Does copying idioms foster their recall?”

Stengers Helene, Deconinck Julie en June Eyckmans

This paper describes an experiment that was set up to measure the relative mnemonic effects of enhanced attention to form versus attention to meaning during the acquisition of L2 figurative idioms. Intermediate L2 English students were presented with online exercises on a set of 25 English idioms that they were unfamiliar with. In the first series of exercises, all participants were invited to elaborate on the meaning of the idioms. Afterwards, half of the participants were requested to copy the idioms, the other group of participants was asked to rate the usefulness of the idioms, an activity relying mainly on semantically-oriented processing. Recall was measured after the treatment by means of a gap-fill exercise in which each idiom was presented in context with a keyword missing. The results of the experiment are discussed in light of the levels-of-processing theory (Craik & Lockhart 1972), the transfer appropriate processing theory (TAP)(Morris et al. 1977) and Barcroft’s transfer-of-processing-resources-allocation (TOPRA) model for lexical learning (2000). We also show that cognitive-style variables may enhance or constrain the proposed mnemonic effects.