

The Roles of Input and Output in How to Acquire L2 Vocabulary

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Abstract

This study examines the role of input and output in second language vocabulary acquisition. Through interviews and codes, this article analyzes the influence of different learning styles on vocabulary memory. Based on input and output theory, second language learning can be divided into three processes. A key aspect of learning a second language is understanding discourse and acquiring materials in the foreign language. A second aspect is that second language learners can absorb and internalize input language materials. Furthermore, second language learners can apply their internalized language knowledge and skills to produce products that are in line with English language culture and rules. All three processes are based on the input of language materials. According to output theory developing language ability internally is a time-consuming and challenging process that must be corrected constantly. It is possible to improve word acquisition by providing learners with comprehensible input that is slightly above their current language level ($i+1$). It is crucial that foreign language learners receive input that is understandable (Krashen, 1985; Loschky, 1994). According to the results of this study, rich language input can improve vocabulary comprehension and memory, while active output can facilitate the consolidation and flexible use of vocabulary learned. It is stressed in the study that input and output are complementary in the acquisition of vocabulary. Therefore, both factors should be considered when learning a language to ensure that students learn efficiently.

Keywords

Acquire L2 vocabulary; Input and output; Krashen; Swain.

1. Introduction

This study examines the role of input and output in second language vocabulary acquisition. Through interviews and codes, this article analyzes the influence of different learning styles on vocabulary memory. Based on input and output theory, second language learning can be divided into three processes. A key aspect of learning a second language is understanding discourse and acquiring materials in the foreign language. A second aspect is that second language learners can absorb and internalize input language materials. Furthermore, second language learners can apply their internalized language knowledge and skills to produce products that are in line with English language culture and rules. All three processes are based on the input of language materials. According to output theory developing language ability internally is a time-consuming and challenging process that must be corrected constantly. It is possible to improve word acquisition by providing learners with comprehensible input that is slightly above their current language level ($i+1$). It is crucial that foreign language learners receive input that is understandable (Krashen, 1985; Loschky, 1994). According to the results of this study, rich language input can improve vocabulary comprehension and memory, while active output can facilitate the consolidation and flexible use of vocabulary learned. It is stressed in the study that input and output are complementary in the acquisition of vocabulary. Therefore, both factors should be considered when learning a language to ensure that students learn efficiently.

Globalization and interculturality are causing an increase in the number of people learning second languages. Vocabulary acquisition is the basis of learning English as a second language. Chen and Chung (2008) state that vocabulary learning is regarded as an instrumental component of the learning process of a foreign language since vocabulary includes the basic building blocks of sentences. Language learning is greatly influenced by vocabulary knowledge (Akbarian, 2010). The fact that vocabulary is one of the most crucial components of acquisition of a foreign language has been documented by researchers (Nation & Newton, 1997; Ruutemets, 2005). Even though there has been a long-standing debate on the role of input and output in language acquisition as well as numerous studies comparing the effects of both instructional methods on grammatical acquisition (see Erlam, 2003), very few studies have addressed vocabulary acquisition. In our research, we investigate the following factors: 1. the role of input and output in L2 vocabulary acquisition. 2. Which is more effective for the acquisition of second language words: input or output? In addition, an ESL learner was interviewed in order to learn about how input and output knowledge are related to word learning.

2. Summary of Relevant Theories

Second language acquisition emerged as an independent discipline in the 1970s, and as research proceeded, researchers put forward a number of theories, among which Krashen's "Input Hypothesis" (1982, 1985, 1998) and Swain's "Output Hypothesis" (1985) had the greatest influence. The input hypothesis is the core of Krashen's (1982) integrated and systematic theory of input. Krashen (1982, 1985) proposed that language can only be acquired by understanding information, or by receiving 'comprehensible input'. The author emphasizes the importance of 'comprehensible input' in language learning as a prerequisite for language acquisition. Consequently, it is believed that acquisition occurs after a significant amount of comprehensible input is received, which means both 'large' and 'comprehensible'. For the input value to be "comprehension", it should correspond to the value "i+1", which defines "i" as the current level of knowledge of the learner. "i+1" refers to the knowledge that the learner will acquire just slightly above their current level. If 'i' is considered as no progressive input, then 'i+2' would result in a low level of learning. Therefore, Krashen (1982) argues that the language input between 'i' and 'i+2' is the most desirable. It is critical to note that Krashen (1985) explains that it is not possible to teach children to speak a foreign language. Instead, it is something acquired naturally over time through exposure to a large amount of comprehensible corpora. It is acquired through learning the necessary grammar and vocabulary.

