

淡江大學九十三年學年度碩士班甄試入學招生考試試題

系列：英文學系

科目：英文(含英語語言學議題)

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本試題雙面印製

Below is part of an article titled "L2 vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading," by James Coady from the book *Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition* (James Coady and Thomas Huckin, editors, Cambridge University Press, 1997). Summarize the main points of this passage in your own words. Then discuss some implications of one or more of these points for English language teaching in Taiwan. Your discussion of implications should focus on a particular setting, such as senior high school English, children's English in public elementary schools, or some other equally specific setting of your choice. Remember that your discussion of implications must show clear and explicit relationship to some aspect(s) of the passage below.

L1 vocabulary acquisition

The incidental vocabulary learning hypothesis (Nagy & Herman, 1985) is based on research into how children learn vocabulary in their native language. It proposes that the vast majority of vocabulary words are learned gradually through repeated exposures in various discourse contexts. Proponents of this view claim that learners typically need about ten to twelve exposures to a word over time in order to learn it well. They observe that native speakers can learn as many as fifteen words per day from the ages two to seven and therefore conclude that direct instruction of vocabulary cannot possibly account for the vast growth of students' knowledge of vocabulary. Consequently, Nagy and Herman (1987) argue that teachers should promote extensive reading because it can lead to greater vocabulary growth than any program of explicit instruction alone ever could.

L2 vocabulary acquisition

Following this same logic, it is argued that L2 learners who achieve advanced reading proficiency in a language will acquire most of their vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading rather than from instruction. For example, Krashen (1989), a leading proponent of extensive reading, argues that language learners acquire vocabulary and spelling most efficiently by receiving comprehensible input while reading. He claims that this results from the Input Hypothesis, i.e., successful language learning results from comprehensible input as the essential external ingredient coupled with a powerful internal language acquisition device. Krashen originally postulated the Input Hypothesis for oral language acquisition and in a recent study of oral vocabulary acquisition Ellis (1994) argues that it is "not comprehensible input but comprehended input that is important" (p. 481). Nevertheless, Krashen (1989) claims

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that the Input Hypothesis also applies to vocabulary acquisition by means of extensive reading.

Instead of more traditional pedagogical approaches to L2 vocabulary learning, Krashen, like Nagy and Herman, advocates massive quantities of pleasure reading in the students' own area of interest as well as large quantities of light, low-risk material that students are not tested on. In short, he believes that the Input Hypothesis is more efficient than other hypotheses; moreover, even if it were not, it is a much more pleasurable process.

L2 vocabulary acquisition research

Krashen (1989) analyzes the results from 144 studies in his attempt to provide evidence for the superiority of the Input Hypothesis. But it is very important to note that all but three or four of these studies involved native speakers rather than L2 learners. Research that positively supports Krashen's claims as regards L2 vocabulary acquisition is still very limited.

For example, in the Pitts, White, and Krashen (1989) study, intermediate ESL students read the first two chapters of *A Clockwork Orange*. The subjects were tested 10 minutes after having spent 60 minutes reading the text. A control group, which did not read the text, was also tested on the nasdar (invented) vocabulary. A small, but statistically significant amount of vocabulary was acquired by the subjects in the experiment as compared to the control group.

Day, Omura, and Hiramatsu (1991) carried out a similar study with Japanese high school and undergraduate EFL students who read an adapted version of a story and then took a vocabulary test on some of the words in the story. The control group took only the vocabulary test with the result that the subjects who read the story knew significantly more vocabulary. Their proficiency level was not specified.

Dupuy and Krashen (1993) had third-semester students of French watch five scenes of a play on film and then read the next five scenes in French. They were then given a surprise vocabulary test on words in the text. The subjects performed significantly better than control subjects enrolled in another third-semester class who did not see the film or read the text.

Research issues

There are some important issues, however, that these studies do not address. First and foremost, there appears to be a serious methodological problem with these studies; namely, the control groups were not given

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any exposure to the texts containing the target vocabulary. Accordingly, it is hardly surprising that the experimental groups demonstrated better knowledge of these words than did the control groups. Apparently the goal of these studies was simply to demonstrate that vocabulary learning can take place through exposure to texts. A more informative process would have been to ask the control groups to simply memorize the target words in whatever mode they wished within an identical time frame. This procedure, together with follow-up testing and so on, would have produced greater validity for these studies.

Second, most of the subjects in the studies under review appear to be at an intermediate level of FL instruction. We are left with the question of whether such gains would occur with students at either the very beginning or very advanced levels. For example, do actual beginners know enough vocabulary to read well enough to learn words in this manner?

