

The Acquisition of Mandarin Sentence-Final Particle *ne* (呢) in L1 Cantonese-L2 Mandarin Speakers

Abstract: The sentence-final particle (SFP) *ne* (呢), one of the few Mandarin SFPs with dual projections in the split CP domain (i.e., S.AspP and AttitudeP), has different discourse functions (i.e., denoting progressive aspect and expressing speaker's attitude) (Pan, 2019, 2021). Such unique property gives rise to syntactic and semantic complexities, which may pose acquisition challenges for L2 learners. Therefore, this study investigates the L2 acquisition of Mandarin SFP *ne* by comparing data collected from five L1 speakers in Mainland China and five L2 speakers in Hong Kong SAR. A narrative retelling task using *Frog Goes to Dinner* (Mayer, 1974) and an acceptability judgment task were employed to assess their production and perceived felicity of the SFP *ne* respectively. The results of the two experimental tasks show that L2 Mandarin learners exhibited greater difficulties in acquiring the *ne* denoting progressive aspect (S.AspP) than the one used for indicating speaker's attitude (AttitudeP). The observed acquisition difficulties can be attributed to cross-linguistic differences in the construction of progressive aspect in Cantonese and Mandarin, statistical regularities in the input, as well as to the asymmetrical form-meaning mappings between Mandarin *ne* and its Cantonese counterparts that serve the same discourse functions.

Keywords: L2 acquisition; Mandarin sentence-final particle *ne*; Cross-linguistic influence; Form-meaning mapping

References

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