For language acquisition to take place, input is crucial, and a steady diet of language helps students acquire the rudiments of thinking in the target language. A hypothesis states that without input, there is no absorption and therefore, no output can be produced, and only a sufficient input is necessary to ensure a favorable outcome. We acquire language through input, i.e. what we read and hear, rather than through output, i.e. speaking and writing (Krashen, 1985, p. 2). From Krashen's (1985) perspective, if we focus on language input, language output follows naturally. Language input is our focus. Additionally, it should be noted that language output in language acquisition is not necessary for language acquisition.

However, several studies (Ellis, 1993; Nagata et al., 1999) have highlighted the one-sided nature of this hypothesis, which emphasizes the deterministic role of 'input' and attributes language acquisition solely to 'input' of the language, without accounting for other factors in the acquisition process. Acquisition of a language is attributed to the "input" of the language. The input hypothesis ignores other factors involved in language acquisition. Swain (1985) asserts that comprehensible output is as relevant as comprehensible input; she claims that comprehensible output will result in or promote language acquisition only when the learner is

pushed, that is, when the learner actively uses linguistic forms to convey meaning. In situations such as these, learners should be able to describe any specific phenomenon with a degree of factual accuracy, which in turn will lead to increased language proficiency.

When learners experience communication, they are prompted to communicate accurately, coherently, and appropriately and not simply to convey information (Swain, 1995, P. 135). By 'pushing' learners, she argues, students are forced to 'stretch' their interlingual resources harder, thereby forcing them to process language more deeply and allow. A further advantage of production is that it allows learners to switch between semantic and syntactic processing (top-down and bottom-up approaches) as well as test hypotheses about the newly acquired language. Encourage them to develop their interlanguage skills beyond their current level.

2.1. Aim of assignment

The purpose of this paper is to examine the effects of second language vocabulary acquisition using Krashen's input theory (1982) and Swain's output hypothesis theory (1985). Vocabulary acquisition occurs as a result of input and output interacting. This study will support the acquisition of the target vocabulary through further language input based on Krashen's input hypothesis theory (1992), which is actively incorporated into the acquisition process. According to Swain's output hypothesis (1985), output should be pushed to improve understanding of its function. As a result of this paper, students will learn how to correct and improve their vocabulary system as well as enrich their vocabulary knowledge. Then will enhance their communication and pragmatic skills. Additionally, a comparison is made between the theory that enables students to acquire vocabulary more effectively.

2.1.1. Research questions

The goal of the interviews was to investigate the role of inputs and outputs in word acquisition and the impact of different outputs on vocabulary acquisition. As a result, the following research questions must be addressed:

How do input and output affect the acquisition of words in a second language?

Do output tasks promote more effective vocabulary acquisition among second language learners than input tasks?

2.1.2. The participant information

There is a 24-year-old woman named Emily from Jiangsu, China. Having studied English for more than 12 years, she is well versed in the language. She is a native Chinese speaker. Emily began learning English as a second language at eight. Upon graduating from college, she worked as an English teacher in Sydney for one year. She is currently enrolled in the Master of Education in TESOL program at the University of Sydney.

2.1.3. Transcription of the interview with Emily

The text contains input, output, average results and mbetter results.

I: Hello, Emily, Good evening. Shall we start now? Emily: Yeah, of course.

1. Please tell us about yourself and your experience of learning English?

Hello students, my name is Emily and I am very happy to be part of this interview. I am 24 years old and I have been studying English since I was in the third grade, so I have had 12 years of experience so far. From my primary school years until my sophomore year of undergraduate studies, all the English teachers I had contact with were Chinese teachers. However, from my third year of undergraduate studies until my postgraduate studies, the teachers I had were basically foreign teachers, so I have experienced different teaching styles and methods. I have also had one year's work experience as a full-time secondary school English teacher, and I hope that my English learning experience will be of some help to you in your research.

