

Research Article

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Thai tonal confusion patterns in the production of L1 Chinese Zhuang students

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Abstract: This paper examines Thai tonal confusion patterns in two sample groups of Chinese Zhuang Students with the research hypothesis that the experimental group who possess Zhuang language experience as native speakers (C+Z) would have better tonal performance in the process of assigning tone for each lexical word than the control group who have no experience of Zhuang (C-Z). The hypothesis focuses on the C+Z' familiarity of tone split which is a common feature of the tonal system in Tai languages as their L1 positive transfer. The tone split patterns of their L1 and L2 were explored and contrasted in the comparative Gedney's tone box. The C+Z and the C-Z were asked to pronounce 60 words of two wordlists, one of which contained Zhuang-Thai cognates to stimulate the familiarity of their L1 tone split pattern. The findings show that Thai tonal confusion patterns in the two groups present differently. The accuracy rate of the C+Z is significantly higher than that of the C-Z overall and especially in T3 and T5. Their confusion rate on the Zhuang-Thai cognate wordlist was not higher than the non-cognate wordlist. All of the aforementioned indicates the positive transfer of the L1 Zhuang in the students' Thai L2 tonal acquisition.

Keywords: positive transfer; tonal confusion; tone split patterns; Zhuang-Thai cognates

1 Introduction

Tone acquisition is still a popular area of research in both second language acquisition (SLA) and foreign language teaching (FLT) for those who are interested

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