

Critique on “What Elicited Imitation Can Show Us: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of Longitudinal Changes”

Introduction

“What Elicited Imitation Can Show Us: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of Longitudinal Changes” was first published by *Tesol Quarterly* on 14th February 2021. The thesis is logically well organized and provide sufficient details to support the point that Elicited Imitation(EI) can show us implicit knowledge improvements by analyzing longitudinal changes. The authors clearly articulate the viewpoint and apply both quantitative and qualitative these two scientific methods to present valid arguments and results. However, they have not realized the use of explanatory sequential mixed method in the article.

The first author --Jimin Kahng-- is an assistant professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Mississippi. Her research interests center around issues in second language (L2) speech, including how L2 oral language develops, in what way instruction facilitates the developmental process, and how to assess the development.

Msafiri Otonya ranks the second author, who is a graduate student at the University of Mississippi, working toward a Master’s degree in Modern Languages with an emphasis in Applied Linguistics and TESOL. His research interests lie in the cognitive processes involved in second language acquisition (SLA), phonology, and cross-linguistic influences in SLA.

Both of the authors’ academic backgrounds are related to Applied Linguistics, which provide them concrete linguistics, methodology and pedagogy knowledge of making researches on EI. In the process of presenting the article, they showed excellent professional academic knowledge and the capability of asking and solving research questions.

The research study follows logical steps-- on account of the clearly statement of the purpose of study, accurate definition of the main theory and literature review,

scientific construction of theoretical framework and research methods, and systematic demonstration of data analysis and final results .

Summary

The main theory is Elicited Imitatio (EI), which has long been used in child and adult L2 acquisition to assess knowledge of specific grammatical structures or overall linguistics competence (Naiman, 1974); Hamayan, Saegert & Larudee, 1977; Henning, 1983; Munnich, Flynn& Martohardjono, 1994; Jensen & Vinther, 2003; Campfield & Murphy, 2014; Saeandi 2015). Recent construct validation studies investigating measures of explicit and implicit second language knowledge have provided support for EI task as a measure of implicit linguistic knowledge.(Bowles, 2011; R. Ellis, 2005, 2009a; Erlam, 2006)

The theory and literature of EI have been accurately organized in the first part , from which can perceive that the authors have rich professional knowledge and looks up a large number of documents in this field of study. The study builds on the previous investigations of the EI and the construct validity of EI has been examined by the task designs for showing longitudinal changes.

However, this study differs from the other ones as it moves on research investigating the validity of EI as a measure of implicit second language in five main areas: comprehension, memory, morphology and syntax, phonology, and fluency. And qualitative method has been used to perceive more detailed information of the implicit knowledge improvements.

Thus, through the author's experiment we consider EI as a much-used measurement instrument in applied linguistics, and it is also a reliable and quick assessment of holistic speaking ability and implicit grammar knowledge. Like Many researchers, the authors have the same assumption that if EI taps into receptive and productive oral skills it can serve as a reliable indicator of learners' oral language proficiency, L2 grammar, or implicit language knowledge.

As the “The purpose of this study is to further explore the potential usefulness of EI task in capturing the longitudinal changes in many aspects of second language level through quantitative and qualitative analysis of EI performance before and after studying abroad for 10 months. During this period, learners need to develop second language implicit knowledge through daily second language use.”

This paper analyzed EI performances of 24 participants before and after 10-month study abroad in order to further investigate the potential usefulness of EI tasks in capturing the longitudinal changes of multiple aspects.

The present article describes an elicited imitation developed for assessing the longitudinal changes in many aspect of second language level. It reports a study that during 10 months of studying abroad the learners have developed second language implicit knowledge through daily second language use.

In this study, learners' response to all the language measures were scored in terms of accuracy. For quantitative analysis, participants' responses in the pretest and posttest were transcribed and coded for overall accuracy and the score turns out to be very highly correlated with the accuracy score. After DIALANG tests for vocabulary and grammar, the majority of participants' proficiency level has increased according to statistic analysis. The statistically analysis in the tables significantly helps the reader to rule out the result.