2. How do you rate your word capacity? Are they sufficient?

For my word capacity, I think it should depend on the situation, when I am dealing with less difficult texts or topics that I am familiar with, my word capacity is sufficient, but when I am dealing with more difficult texts or unfamiliar topics, my word capacity is not sufficient, such texts or topics are challenging for my word capacity. At the same time, I believe that the number of English words is huge and for a non-native learner of English, the vocabulary should always be expanded. It is only through persistent word acquisition that one's word capacity can be effectively increased.

3. Do you have any difficulties with word acquisition?

Well, as a non-native English learner, I did have different challenges with word acquisition, such as not acquiring words in an appropriate way and not knowing how to acquire words effectively. As a non-English major, I did not have a good understanding of phonetic symbols or the prefixes and suffixes of words, which led to a somewhat rote approach to word acquisition starting with repetitive reading aloud and writing exercises. This approach to word learning did not give me enough pleasure, but rather made me feel that word acquisition was a challenge. At the same time, this inappropriate method of acquiring words made me forget faster, so I needed to keep revising. I think this is an inappropriate and inefficient way of acquiring words. Also, my native Chinese language has an impact on English word acquisition. Sometimes I am not able to substitute my first and second language properly, which leads to problems with the context in which I use words.

4. What do you think helps you to acquire words?

In my 12 years of study, I think words are remembered in a variety of ways. During listening we learn words that are commonly used in everyday life depending on the topic e.g. when talking about accommodation we learn words like rent, food and dates of stay. There are more opportunities for word acquisition when reading different texts. From Year 3 onwards we are exposed to different reading texts and different topics, including politics, economics and culture. So we learn different words as we read and use them in other ways.

5. Can you recall how you first acquired vocabulary when learning a second language?

I first learned a second language at a young age. Therefore, I was taught orally by the Chinese teacher and the other students and I learned words by imitating the teacher's pronunciation, reciting and writing them down. At the same time, I think there are fewer ways of acquiring words at the beginning of learning a second language, as they are all words from the national textbooks.

6. If the content is too difficult does it make you study harder and therefore get good results?

In general, I think that if the content is too difficult and above my ability to acquire words, I will not study harder to achieve good results because the unpleasant process has a negative impact on me and makes it difficult for me to be motivated to continue with my word acquisition. I therefore believe that word acquisition should match or be slightly above my ability so that it is challenging and motivates me to learn.

7. Which of the following do you focus more on in your English learning process?

In my English learning process, I focus more on reading. In the English-speaking environment in China, our listening and speaking activities are largely confined to the English classroom. However, most of our English exam questions involve reading and writing. Therefore, I have more opportunities to acquire words in reading. I also read English literature or English novels as a way of acquiring words.

8. Was vocabulary acquisition through reading effective for you? How effective is it?

I think I have encountered a lot of challenges and obstacles in reading English literature in general. Because not all English texts matched my original word base, the vocabulary that appeared in some of the English texts was more difficult, which posed a barrier to text comprehension and word acquisition. The second point is that because unfamiliar words

appear less frequently in reading, there is a risk that I will not see the word for a long time, which will make me forget it more frequently and will not see the word for a long time, which will make me forget it more frequently and will not have a positive impact on my English word acquisition.

9. Do you think input is more effective for you or output? Share your experience of doing input and output?

In my English learning experience, I think output is more effective. In my experience as a postgraduate student at the University of Sydney, we used the breakout room feature in class. During this process, we would talk freely. I think the output is efficient and positive as it reinforces what we have learnt in the class and improves our vocabulary acquisition and oral communication skills. And check myself-formed hypotheses, I was able to express them more accurately in my subsequent studies. To give another example, in my IELTS writing, I think carefully about the words I use in relation to the topic I am given. If I come across a topic that is familiar, then I can use the words and sentences that I have learnt. However, if I encounter a topic that is unfamiliar to me, this also motivates me to acquire English words through appropriate means.