Third, do such gains occur when control groups are given alternative cognitive enriching opportunities, for example, strategy instruction and mnemonic techniques? For example, Moore and Surber (1992) compared several types of vocabulary acquisition strategies and found that the keyword method and the context method were superior to no method. Moreover, Sanoui (1995) found two distinct approaches to vocabulary learning in L2: Some adults are clearly capable of managing their own learning whereas others rely heavily on instructors' guidance to develop their lexical knowledge, and for such learners she recommends helping them to acquire processes for managing their own learning.

Fourth, do such gains persist through time, and do they do so with a significant advantage over strategy-oriented approaches to vocabulary learning such as memorizing words, using the keyword technique, and so on?

Negative research evidence

There is also some negative evidence in the research literature. For example, in an explicit attempt to test the IH, Tudor and Hafiz (1989) set up a 3-month ESL extensive reading program using graded readers. Compared to a control group, the experimental group showed significant improvement in both reading and writing, especially writing. However, "the subjects' vocabulary base remained relatively unchanged" (p. 164). Moreover, in a subsequent study with adults in an EFL setting who also used graded readers, Hafiz and Tudor (1990) again found no significant vocabulary gain. Hulstijn (1992), in several studies of adult L2 learners, concluded that "the retention of word meanings in a true incidental learning task is very low indeed" (p. 122). Thus we are left with very

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mixed results from the research in support of Krashen's claims about L2 vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading alone.

Comparing instruction and extensive reading by adults

On the other hand, Paribakht and Wesche (Chapter 9, this volume) investigated this question in a university setting with adults studying English for academic purposes. They found that while reading for meaning alone did result in significant acquisition of L2 vocabulary, direct instruction led to acquisition of even greater numbers of words as well as more depth of knowledge. Zimmerman (1994) found similar results. It is beyond the scope of this article to survey the components of such an instructional approach, but see, for example, Paribakht and Wesche (Chapter 9, this volume), Hulstijn (Chapter 10, this volume), Nuttall (1982), Nation (1990), and Cohen (1990).

Comparing instruction and extensive reading by children

In contrast to the above studies with adults, Elley (1991) presents the results of nine different studies that exposed young children to a large range of high-interest illustrated storybooks in second language literacy oriented programs. Five parameters were common to all of the studies: immersion in meaningful texts, incidental language learning, integration of oral and written language, focus on meaning rather than form, and the fostering of high intrinsic motivation. There were rapid gains in reading and listening comprehension, which tended to remain stable over time. Moreover, Elley (1989) found that oral reading of stories to L2 elementary learners led to significant and long-term vocabulary acquisition. Elley concludes that these studies provide support for whole-language approaches and Krashen's Input Hypothesis.

But here again it is important to note that these results are with children, not adults. Some researchers claim that children acquire language in a significantly different manner than adults whereas others disagree strongly with such claims. In view of such controversy, results from studies on how children can acquire vocabulary cannot be extrapolated to adult acquisition in a simple and straightforward manner. For an introduction to this debate, see Clahsen, 1990; White, 1990; Klein, 1990; Lassen-Freeman and Long, 1991.

Extensive reading of newspapers

A different kind of evidence can be seen in a diary study by Grabe and Stoller (Chapter 6, this volume), which describes an attempt to learn

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Portuguese by extensive reading of mainly newspapers for at least 2 hours per day. Their theory was that "many exposures of differing intensities would gradually lead to a large recognition vocabulary." They concluded that reading and vocabulary abilities did develop as a result of extensive reading practice. Note, however, that the subject was a highly motivated adult learner who was very knowledgeable about successful language learning strategies. For more discussion on how to use newspaper articles for extensive reading, see Kiyongho and Nation (1989).

The beginner's paradox

Since the empirical evidence in support of incidental acquisition of vocabulary is somewhat ambiguous, it would seem that we must pay more serious attention to the problem facing those language learners who are beginners and who face a truly paradoxical situation. How can they learn enough words to learn vocabulary through extensive reading when they do not know enough words to read well? For a possible solution, let us adopt a somewhat pragmatic and pedagogical approach.

From a pragmatic perspective, it appears quite logical for beginning L2 language learners to put most of their emphasis on learning words. And yet most contemporary academic approaches to language learning place minimal importance on vocabulary learning and appear to assume that somehow words will be learned as a by-product of the other language activities (see Zimmerman, Chapter 1, this volume).