Moreover, the design if comparison analysis in quantitative research studies is seen as a supportive process. In order to obtain what further types of information EI can capture, qualitative focusing on the changes of individual sentences utterance from the aspects of: comprehension, memory, morphology and syntax, phonology, fluency. The analysis of the results has clearly revealed that the in posttest stage the learners become more familiar with formulaic sequences, better memorization of the original sentences, higher correctness in morphology and syntax, and more correctness in pronunciation.

Consequently, if the readers correlate concrete statistic information with examples of qualitative, he will acquire the most comprehensive understanding of the topics.

Evaluation Criteria

From the reader's perspective, the application and construction of the methods are worth of appreciation. The design of methodology almost has achieved both validity and reliability. In general, the steps of data collection and analysis are planned clearly and logically. And the steps are easy to follow, which is beneficial for the researchers who are interested in similar or further study.

On one hand, quantitative study has been well organized in this research and it is a quasi-experimental design according to Robson's classification of research designs. " For quantitative analysis, participants' responses in the pretest and posttest were transcribed and coded for overall accuracy (percentage of repeated words), meaning (1–5; 1 = no delivery of the target message, 5 = full delivery of the target message; see [online Supporting Information](#) for the full scale), and formulaic language (0 = no repetition, 1 = partial repetition, 2 = complete repetition). " Then, for statistic analysis, three EI measures were checked and the testing proves to satisfy the normality assumption.

On the other hand, qualitative research is also used to transcribe the participants language improvements. As it states: “In order to examine what further types of information EI can capture, individuals’ responses in the pretest and posttest were analyzed qualitatively, focusing on their changes. ” In this segment, qualitative research demonstrates detailed changes in five main language areas and each of the five categories is discussed separately, with example responses.

I have scanned issues of EI from the last 5 years, I found that about all the reviews involve quantitative research, or reviews that include both quantitative and qualitative research. While quantitative research was included in many of these papers, qualitative evidence was typically reduced to count or present.

Response

Actually, my argument is Explanatory Sequential Mixed Method design is used. Because if we start with a quantitative phase first followed by a qualitative phase, it is an explanatory sequential approach. The option process of explanatory sequential mixed method is shown in Chart-1. The intent of this design is to have qualitative data help explain quantitative results.