2.1.4. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell us about yourself and your experience of learning English?
2. How do you rate your word capacity? Are they sufficient?
3. Do you have any difficulties in acquiring words?
4. What do you think would help you to acquire words?
5. What can you recall about the way you acquired vocabulary when first learning a second language?
6. If the content was too difficult did it make you work harder to get a good result?
7. Which of the following did you focus more on in your English learning process: listening, speaking, reading and writing?
8. Is the acquisition of vocabulary through reading effective for you? How effective is it?
9. Do you think input or output is more effective for you? Share your experiences of input and output?

2.2. Interview analysis

In accordance with personal arrangements, this interview will take place online. To ensure the interview runs smoothly, an email explaining the terminology will be sent to the interview candidates prior to the interview. In addition, a set of interview questions will be sent to them. Once the interview had concluded, I began to analyze it. There were five major sections: line number, name, script, code, and theme. Initially, I began transcribing the recording, which required me to translate from Chinese to English. The interviewee was using her mother tongue, which would have enabled her to express herself more effectively. Once the script had been translated, it was checked while listening to a recording of the interview. By doing this, I could identify any details that were missing. Following this, I began to code and categorize the transcripts, identifying the main points made by the interviewee for each question. There is a red color for input, a blue color for output, and a green color for average results, and a yellow color for better results. Lastly and most importantly, the key points of coding are related to the literature on input and output in second language acquisition. In the Theme Column that follows, the main concepts from the literature are described.

2.3. Finding

According to the interview, she uses reading as one of the primary sources of word acquisition in her learning process (Appendix, lines 73-75). However, she encounters some difficulties in

the process of acquiring words by reading, and she observes that the low frequency of input affects her ability to acquire words. After acquiring the words, she was unable to recall them well or even forgot them (Appendix, lines 79-87). One of the most significant factors in the acquisition of vocabulary is the frequency of exposure (Elley, 1989). Significant input is also required in the acquisition of vocabulary. She also states in her learning experience that reading materials beyond her level of skill can be a hindrance to acquiring vocabulary. Krashen's input hypothesis (1985) suggests that input alone is insufficient for a learner and that comprehension is necessary for a person to learn.

At times, Emily did not know the words when reading, and when the text was difficult or the topic unfamiliar, she thought her language capacity was inadequate (Appendix, lines 23-27). A major reason for this was Emily's limited word capacity. The results of this situation support the theory 'input first, output second' (Krashen, 1985). Clearly, output cannot exist without input. Nevertheless, as Swain (1985) points out, input is necessary, but not sufficient. EFL vocabulary acquisition requires more than just input; promoting output can also play a vital role in this process. By using the breakout rooms in class, she was able to share her views with the others and begin a discussion (Appendix, lines 90-94). Emily presented her ideas orally and tested the hypotheses she had formulated. Having negotiated meaning with her peers in the breakout room, she continued to modify her output in order to make her language more precise. During the process of learning a second language, hypothesis testing is essential. The output provides an opportunity to test potential hypotheses about the target language.

The output is a means of testing the underlying hypotheses associated with the target language. Hypothesis testing is based on 'interaction and feedback', which occurs between learners. In order to assess the accuracy and comprehension of their own mediated grammar, learners use the feedback they receive from their interlocutors (Swain, 1989). Emily believes that output is more effective in the acquisition process than input. When writing her IELTS essay, she forces herself to use words or phrases that she has already mastered (Appendix, lines 92-95). This helped her to get a better grasp of words on the same topic. Swain (1993) found that learners in the target language who speak or write the language are forced to syntactically process the language they are about to produce if they are under external pressure to do so. In this way, the output becomes more accurate, relevant, and complete.

Based on the above analysis of our interviews, Swain's theory (1985) is supported by a great deal of evidence. Understanding the input is not the only factor necessary for successful L2 vocabulary acquisition; pushed output can also play a significant role in the learning of L2 vocabulary (Swain, 1993). According to the above analysis of the interviews, it can be concluded that the pushed output method is more effective than the traditional input method. This is because it helps students to acquire vocabulary. This seems to indicate that the output method results in a stronger embedding of the vocabulary, greater retention and better use of the vocabulary by the students. This is compared to the input method. In general, the output method has proved to be very effective, useful, and feasible.

