

Survey the Effect of Output Tasks on Incidental Vocabulary Learning in Students

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Abstract

The present study is a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test in design. 100 students with intermediate level selected randomly. Among them, 80 students which are randomly selected as sample size and based on their English professional scores. They all were Persian native speakers and were taking an English course at English institutes in Tehran. Data collected by three instruments include the standardized language proficiency test which was used for homogenizing the participants regarding students' proficiency level, another instrument is 75 vocabularies, multiple choice items to assess students' vocabulary proficiency level and the last instrument includes cloze and editing tasks. Data analysis was done in two parts include descriptive analysis (frequencies, means, standard deviation) and inferential analysis (Multivariate analysis and Levine test). The results of the study indicated that individual and collaborative oral output tasks have significant effect on incidental vocabulary learning, furthermore, the results revealed that individual and collaborative written output tasks have no significant effect on incidental vocabulary learning.

Keywords: Collaborative Written Output Tasks, Collaborative Oral Output Tasks, Individual Written Output Tasks.

Introduction

In search for the best way to teach grammar, the roles of input and output have received considerable attention in second language acquisition (SLA) theory and many studies have produced major insights in the field of SLA. Earlier studies gave the idea that acquisition is a natural outcome of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985). Such studies have mainly focused on the significance of understandable input in developing learners' knowledge of the target language. Lately, however, several studies have suggested that the role of output is as important (if not more) for acquisition of a second language as the role of input. These studies' claim is mainly based on Swain's output hypothesis (Swain, 1985) which considers output as the cause of L2 acquisition, not just the product of it. Studies on output (e.g. DeKeyser&Sokalski, 1996; Izumi, 2002; Song & Suh, 2008) together with formal and informal observations of Canadian immersion program (Swain, 1985) provide empirical evidence that developing productive ability of learners and language acquisition requires more than mere comprehending the language.

Many research results to date have explored the role of output and different functions of it in language learning (Bygate, 1999; DeKeyser&Sokalski, 1996; Garcia Mayo, 2002; Geeslin, 2006; Izumi, 2002; Izumi& Bigelow, 2000; Song & Suh, 2008; Storch, 1998 & 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). Among the various functions of output proposed by Swain (1995), the remarking function has received considerable attention since many research findings show that noticing and attention play significant roles in language learning. Nevertheless, the studies which exactly have explored whether output tasks promote learning of target linguistic forms, as a result of noticing function, have produced mixed results (Izumi, 2002; Izumi & Bigelow, 2000; Izumi et al., 1999; Izumi & Izumi, 2004; Song & Suh, 2008). Therefore, more research needs to be done to discover the issue. Besides, the possible effect of these tasks on learning grammatical morphemes has not been fully discovered. This is despite the fact that many learners have problems in using these morphemes in natural settings – particularly in expressing the notion of temporality through verbs.

On the other hand, Huckin and Coady (1999) emphasize the importance of incidental vocabulary learning by referring to several studies indicating that learners gain more vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading with guessing at the meaning of unknown words. However, despite the obvious advantages, there are also a number of disadvantages for incidental vocabulary learning. For example, research suggests that contextual information is often unclear for language learners to make correct inferences (Bensoussan & Laufer, 1984) which has proved rather effective in printed materials. And so research says that direct and deliberate learning is more effective, focused and goal-directed than incidental learning (Nation & Meara 2010). This research tries to show the significant effects of different output tasks on incidental vocabulary learning.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of different output tasks on incidental vocabulary learning. This chapter tries to describe what the researcher did to address the research question; the steps taken into account are participants, instrumentation, procedure, design, and data analysis. The participants of the study include, 100 students with intermediate level selected randomly and the sample size of students was 80 students which are randomly selected based on their English professional scores. They all were Persian native speakers and were taking an English course at English institutes in Tehran.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in present study include:

Language proficiency test (Oxford Quick Placement Test), Pre-test (vocabulary test), Post-test (vocabulary test), Delayed post-test (vocabulary test). The study data will be included: Background information, measures the output tasks and incidental vocabulary learning, descriptive data, and measure the outcomes. The standardized language proficiency test was used for homogenizing the participants regarding their proficiency level which includes two parts with 60 items dedicated to test learners, grammar and vocabulary, knowledge through multiple-choice items and cloze passages. This test can be used by the learners of all language proficiency level, however, the score for each level is different, the maximum score is 60 and the band score 0-17 is dedicated to the beginner level (A1), 18-29 is belonged to the elementary level (A2), 30-39 is dedicated to lower intermediate level (B1), 40-43 is a band score for upper intermediate level (B2), and the band scores 48-54 are dedicated to the advanced (C1) and very advanced levels (C2) respectively.

