

Exploring the influence of input-based and output-based instruction on English language teaching in EFL classroom

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Abstract

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) discusses the way second language is taught to nonnative Learners. One particular area of debate within SLA is whether an input or output-focused approach is most effective in enabling English language learning. Whereas approaches centering on output have gained ascendancy in recent years, an input-centered approach nonetheless continues to have its proponents. This on-going debate is reflected in three outlined recent empirical case studies in the area. The studies appear to suggest that whether to adopt an input or an output focus in the classroom may depend on what is being taught and to whom. This essay will offer my own modifications to some of the activities presented in the readings to make them more effective in a classroom setting. Lastly, this essay will assess whether my proposed teaching practice has merit and is able to benefit EFL learners both now and into the future.

Key words: input-based instruction, output-based instruction, influence, English language teaching, EFL classroom

1. Theory associated with the topic

1.1 Input hypothesis and input-based instruction

Input refers to the language that a learner is exposed to in a communicative context, to what they listen to or read or obtain via visual language cues, input is an absolutely necessary element for second language learning because it helps learners to build linguistic hypothesis (Gass & Mackey, 2007, p. 182). Comprehensive input is concerned with the language a learner is easily able to address (Krashen, 2009). Ellis (2012) claims input-based instruction can be used as guidance that 'includes the control of the input that students are presented to or are required to process' (p. 285). Processing instruction (PI) is one of the type of input-based instruction, where the instructor will know to what extent learners understand the target knowledge by their verbal or nonverbal reaction, as learners will be stimulated to process input under the control of the instructor (VanPatten, 1993, 2002). This may happen, for instance, through Learners listening to a sentence that describes one of two pictures and then select the correct one (Ellis, 2012). Since the ability of learners to receive instruction contributes to their second language acquisition, is a necessity to explore input-based instruction and its current implication and application in a teaching context further.

1.2 Output hypothesis and output-based instruction

Due to the fact that comprehensive input is not enough to develop high level of linguistic competence, therefore, output' role need to be considered inevitably. Language production can be defined that the factor causing students emphasize on the means of expression (Swain, 1985, p. 249). During that process of express the meaning of learners, learners is much possible to find the gap between their linguistic resources and the system of target language. As to the function of output, output provide opportunities for learners to use language, which push learners to shift from comprehend the meaning of words and sentences to language use connected with syntax, morphology and grammatical processing (Swain, 1995, p. 128). However, the issue whether the role of output can develop the competence of L2 language learners is controversial. Krashen (1998) do not believe output can facilitate language acquisition, while Swain (1985) holds the opposite idea that output stimulate student to acquire L2 language acquisition positively. Therefore, to facilitate the ability of target language production, it is necessary to not only use techniques of input-based instruction, but also make use of the strategies to improve the ability of language use, that is output-based instruction exactly. Because of the trend of using communicative approach in classroom, production-based instruction naturally tends to a more free, communicative one, which usually advocates to use corrective feedback instead of the mechanical one in consequence of grammar drill and practice (Shintani & Ellis, 2013).

2. Current empirical research

2.1 Research 1

Hamavandy & Golshan (2015) compared differential potential of SLA output tasks with input-task teaching of English grammar. In the background of this study, it introduced the necessity to understand the importance of output hypothesis. The study poses the view that comprehensive input is not sufficient to obtain outcomes for nonnative language learners as it lacks rich practice to allow them to gain command of native-like grammatical features. Specifically, during the process of communication, a kind of modification inevitable for non-native learners occurs, which in turn affects learners' development. In other words, output gives rise to changes of the way of learners' input. This view consistent of Swain (1995) who argues that language production enables learners to focus on the way of express themselves in order to convey their meaning proficiently (p. 249). The effectiveness of the way of language is produced and the relationship between learner output and language proficiency can hardly consider as conclusive and clear. For example, Izumi & Izumi (2004) found that the oral output cannot promote second language acquisition in relation to grammatical form as the output group failed to outperform the control group because output tasks do not engage participants in the syntactic (bottom-up) processing, which is crucial factor for L2 learning. However, Ellis & He (1999), who investigated the influence of premodified input, interactionally modified input, and modified output on comprehend directions in a listen-and-do task, found that participants with comprehensive output achieved better results than those who received merely input. In this study, results indicate input-based learning has a more positive influence on knowledge of target grammatical structure than output-based learning, which is opposite to principles of the output hypothesis. Further, there was no significant difference between learners who participated in output tasks and learners who involved in non-output tasks. However, the suitability of output practice cannot be denied even though the way different tasks effect L2 learning performance may differ. Individual differences should be taken into consideration, when assessing an output task, different linguistic, social, psychological backgrounds of learners tends to influence their language production. Therefore, further modified output tasks need to be explored in the future.

