This study has several implications of the developmental stages for classroom teaching. Here, the author would like to offer two suggestions.

First, teachers should become familiar with the developmental stages and consider each of the stages of their learners. Although it is time consuming to interview every individual in the class during the first few weeks of the term, it would be beneficial to the long-term success of the instruction and class as a whole. Of course, in one class, learners will be categorized in a variety of stages (from one to six, even though most immediate or advanced learners cluster around the sixth developmental stage). That is a problem that remains with school financing for streamlining classes and trying to place students in appropriate groups. However, as the tests used for streamlining (in-house placement tests or TOEIC Bridge tests) in the context under consideration are only written tests, they fail to consider the students' oral abilities. Therefore, if an interview component like Rapid Profile was used, the students could be placed more in the same developmental stage groups.

Second, teachers should gear their grammar teaching lessons to students at certain "$i + 1$" levels, where i serves as the current language level. Since budgetary constraints often do not allow students to be placed with others in the same developmental stages, then teachers should measure the developmental stages of each group of their learners on their own. This will allow them to know which students are ready for the acquisition of certain points and which are not.

Limitations

Only 20 students participated in this study. The first problem here exists in the sheer lack of number of participants. In order for any conclusive evidence to be added to the body of research on the developmental stages and for using focus on form to more effectively advance the participants' stages to more advanced ones, then more subjects need to be used. Also, it would be helpful if the subjects were taken from a variety of university contexts across Japan, not simply from one university setting of only female students. As Poole (2005, p. 10) said, "Before wide-reaching conclusions about focus on form instruction can be made, more of such studies need to be done using learners across proficiency levels and in multiple instructional settings". Randomness and diversity would have shown that the results found in this experiment were more universal across the entire country of Japan.

Second, a control group not receiving focus on form instruction was not used. A control group is necessary in any research dealing with the effectiveness of one teaching method over another. Had a control group been utilized, then the results from this study would have been seen as more valid. The control group would have shed light on how much acquisition could be been attained even without form focused instruction over an intensive period of one week.

Third, there is the issue of the length of time of the study. The participants in study one were profiled before and after a period of intensive instruction. One set of post-tests was given two weeks after the intensive one-week instruction ended. The final post-tests were given one month after instruction. However, if we

question the long-term acquisition of the participants, then a more longitudinal study would be called for. One month is not an accurate amount of time to determine if short-term, nevertheless long-term acquisition had taken place. As Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) stated, such longitudinal studies allow researchers to make generalizations based on a population. This is a major limitation of the first study.

Finally, the students who participated in the study could be more accurately profiled if, according to the premises of Rapid Profile, a second individual (a data entry assistant) was listening to the interviews and simultaneously inputting the students' utterances into the program. This would help to add to the validity and reliability of the study. Also, it would have left the researcher time to elicit more information from the participants, particularly trying to focus on the grammar points of cancel inversion and relative clauses, which were the chosen grammar points for this experiment.

Suggestions for Future Research

The developmental stages are not only an issue in SLA and TESOL. Research on the stages could also be undertaken regarding LOTE (languages other than English) and any conclusions that can be extended to studies in LOTE. Likewise, classroom action research is called for immediately, as teachers are the best resources for what is going on in their classroom. This is an issue which the author hopes to continue in future research as well.

Usage of the premises behind the Teachability Hypothesis can be helpful in teaching students the forms which they are "ready" to incorporate into their interlanguage. A focus on form teaching methodology may be useful in accomplishing this goal. Likewise, materials can be used more efficiently if teachers are to understand the reasoning behind the Teachability Hypothesis. In answering Pienemann's question "Is language teachable?", the results of this study add to the field of knowledge about "what" is teachable as well as "when" it is teachable. This study supplied valuable information to this area of exciting research, and it is hoped that it will play a role in revitalizing debate in ways that will be of benefit to teachers and learners in Japan and beyond.

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