This study extended Sachs and Polio’s (2007) second experiment. Concurrent verbal reports (think-alouds, TA) were used in their study to measure adult ESL learners’ awareness of the corrections provided and to examine possible effects of reactivity. However, learners in that study thought-aloud in their L2, English, which may have inadvertently affected their conclusions regarding reactivity. The present study investigated the issue of Depth of Processing and the effects of reactivity as a function of think-aloud language, L1 or L2, an issue that has not been previously addressed in the literature. 87 Intermediate and Advanced students of Spanish were randomly assigned to three experimental conditions: reformulation (silent), reformulation + TA in L1 (English), reformulation + TA in L2 (Spanish). At pretest, learners wrote a short story describing a picture prompt. For all learners, a reformulated version of the story was drafted by the researcher, in which errors had been reformulated. At treatment (4 days later), learners were instructed to compare their original short story with the reformulated version and were either silent or thought-aloud during the comparison phase. At posttest (3 days later), learners re-wrote their short stories. As data analyses are being finalized, instances of processing are being categorized into three different levels (shallow, intermediate, deep). Changes in accuracy were measured by counting errors per T-unit in the original story compared to the posttest story. Data analyses so far seem to reveal deeper instances of processing for the advanced group. While no significant effects on reactivity emerged for either the intermediate or advanced groups when comparing TA and silent conditions, advanced learners were better able to take advantage of written corrective feedback.

References:


Keywords: writing, processing, feedback, psycholinguistics.