2.2 Research 2

Namaziandost, Dehkordi & Shafiee (2019) investigates the relationship between input-based activities and output-based activities on vocabulary acquisition of Iranian EFL learners. They found that both of these actions give rise to productive vocabulary knowledge and their effects are similar. This study is important due to a lot of empirical studies focusing on the impact of input and output instruction on grammatical aspects and comparatively little research studies on vocabulary acquisition, which this study explores. The study confirms that both input and output have role in affecting L2 development and confirms the view that the effectiveness of each on L2 language improvement is debatable and may result from the instruction given to Learners. The authors also conform to a long-standing trend shifting from traditional instruction using explanation and mechanical output practice into one

applying comprehensive and meaningful input in a communicative context in classroom teaching (VanPatten, 1993).

The importance of this study is in the exploration of the usefulness of input-based and output-based activities involving the knowledge of vocabulary that enable instructors to implement effective teaching strategies in a communicative way. They include focusing on a form that teaches vocabulary through building a target language context in order to raise language awareness and consciousness of L2 learners, thereby implementing learning in an EFL class. This study also develops knowledge of the effects of input-based and output-based activities on vocabulary learning for young EFL learners.

2.3 Research 3

Another valuable study on this topic conducted recently is *The Effects of written Input on Young EFL Learners' Oral Output* by Monica Amores Sanchez and Elizabet Pladevall Ballester (2014). The study focused on Young Learners in a private school in Spain. In this study, the authors sought to establish if written input and written output impact on oral production of young language learners in a minimal input environment in an EFL context. The study contrasted the results of an experimental group, which was provided written instruction, recorded lexical items in written form to then produce them orally with a control group, which was given oral instructions alone and produced presented sentences orally. The study found that an instructional approach, which contains oral input supported with written input results in better oral output of Learners. It also found that visual is stronger auditory memory.

The significance of this study is that it contradicts the common practice for early foreign language teaching to place greater emphasis on the acquisition of oral abilities instead of literacy; reading and writing. Thereby it places the learning of all the skills on equal footing. This leads the authors to conclude that reading and writing in L2 should be taught to young Learners as soon as they are able to read and write in L1 (Sanchez & Ballester 2014, p. 27).

This research is unique in the field of enhancing spoken skills through written input in that it focused on young learners. Whereas previous studies demonstrated that vocabulary seen visually by Learners is best recalled by a Learner if it is the word encountered again visual, this study shows that this is also true of grammatical structures. Thus, for better output, it would appear integrated instruction in the classroom context should replace only oral one.

3. Proposed applications for teaching

From the research 1, factors such as task types, individual differences with various linguistic, psychological and social cultural backgrounds should be considered in teaching in an actual classroom according to Hamavandy & Golshan (2015). Specifically, task types are required to use flexibility, and teachers' design, which is based on students' needs. Moreover, to comprehend language better, teachers are expected to give corrective feedback for learners. According to Shehadeh (2002), in order

to revise their original output, feedback from native speakers ought to be provided to enable learners to undergo a self-check process. Learners are not able to realize the part of their language that needs to be modified, feedback provides opportunities for learners to understand their language in depth.

In addition, from the research 2, the providing corrective feedback and using the input-based and out-based instruction in a more communicative approach, this can be achieved through the application of tasks activities in task-based language teaching.

Focus on form (FoF) is a key construct in task-based language teaching (TBLT) and can also be used for input-based instruction. Only when the meaning cannot be conveyed accurately or under the condition that the instructor considers the process necessary for comprehension, formal aspects would be given more attention.