The Output Tasks: The output tasks used in this study included cloze and editing tasks. Cloze tasks included completing a short descriptive text and a short interview with ten blanks to be completed with the given incidental vocabulary. The editing task also included completing a short descriptive text and a short interview with ten erroneous sections related to the target phrasal verbs. The subjects were to spot the wrong sections of the texts and write the correct forms of the target phrasal verbs. The output tasks used in this study were modified versions of cloze and text-editing tasks used in previous studies (Izumi & Bigelow, 2000; Nassaji & Tian, 2010). In a typical output task, the researcher or the teacher reads the text twice for the learners while they take notes. Then they are asked to reconstruct the original text through gap-filling exercise (in cloze task), correcting some sections in the text (in editing task) or rewriting the text. In this research, however, the subjects were first exposed to the written input, and then were asked to complete the output tasks.

Procedure: This is an experimental study in which the data will be gathered via pre-test and post-test and this is also a library study. The participants are going to be divided into 4 experimental groups: collaborative written tasks (CWT), collaborative oral tasks (COT) individual written tasks (IWT) individual oral tasks (IOT). In this study, the participants (students) were asked to participate in pre-test, then after 15 sessions, the students were asked to take post-test to evaluate their vocabulary proficiency. After a month, a delayed posttest was performed to evaluate the vocabulary proficiency after treatment.

Data Analysis: This study aimed at finding the effect of different output tasks on incidental vocabulary learning. In order to find a legitimate answer to the research question and to see whether the null hypothesis was rejected or confirmed, the SPSS software package was used to conduct analysis.

Results

This study attempted to investigate the effect of different output tasks on incidental vocabulary learning. For this purpose the following null hypothesis was formulated by the researcher:

Main hypothesis

There is not any significant difference among collaborative oral output tasks, individual oral output tasks, collaborative written output tasks, individual written output tasks is regard to effect on incidental vocabulary learning.

The hypothesis will be tested using analysis of variance as follows:

Table1. Summary of multivariate covariance test to assess the effects of output task on incidental vocabulary learning

Partial Eta Squared	Sig.	Error df	Hypothesis df	F	Value	Source
17.35	0.42	31	4	4.25	0.75	Group

As the above table shows, by controlling the effect of pre-test, Wilkes lambda index is not significant at 0/05. In other words, it could be argued that there is not significant difference between groups in none of the output tasks variables of incidental vocabulary learning. So, to carry out the differences between variables, there is no need to analysis of covariance.

First special hypothesis

Individual oral output task do not have any effect on incidental vocabulary learning.

Above hypothesis will be measured by variance analysis test.

The results of variance analysis are shown at table 2.

Table 2. the results of variance analysis to assess the effects of Individual oral output task on incidental vocabulary learning

Effect size	Significance level	F	Mean of squares	Df	Sum of squares	Changes source
0.42	0.001	38.86	2.100	1	3.100	Group
			0.055	37	2.052	Error
				40	560.058	Total

According to numbers from the table above, by controlling the effect of pre-test, the effect of significance level among subjects is significant effect on the level of 0/01. So shown in table 2, after treatment, scores of incidental vocabulary learning in experimental group are significantly increased after the intervention, so the null hypothesis can be rejected at 0/01 and it can be also accepted with confidence of 0/99 that individual oral output task has influenced incidental vocabulary learning. Furthermore, effect size indicates that about 52.7 % of changes of participants 'incidental vocabulary learning is depended on Individual oral output task.

Second special hypothesis

Collaborative oral output task do not have any effect on incidental vocabulary learning.

The results of variance analysis are shown as follows:

Table 3. The results of variance analysis to assess the effects of Individual oral output task on incidental vocabulary learning

Effect size	Significance level	F	Mean of squares	Df	Sum of squares	Changes source
0.718	0.000	72.428	2.028	1	2.028	Group
			0.020	37	0.729	Error
				40	622.678	Total

According to numbers from the table above, by controlling the effect of pre-test, the effect of significance level among subjects is significant effect on the level of 0/01. So shown in table 3, after treatment, scores of incidental vocabulary learning in experimental group are significantly increased after the intervention, so the null hypothesis can be rejected at 0/01 and it can be also accepted with confidence of 0/99 that individual Collaborative oral output task has influenced incidental vocabulary learning. Furthermore, effect size indicates that about 71/8 % of changes of participants 'incidental vocabulary learning is depended on Collaborative oral output task.

