Pre-service English teachers' dialogic descriptions of motion: Task effects and trouble sources

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In task-based language teaching (TBLT), teachers interactively provide language input and model task performance. As such, their communicative effectiveness (i.e., clarity and precision) is essential. The nature of pedagogic tasks is held to influence usage of constructions which differ typologically across the L1 and L2, such as motion verb (MV) constructions, in experimental (Cadierno & Robinson, 2009) and classroom (Eskildsen, Cadierno, & Li, 2015) studies. However, further research is needed with a wider range of task designs and language users. This experimental study examined the effects of dialogic task design on pre-service English teachers' use of MVs in a direction-giving map task. The study integrated frameworks from TBLT, cognitive linguistics, and conversation analysis. In a repeated-measures design, 16 pre-service teachers at a Japanese university performed simple and complex tasks in the teacher's role, with a peer in the student's role. These tasks varied in terms of planning time, number of elements, and familiarity of map location. Teacher production was analyzed to answer three research questions: (1) Does task complexity influence MV production (including types and tokens)? (2) Does it influence the amount of repair by the teacher (including student-initiated and teacher-initiated)? and (3) How do repairs shape the discourse within which motion, path, and location are expressed in the L2? Descriptive analyses indicated that while *go* was by far the most frequent MV, a range of others (e.g., *enter, walk, leave*) were also used. Nonparametric tests showed that complex task versions elicited significantly more MV tokens (but not types), with effects ranging from small to large (d = 0.63 to 2.08). Also, complex tasks resulted in significantly more teacher-initiated teacher-repair (but not student-initiated teacher-repair), showing small to medium (d = 0.58 to 1.02) effects. Further analysis of the teacher-initiated self-repairs indicated that trouble sources could often be attributed to the expression of motion (*you can take…you can go up the stairs*), path (*don't go through…between the tree and building*), and location (*go…across the corner uh across the road*). These results illustrate how repairs may provide information about the usage of MV constructions, while serving the teacher's goal of communicative effectiveness. In sum, this paper aims to link usage-based cognitive linguistic approaches and TBLT in order to illustrate the potential convergence of external (task design) and internal (teacher production) influences on discourse in future English as a foreign language classrooms.

References

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