2.4. Similarities/ Differences

Emily's learning experience as an ESL student is similar to mine in many ways. Taking a look at some of our educational backgrounds, both Emily and I studied English for more than ten years in China. Consequently, we have become familiar with the method of acquiring vocabulary. One of the two similarities that we found between our L2 word acquisition experiences was that both of us began our L2 acquisitions with a traditional approach to vocabulary acquisition. There was a strong focus on teacher input, such as listening to the teacher and reading textbook texts (Appendix, lines 52-55). Nonetheless, the traditional approach to vocabulary teaching had its advantages in that it provided a lot of input. However, we are still unable to fully convert this input into intake and improve vocabulary skills in an effective manner.

In addition, both Emily and I agreed that output was better than input for word acquisition. Emily's favorite form of output was oral discussion. She likes to express herself in the breakout room and listen to the feedback of others (Appendix, lines 83-85). When speaking the target language, learners become acutely aware of the gap between what they want to say and what they can actually say (Swain, 1995). On the other hand, I preferred to use my new found vocabulary knowledge to formulate sentences and form words. I forced myself to write about a specific topic using the words and phrases I have acquired over the years. During this activity, I can export what I have learned and review and consolidate the vocabulary and expressions. In spite of the fact that it can be painful to be 'pushed to output', it is a reliable method of achieving this. The most effective method of learning English is for students to output what they have learned. Outputs are used to bring language issues to the learners' attention. (Ellis,2002)

2.5. Insights

I learned a number of things from this task. As a result, I have gained a deeper understanding of Krashen's input hypothesis (1985) and Swain's output hypothesis (1985,1992). As far as I am concerned, second language learning can be categorized into three processes based on input and output theory. As a second language learner, one of the key processes involves understanding foreign language discourse and acquiring foreign language materials. Secondly, second language learners can internalize and absorb input language materials. A third process involves second language learners utilizing their internalized language knowledge and skills to produce products that adhere to the language culture and rules of the English language. The input of language materials constitutes the premise of each of these three processes. Internalization of language ability is a time-consuming and difficult process, which must be constantly corrected for errors. Word acquisition can be improved by providing adequate input that is comprehensible and slightly above the learner's current language level ($i+1$). Inputs that are understandable are crucial for the development of the mediated language of foreign language learners (Krashen, 1985; Loschky, 1994). In keeping these concepts in mind, I have been able to find more appropriate ways to guide my acquisition of words.

In the United Kingdom and the United States, the majority of textbooks for second language learners are based on newspapers, periodicals, and magazines from mainstream countries. These publications are not only up-to-date, but also authentic. The following should be noted, however, that not all English texts are suitable for word acquisition. Input theory states that when choosing English materials, we should not only select words that are more advanced in their usage than those used by English learners with a higher level of English (Krashen, 1985). Rather, we should focus on the grammatical structure and the layout of the text. When you've reached Emily's learning stage, English learners have mastered a large number of vocabulary. However, they also have a certain level of appreciation for English and are capable of using and appreciating some of the rhetorical devices employed in English. Intelligible input can only be achieved by selecting high-level language input materials.

Moreover, Emily must force herself to produce output in her subsequent language practice after revising and calibrating. The output of the learner that demonstrates the extent of his or her linguistic competence as they try to create the desired meaning accurately and appropriately" (Swain,1985, p. 252). In this way, language skills are exercised to their fullest extent. As a result, group discussions and role-playing activities are useful tools for practicing language skills and learning vocabulary. Furthermore, it developed critical thinking, and learning a language with only input or output is not effective. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. It is only through the combination of input and output that you can improve your word knowledge and language abilities.

2.6. Conclusion

It was a more challenging assignment than I anticipated. Prior to this assignment, I was unfamiliar with coding and interviewing. I had difficulty conducting interviews. I should not just ask questions if I wish to conduct a quality interview. It is crucial that I consider what questions to ask and how to formulate them in a manner that will elicit the desired responses. Further, I need to ensure that the results of the interview are closely related to the theory. Although this study has largely addressed the research questions, there remain a few shortcomings due to my academic skills and objective limitations. Due to the relatively small sample and the single level, the results are somewhat difficult to generalize. The problems reflected are also bound to have inherent limitations and therefore are not comprehensive.

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