The effect of Chinese ESL learners’ beliefs on their autonomous learning

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Abstract

What beliefs do Chinese learners hold about language learning? What is the effect of these beliefs on their autonomous learning? These are the two questions that this study aims to address. I employed naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to investigate five Chinese ESL learners’ beliefs about language learning and their learning behaviour. A number of instruments (interviews, classroom observations and stimulated recall, learning logs) were used to collect triangulated data over a 12-week period. Following standard procedures of qualitative data analysis, I identified five categories of learners’ beliefs. The results revealed that the beliefs that the learners held were context-specific, reflecting their learning experiences. Some of them were conducive to learning autonomy while others were not. The beliefs influenced the level of the learners’ autonomy. The study suggests that educators should take into account learners’ beliefs when promoting autonomous learning.

Keywords: Chinese learners, autonomy, autonomous learning, learners’ beliefs, self-efficacy, learning behavior

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Most language educators believe that learners should be responsible for their own learning and use opportunities to practise language actively outside the classroom. This paper aims to define learner autonomy and identify the benefits and difficulties of learner autonomy in learning a second language as well as investigate the tendencies of different types of autonomous out-of-class English learning activities Chinese students choose and the reasons for these choices. Beliefs and Out-of-class Language Learning of Chinese-speaking ESL Learners in Hong Kong. Wu Man-fat, Haking Wong. Psychology. The effects of out-of-class use of English on autonomy perception. Ö. Bayat. 2011. Past research on the learning of Chinese learners has shown the importance of taking into considerations contextual influences (e.g. Chen, Lee & Stevenson, 1996). Asian students were found to use language learning strategies (LLSs) which are different from those of other cultural backgrounds (Griffiths, 2003; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985). In the pilot interviews, participants were asked general questions on their use of LLSs. However, participants’ responses showed that they had a very limited understanding of LLSs, and most participants just focused their accounts on a few LLSs such as memorizing. Pilot participants also had difficulties in judging what were regarded as LLSs. What is the effect of these beliefs on their autonomous learning? These are the two questions that this study aims to address. I employed naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to investigate five Chinese ESL learners’ beliefs about language learning and their learning behaviour. A number of instruments (interviews, classroom observations and stimulated recall, learning logs) were used to collect triangulated data over a 12-week period. Following standard procedures of qualitative data analysis, I identified five categories of learners’ beliefs. The results revealed that the beliefs of Asian Students’ beliefs about L2 learning Rao’s study (2002) describes a group of Chinese students who prefer traditional teaching methods to modern ones. Rao administrated a questionnaire to 30 university students in China to investigate their perceptions of communicative activities such as task-based activities and discussions, and non-communicative activities such as audiolingual drills and a grammar rule explanation by the teacher. training about CLT, can only form their beliefs based on their knowledge of L2 learning and teaching. Even so, the teachers have to become aware of this gap and find solutions as this trend would be intensified more as the world becomes smaller. How to develop learner autonomy: 1) Teach the students how to learn Show the students how to learn, teach different study skills and strategies, even simple ones like writing coloured words on papers, highlighting key words, creating mind maps, techniques to remember the words better. Show them the ways they can use course book at home (listening to the tracks and working with transcripts, retelling the stories etc.) Train learners to identify their own preferred learning styles and strategies. While some students like sitting passively, reading or translating, others prefer creating tables an