Vocabulary threshold for reading comprehension

Lauter (Chapter 2, this volume) discusses the L2 vocabulary knowledge needed for minimal reading comprehension and concludes that "the turning point of vocabulary size for reading comprehension is about 3,000 word families." Since a word family contains a base form plus its inflected and derived forms (e.g., *find, finds, finder, findings*, etc.), this increases the total amount to about 5,000 lexical items. She claims that, upon reaching that lexical threshold, good L1 readers can be expected to transfer their reading strategies to L2. Moreover, she cites Nation and Coady (1988) concerning their claim that successful guessing in context occurs when about 98% of the lexical items in a text are already known. She points out that this implies knowing about 5,000 word families or about 8,000 lexical items. Presumably the reader would then be an independent learner capable of learning words through context in the same manner as L1 learners. But it is sobering to note how much vocabulary

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knowledge the learner must have in order to read at this level of independence and native-like proficiency. We can now further appreciate the beginner's paradox: How does a beginner learn enough words to read with even modest comprehension at the threshold level of 3,000 word families, and, beyond that, an independent level of 5,000 word families?

Low-frequency vocabulary problems

Another basic problem facing foreign language learners is that they typically have minimal opportunities for exposure to the target language, and especially the types of spoken language experiences that native speakers enjoy and that enable them to achieve at least the minimal vocabulary needed for reading. For example, a comparison of the Schonell, Meddleton, and Shaw (1956) count of spoken English and the Kucera and Francis (1967) count of written English would seem to indicate that written English contains twice as many word types as does spoken English. In other words, a great many words of low frequency are found only in writing and therefore, logically speaking, can only be learned by encountering them in that context. Therefore, another problem facing the L2 learner is that many low-frequency words can be learned only by reading.

Vocabulary control movement

Historically, the most significant attempt to solve the beginner's paradox was the vocabulary control movement, which attempted to drastically limit the vocabulary found in learner texts (see Zimmerman, Chapter 1, this volume). The assumption behind this practice is that the task of acquiring the language is greatly eased by eliminating (insofar as possible) the burden of recognizing too many different word forms. In an effort to produce comprehensible material, hundreds of simplified versions of texts have been produced, usually by eliminating all words above a certain level of difficulty as determined by a list of the frequency with which words occur in the language in general (e.g., West, 1953). For example, Nuttall (1982) cites the vocabulary levels of some major series of British EFL readers where the vocabulary levels range from 300 to 3,500 words. Such simplified reading texts, typically known as graded readers, are discussed in more detail by Bemford (1964), Hill and Thomas (1988, 1989), and Thomas & Hill (1993), who review many of the hundreds of available titles. Also see Wodinsky and Naiton (1988), Hedge (1985), Greenwood (1988), and Ellis and McRae (1991), who discuss various aspects of learning from graded readers.

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Use of authentic materials

However, use of such simplified texts has been greatly criticized because they are not seen as "authentic." Because the process of simplification involves rewriting, it tends to eliminate much of the normal syntactic and pragmatic usage of an ordinary text as well as its less frequent vocabulary. Critics of such texts (Huckin, 1983; Widdowson, 1979) claim that they do not prepare students for the "real" texts they will face all too soon. Instead they suggest that actual native speaker materials that have not been simplified should be used for pedagogy, and they would presumably extend this same claim to the materials being used for extensive reading. Also, many graded readers are poorly written, stilted in style, and actually dull to read. Thomas and Hill (1993) do report, however, that there has been some improvement in this respect.

Note that beginning native speaker readers are not expected to read difficult texts, e.g., literature, until they are at a more advanced state in their schooling. They are usually exposed to simplified readers and specially adapted pedagogical materials such as the popular boxes of reading materials from *Science Research Associates*. On the other hand, there is growing support in elementary language arts education in America for whole-language approaches, which strongly advocate the use of language considered more appropriate to children's level of linguistic and cognitive growth. Proponents therefore argue that young readers should be given authentic, well-written materials that are designed for their age level, e.g., Caldecott and Newberry award-winning books for children. For an application of this approach to TESOL, see Rigg (1991).

Accordingly, many proponents of extensive reading advocate the use of simplified materials for beginners, but readily admit that the goal must be to move as quickly as possible to more authentic native speaker texts. For example, Wallace (1992) argues for a more flexible interpretation of authenticity and concludes that "if we see authenticity as lying in the interaction between text and reader and not in the text itself, we need not hesitate to use specially written texts" (p. 81).