Third special hypothesis

Individual written output task do not have any effect on incidental vocabulary learning.

The results of variance analysis are shown as follows:

Table 4. the results of variance analysis to assess the effects of Individual written output task on incidental vocabulary learning

Effect size	Significance level	F	Mean of squares	Df	Sum of squares	Changes source
0.118	0.332	1.887	1.253	1	1.253	Groups
			0.664	37	24.604	Error
					630.934	Total

According to numbers from the table above, by controlling the effect of pre-test, the effect of significance level among subjects is significant effect on the level of 0/01. So shown in table 4, after treatment, scores of incidental vocabulary learning in experimental group are significantly increased after the intervention, so the null hypothesis can be rejected at 0/01 and it can be also accepted with confidence of 0/99 that Individual written output task has no effects on incidental vocabulary learning. Furthermore, effect size indicates that about 71/8 % of changes of participants 'incidental vocabulary learning is depended on Individual written output task.

Fourth special hypothesis

Collaborative written output task do not have any effect on incidental vocabulary learning.

The results of variance analysis are shown as follows:

The results of variance analysis are shown at table 5.

Table 5. The results of variance analysis to assess the effects of collaborative written output task on incidental vocabulary learning

Effect size	Significance level	F	Mean of squares	df	Sum of squares	Changes source
0.306	0.085	2.022	1.416	1	1.416	Group
			0.700	37	25.889	Error
				40	524.679	Total

According to numbers from the table above, by controlling the effect of pre-test, the effect of significance level among subjects is significant effect on the level of 0/01. So shown in table 5, after treatment, scores of collaborative written output task in experimental group are not significantly increased after the intervention, so the null hypothesis can be rejected at 0/01 and it can be also accepted with confidence of 0/95 that collaborative written output task has no effects on incidental vocabulary learning. Furthermore, effect size indicates that about 30/6 % of changes of participants 'incidental vocabulary learning is depended on Individual written output task.

Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that Individual oral output task influenced incidental vocabulary learning. Thus, the first hypothesis is rejected. Laufer (1995) provided empirical evidence that the L2 learners' productive knowledge of words and receptive knowledge of words do not equally develop in a similar way. In other words, she concluded that if there is no instruction on productive vocabulary use, only a very limited portion of receptive vocabulary transforms to productive vocabulary. Some other studies by DeKeyser (1997), Ellis and He (1999), Izumi and Bigelow (2000) and Kwon (2006) provided evidence that the learning condition for productive vocabulary acquisition should be different from that of receptive vocabulary

The results of the study about 2nd hypothesis revealed that collaborative oral output task influenced on incidental vocabulary learning. Thus, the study 2nd null hypothesis was rejected. Swain argues that any language production is a cognitive activity, mainly when learners use language through collaborative tasks as a problem-solving tool. This opinion made Swain adopt the sociocultural theory in her own research (Ellis, 2000). Swain (2000) argues that when learners perform output tasks collaboratively, they are involved in social interactions, but whether these interactions contribute to language acquisition is still under investigation.

The results of the study about 3rd hypothesis revealed that Individual written output task do not have any significant effect on incidental vocabulary learning. Thus, the 3rd null hypothesis was accepted. By means of external speech, internalization of knowledge is facilitated. This position is an additional reason in favor of the use of collaborative work in L2 learning. Thus, it seems individual output task could not influence the incidental vocabulary learning.

The results of the study about 4th hypothesis revealed that collaborative written output task do not have any significant effect on incidental vocabulary learning. Thus, the 3rd null hypothesis was accepted. Regarding second research question, it should be noticed that collaborative writing tasks have emerged within two major frameworks, i.e., writing conferences (teacher-student) and peer-to-peer collaborative

writing. Writing conferences well signify the social constructivist paradigm in writing pedagogies as per their element of Vygotsky's notion of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which originally described the novice expert collaboration, or as Storch (2002) refers to it as "asymmetrical" grouping. The following suggestions leave room for further investigation on these issues: Future research should include the learners of other proficiency levels in the larger population. It may also aim to examine if advanced learners benefit more from vocabulary learning strategies than intermediate-level ones. A parallel study can be conducted just on male or female students to see if the study is sensitive to the participants' gender or not.

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