

Title

The effect of visual enhancement on FL learners' recall of German formulaic sequences

Abstract

Foreign language learners are confronted with the enormous task of acquiring a large vocabulary, which does not only consist of individual words but also of standardized lexical chunks. Although recently, research has tended to focus more on the use of formulaic sequences by foreign language learners, e.g. studies into learner corpora (Durrant & Schmitt, 2009; Meunier & Granger, 2007; Waldman & Laufer, 2007), fewer studies have investigated techniques that facilitate the learning process. In this paper, I will explore whether the attention-drawing technique Visual Enhancement has a positive effect on Dutch-speaking learners' recall of the form of German individual words as well as German formulaic sequences when they read a text.

Twenty-eight participants took part in this study. A within-subject design with two variables, each with two levels, was adopted. The first factor is 'type of lexical item': individual word or formulaic sequence. The second variable 'Visual enhancement' also consisted of two levels: +/- bold typeface. This technique was operationalized by putting half of the target items (half of the individual words and half of the formulaic sequences), which appeared in the reading text, in boldface, whereas the other half was not in boldface. The target items were selected on the basis of a pretest. The dependent variable was recall of the form of 24 lexical target items: 12 individual words and 12 formulaic sequences. Recall of these items was tested via one immediate translation (L1 into L2) posttest.

The findings indicate that there was a significant difference in the number of individual words recalled and the number of formulaic sequences recalled. Participants provided the form of more individual words than of formulaic sequences. In addition, the analyses showed that the variable 'visual enhancement' had a significant, positive effect on learners' recall of the target items: items in bold typeface were recalled more often compared to target items not in bold typeface.