Second Language Acquisition

B.A. (Q) Course, Summer 09
Erfurt University

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Input and Interaction: Quick Quiz

• What is the difference between “input“ and “intake“?
  – Intake is that part of the language occurring in someone’s environment that is really processed.

• What is a re-cast?
  – It is a kind of corrective repetition, but no explicit correction. The repetition – given by the more competent speaker – takes up the utterance of the other speaker and repeats it in a corrected form.

• Is “motherese“/child-directed speech (CDS) a universal feature of human language use, i.e. found in all societies and cultures? In other words: is child-directed speech necessary for language learning to occur?
  – No, there are cultures in which infants and young children are not regarded as adequate communicative partners of adults.
Input and Interaction: Quick Quiz

• Is there an equivalent of “motherese“ / “child-directed speech“ in SLA?
  – Yes, it’s called “foreigner talk“ and resembles child-directed speech in some ways.

• Is Michael Long‘s “interaction hypothesis“ an extension of Krashen‘s “input hypothesis“ or does it contradict it?
  – It is an extension of Krashen‘s original idea: interaction is required to create the right kind of input.

• Is Swain‘s “output hypothesis“ an extension of Krashen‘s “input hypothesis“ or does it contradict it?
  – It contradicts Krashen’s input hypothesis, in which output is only the consequence of acquisition, but not the cause of any further acquisition.
The properties of CDS in FLA

• CDS (as in Western middle-class families) facilitates language learning:

“Despite the potential usefulness of child-directed speech as input data, it is clear that caretakers are not typically motivated by any prime language-teaching goal, nor is their speech in general specially adapted so as to model the target grammar. *Instead ist special characteristics derive primarily from the communicative goal of engaging in conversation with a linguistically and cognitively less competent partner and sustaining and directing their attention.*“ (MM, p. 163, emphasis inserted)“
The properties of CDS in FLA

- CDS (as in Western middle-class families) facilitates language learning:
  
  - **encouraging participation** in on-going communicative exchanges and social routines, sustaining attention and positive affect

  - **improving comprehensibility** by focusing on elements of the immediate situation (being semantically contingent), by providing simple, repetitive vocabulary and by marking linguistic segmentation with the help of intonation, speed, and loudness

  - **providing feedback** by re-casting (not by correcting) children’s utterances (i.e. providing positive models (indirect negative evidence) instead of explicit corrections)
“Foreigner Talk“ in SLA

• simplified and pidgin-like variety of speech addressed to foreigners (foreigner talk discourse, Long 1983, 1985):

  – not usually of the *Me Tarzan, you Jane* type, though adjustments/simplifications are frequently made:
    • shorter utterances,
    • simplified vocabulary (very few idioms),
    • simpler grammar
  – also containing: longer pauses, adaptations in intonation (overemphasize unstressed segments), increased loudness and decreased speed/tempo
  – more effective than formal simplification: repetition, elaboration
Input Hypothesis (Krashen)

• decisive in language acquisition: "comprehensible input"
  – a language form one step above the learner‘s present competence in the natural order/developmental sequence: (i+1) (i.e. a form for which the learner is developmentally "ready") must (i) occur in input that is understood,
  – this form triggers a change in the learner‘s interlanguage, due to a gap between the current interlanguage grammar and the linguistic form perceived
  – for a change in intergrammar to happen, i+1 must recur with minimum (but sufficient) frequency

• problems: not testable/operationalizable
Interaction Hypothesis (Long)

- Long (series of publications in the 1980ies) investigated the structure of foreigner-talk discourse, i.e. the interactions in which learners were engaged:

  “... these interactions should not be seen simply as a one-directional source of target-language input, feeding into the learner’s presumed internal acquisition device. Instead when learners engaged with their interlocutors in negotiations around meaning, the nature of the input might be qualitatively changed. That is the more the input was queried, recycled and paraphrased, to increase its comprehensibility, the greater is the potential usefulness as input.“ [MM, p. 160, emphasis inserted]

**Methodology:**

- test/show => (i) adjustments facilitate comprehension of input
- test/show => (ii) comprehensible input promotes acquisition
- deduce: => (iii) adjustments promote acquisition
Interaction Hypothesis (Long)

• Long (series of publications in the 1980ies) investigated the structure of foreigner-talk discourse, i.e. the interactions in which learners were engaged.

• Interaction hypothesis as extension of the input hypothesis:
  – conversational management and discourse structure in NS-NNS interactions different from NS-NS interactions:
    • NNS-NS interactions: repetitions, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, clarification requests, etc.
  – again NS act merely for communicative reasons, not for pedagogical ones
    • however: collaborative effort useful for NNS‘s learning -- input fine-tuned to NNS level of competence, thus creating i+1 forms of input (adequate, comprehensible input)
Interaction Hypothesis (Long)

• Long (series of publications in the 1980ies) investigated the structure of foreigner-talk discourse, i.e. the interactions in which learners were engaged.

• Interaction hypothesis as extension of the input hypothesis:
  – *empirical investigations*:
    • step (ii) in Long‘s method:
      – clear link between increased comprehension and improved acquisition is not provided in (Loschky 1994, Gass and Varonis 1994),
      – but established in Mackey (1999) for question formation

• **Revised Interaction Hypothesis**: see selective attention
Output Hypothesis (Swaine)

• Result of observations of Canadian French immersion programmes (Swain 1985, 1995).
  
  – Just comprehending input is not sufficient, as *this input is only partially processed*, i.e. for semantic information. This contradicts strongly with Krashen‘s claim that output is only the result, not the cause of acquisition.
  
  – Claim: Only second-language production (i.e. the creation of output) forces learners to completely process the input and thus develop their interlanguage morphology and syntax:
    • noticing/triggering function/consciousness-raising role of output
    • hypothesis-testing function of output
    • reflective/meta-linguistic function of output
Survey Interaction Approach

• Learning occurs on the basis of:

**input**: i.e. exposure to language in meaningful communicative events

**output**: active language production

**interaction**: i.e. participation in communicative situations

**intake**: input processed

**additional factors**: selective attention/ “noticing“/ awareness-raising (*focus on meaning* + *focus on form*)

**negotiation for meaning**: re-casts, rather than explicit corrections, of NNS utterances

**feedback**: repetition and elaboration of NS utterances

increase comprehension

take-up of phonological and semantic re-casts

Week 14, Input/Interaction

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References