Personally, tasks in this study does not significantly affect learners output performance, this is because the cloze component for the picture activity is not sufficient for this purpose. Thus, instead I would use a jigsaw output task activity to facilitate learning of grammatical structures accurately. This type of approach is often used in task-based language learning, a communicative language learning method. I would assign participants to groups of 3, each participant in a group would be given different pictures with a number 1, 2, 3 with partially completed cloze component. Each participant would be given 2 minutes to complete the picture description using their grammar knowledge and then share their understanding with others. After that, the participants would be regrouped based on the same text number and would be asked to make interaction and negation meaning with others about their answers. Then they would return to their original group and each would be asked to make a report about their picture description, while others would provide peer feedback. During this process, I would take notes on their strengths and weaknesses. Finally, I would provide an analysis on their performance and inform them, where they could improve.

4. Why and how would your students benefit from this practice

The reason about why to use focus on form is that this approach contributes to learners' language production in a communicative way. During the process of that approach, the tasks are the key factor to stimulate learners to produce language automatically. Compared with focus on forms, which focusses on the grammatical features that relate to context, form focused approach refers to an approach that helps to teach learners the linguistic forms in a way of getting them engaged in the context of the task. Learners engage in various tasks cooperatively with attention to the meaning, in order to know how to use language in a specific context. The task in this approach plays a role in offering a constant context in which Learners are encouraged to interact with others, listen to others and receive peer-feedback and conduct self-reflection so as to grasp the way of gradually producing the target language (Long, 1996, p. 413-468). Therefore, it is obvious that learners will be negotiate meaning and make discussion with each other in order to achieve the same outcome of tasks activities. It is noticeable that not only their motivation and competence of language production will be improved, but their input will be modified during the process of interaction.

As to the way how will the learners benefit the previous practice, a variety of task activities can be used to promote the way of expression such as ‘comparing two pictures to find a set number of differences, listening to or reading instructions to trace a route on a map, solving a problem or creating a story from clues’ (Willis & Willis, 2010). In addition, learners can receive the feedback especially corrective feedback, which teachers will give formal or informal evaluation for their performance on several different tasks.

5. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of your proposed teaching practice?

Since the practice mainly make use of the jigsaw method, which belong to the task-based language teaching, I would like to adopt questionnaire and interview as well as classroom observation to assess the effectiveness of my proposed teaching practice. I have learned that learners in China are better at English language input such as reading and listening rather than language production such as speaking and writing and prefer the traditional teaching methods as a result of examination-driven and learning preference of learners and so on. However, as the requirement of language use has been increased currently, I decide to attempt to apply this Jigsaw method to teach students’ oral English. Specifically, I will design the direct-email questionnaire, and questions will be based on their learning style, their personality traits, intelligence, learning strategies and ability of self-regulation, as well as the motivation aspects such as which kind of learning materials and topic discussed they prefer. Besides, there will be several students select from all of the class randomly to do an interview, there will be some open and closed-ended questions to ask them. The purpose is to learn their perception and belief on the use of Jigsaw method in depth, and related tasks used in classroom so that teachers enable to design a revised lesson plan such as materials and topic chosen to meet students’ needs, attract their interest, and then improve their language proficiency and motivation to learn. Further, the teacher will use the video to record the whole process of classroom management and make notes during the process of students’ discussion, which provide evidence for teachers to develop practice and get better outcome for my students.

6. Conclusions

This assignment analyses three research articles from the theory to research to practice as a whole. I have chosen three empirical articles mainly about exploring the influence of input-based and output-based instruction on English language teaching in EFL classroom. In order to comprehend it comprehensively to a large extent, I attempt to find three articles in different aspects including input and output’s influence on grammar, vocabulary and oral English. I found that each article has its perspective to make a discussion, especially I have learned from the discussion of empirical studies, there are critical thinking about it, some study support the idea while others against it, so I struggle to categorize their similarities and differences during and after reading, this input processing help me make notes and comprehend what I have learned what I have not access to acquire, then I would like to search the related articles to modify my input deeply. After reading all of these articles, I enable to

write the theory and summary about three articles based on my notes and understanding. However, in terms of the practice, I do think it is necessary to combine my own learning experience with the implication and suggestion from the research articles, so that I am able to extract the valuable idea and evaluate the strengths and weakness, then modifying and applying into the English teaching in EFL Classroom.

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