

The Acquisition of Wh-Movement by Adult Chinese Speakers of L2 English

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ABSTRACT

ABSTRACT This study is an attempt to investigate the acquisition of English Wh-Movement by adult learners using two approaches: a written test and a questionnaire. The participants were 42 adult students from Civic Community College and Yuanlin Community College, both in Changhua. The research was conducted during one semester over eighteen weeks. Results show that Taiwanese adult EFL students committed many syntactic errors in the production of English sentences. In an attempt to account for these errors, the study applies the Chomskyan theory of Universal Grammar to the analysis of differences between certain syntactic structures in Chinese and English. Tree diagrams are employed to illustrate different parameter settings in the respective languages. The main findings are: (1) Wh-parameter poses difficulties for adult Chinese Native Speakers learning in a community college. (2) L1 influences adult students syntactic errors made in the production of English interrogative structures. (3) Most adult EFL learners in basic classes want the English instructor to instruct English grammar in their L1. Finally, the thesis offers recommendations and suggestions for reducing the high rate of syntactic errors made by students learning English in Taiwan. Keywords: Chomsky, Universal Grammar (UG), principles and parameters, Wh-movement, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), L1 transfer.

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