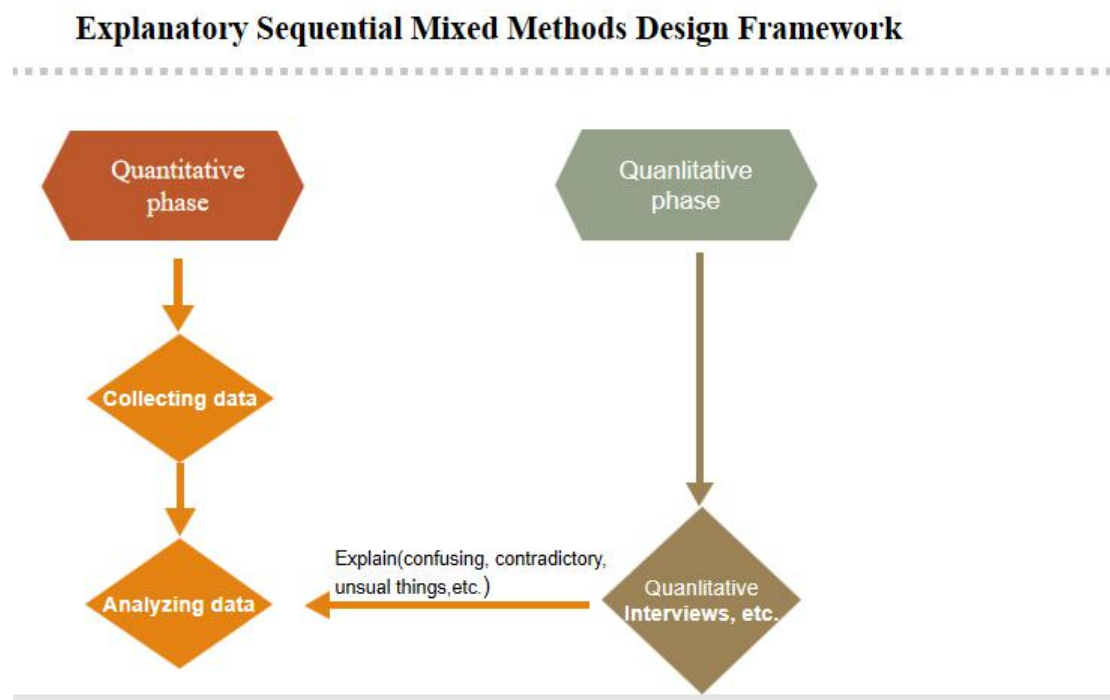


Chart-1

In this study, data has been collected after DIALANG test and Spearman correlation analyses were performed. For statistic analysis, the results show the of the participants different performances between pretest and posttest. All these suggests that after

10-month study abroad there was a significant improvement in language proficiency. Adhered by qualitative research, it works on further details and explanations of the improvements. Both of these two methods get a compromise at the result phase and the qualitative methods further testified the results of quantitative analysis. Thus, explanatory sequential mixed method has achieved all the process and permeated in the whole experiment.

Although, the application of the methods demonstrate the hypothesis well. I would like to suggest an alternative method---Action Research. Action Research (AR) is to identify a problematic' situation or issue that the participants who may include teachers, students, managers, administrators, or even parents-consider worth looking into more deeply and systematically.

If applied in this study, the problems should first be raised:

- 1.What implicit changes does EI show in the performance before and after a 10-month study abroad?
2. Are the measures (i.e., accuracy, meaning, and formulaic language) correlated with participants' proficiency levels?
3. What further types of individual changes can be captured through analysis of EI performance?

The central idea of the action part of AR is to intervene in a deliberate way in the problematic situation in order to bring about changes and , even better, improvements in practice. Importantly, AR research is based on information, which should be collected systematically. The steps of AR are illustrated as follows:

1. Through a short period of observation and investigation, in this study, the researchers can easily obtain first hand information on EI developments by recordings of the learners repetition of provided sentences patterns.
2. When we examine the learners' responses to the test, we may find that they confirmed the questions raised above, it's time to come to the next stage. Reassure the question--after analysis of longitudinal changes, EI can show us implicit language improvements.
3. As the result cooperate with the hypothesis, action plan should be developed and carried out. Continuously collecting oral data, and then analyzing them at certain period of time can show a more steady developments.
4. Finally, evaluation of the results has to be contemplated in order to show if the decision taken were the adequate ones. To conclude, AR testify that EI can be a very valuable way to assess learners language skills, and provide adequate information for the teachers to improve their classroom teaching.

Conclusion

For statistical analysis, the three EI measures were checked for the assumptions of parametric statistical testing. They satisfied the normality assumption; however, as they were strongly correlated with each other, separate paired samples t-tests were conducted instead of a repeated measures MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance). The alpha level was adjusted to 0.017 (0.05/3) by a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. For qualitative analysis, the transcribed responses were analyzed focusing on individual's changes between the pretest and posttest and were categorized based on their common themes.

The results in this research successfully distract from the data and relate back to the literature review. It states that both of the two methods used in the study have showed the expected results of the previous hypotheses. The findings in the article have theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical implications.

Most of the discussions around EI concern about the construct-related validity, and numerous cases focus on whether EI prompts the learners to process the structure and meaning of the sentence. From the article, quantitative results suggest that the participants did comprehension prompts even when they were not able to repeat them. Furthermore, the qualitative results clearly indicate that repetition without comprehension can be very challenging.

The authors also provide pedagogical suggestions. As EI is an effective measure of global L2 proficiency, the analysis of learners' performance can "provide teachers with rich information regarding individual learner's specific developmental levels. Therefore, the authors findings and research method will be very helpful for those teachers who dedicate to teach students in accordance with their aptitude.

The advantages of this EI test is considerable. First of all, practical, it is easily administered and scored. Furthermore, quantitative and qualitative methods suggest the validity and reliability of the study.

Limitations are unavoidable, the sample amount in the research is too small compared with other similar papers. The 24 final chosen participants sample have only be introduced by their sexes, instead of other information related to language competence such as academic background. (Highly educated language learners perform differently from low language learners, which will sure affect the accuracy of the results.)