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“If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning. That way, their children don’t have to be slaves of praise. They will have a lifelong way to build and repair their own confidence.”

Carol S. Dweck, Mindset

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Abstract
Research on vocabulary acquisition from reading has shown that both first and second language learners can gain some vocabulary knowledge through reading. Apart from conducting new studies, one of the ways of investigating a particular phenomenon and creating stronger grounds for certain claims is by replicating previous studies. The aim of this study is to replicate the study on vocabulary acquisition through reading conducted by Zahar et al. (2001). The results show that the participants were able to learn the meaning of 3.02 words or 25.98% of the previously unknown words, which is a little bit higher than the results in the original study. The study found similar relationship between the learning gain scores and the participants’ vocabulary sizes, but different effects of word frequency for the participants with the smallest vocabulary sizes.

Keywords: vocabulary acquisition, extensive reading, incidental learning, word frequency, vocabulary size.

Introduction
There have been a lot of studies and debates on the best ways of learning vocabulary. Research on first language acquisition has shown that children learn a lot of words during their primary and secondary education, and that they complete their secondary education with a knowledge of about 40,000 words (Nagy and Herman, 1987: 21), which means that they learn about 2,000 to 3,000 words a year. One of the ways of learning vocabulary is by formal instruction in the classroom. Several direct procedures for learning vocabulary, such as the key word method, using word cards, exercises with synonyms, classification of words, creating semantic maps, using definitions, and so on, have produced good results. However, classroom observations have shown that explicit instruction can help learners acquire about 200 to 300 words a year (ibid., p. 33), so that the logical conclusion would be that the big increase in the learners’ vocabulary sizes must be a result of other ways of acquiring vocabulary (Jenkins et al., 1984: 768-9). Nagy & Herman (1987: 33) point out that even though explicit vocabulary learning can be effective, we need to take into account the limitations of such instruction as it cannot contribute to considerable increase in learners’ vocabulary knowledge. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that the majority of words are acquired through listening and reading (Nagy et al., 1987: 238).
A number of studies on first language acquisition have confirmed the hypothesis that reading can contribute to incidental vocabulary learning (Jenkins et al., 1984; Nagy et al., 1985; Nagy et al., 1987; Saragi et al., 1978). They have shown that learners can learn the meaning of a considerable number of previously unknown words, that the acquisition of words from reading depends to a great extent on the frequency of the words in the text, and that an important factor that affects the rate of acquisition is the conceptual difficulty of words.

Krashen (1989, 1993, 2004) claims that foreign language learners can also acquire vocabulary through reading and that exposing learners to comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level can result in successful language acquisition. Several studies on second/foreign language acquisition have demonstrated that reading can help learners enrich their vocabulary knowledge through reading (Brown et al., 2008; Cho and Krashen, 1994; Dupuy and Krashen, 1993; Grabe and Stoller, 1997; Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Horst et al., 1998; Pigada and Schmitt, 2006; Pitts et al., 1989; Waring and Takaki, 2003; Zahar et al., 2001). The findings in these studies imply that reading can be an important source for vocabulary acquisition. Nation (2001: 232) remarks that learning vocabulary from context may be the most important way of learning vocabulary and probably the only option for improving the language outside the classroom in foreign language contexts.

The present study is a replication of the study conducted by Zahar et al., (2001) in which the participants were 144 seventh grade ESL learners in Canada. In order to determine the relationship between the participants’ vocabulary size and the learning gains, the participants first took the Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation, 1990). The text that was chosen for the study was The Golden Fleece which contains 2,387 words. The computer analysis of the text showed that 91% of the words belonged to the first 2000 frequency range, 1% were words from the University Word List, and 8% were off-list words. In order to investigate the vocabulary learning gains from reading, the authors chose 30 words of which one third were low frequency words. The pretest had the same format as the Vocabulary Levels Test and was conducted 13 days before the treatment. The participants heard the story on a cassette tape and followed the written version of the text at the same time. Two days after the treatment they were tested on their knowledge of the target words using the same test. The participants learned 2.16 words of the available words, which is 20.88% or one in five words. The correlation between the learning gains and the frequency of the words in the text was r=.36. The analysis of the results showed that frequency was more important for the participants with smaller vocabulary sizes.

The present study addresses the following questions:
1. How much vocabulary can intermediate level EFL students learn while reading?
2. Does the vocabulary size of the participants affect the acquisition rate of unknown vocabulary?
3. Does the frequency of the words in the text affect the rate at which the words are acquired?

Methodology

Participants
The study began with 120 secondary school students in the Republic of Macedonia, aged 16. The data of the participants who were absent from some of the sessions were omitted, so that the study was completed with 83 participants of which 47 were females and 36 were males. They had studied English for six years and were considered to be at an intermediate level. In order to determine the relationship between their vocabulary size and the learning gains, as in the original study, the participants were given the Vocabulary Levels Test. Table 1 shows the results of the Vocabulary Levels Test at the five levels.
Table 1. Vocabulary Levels Test results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000 word level</td>
<td>23.96</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 word level</td>
<td>18.83</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000 word level</td>
<td>15.36</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Word List</td>
<td>15.74</td>
<td>8.65</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10000 word level</td>
<td>8.43</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall number of tested words was 150, and on average the participants knew 82.32 words or 54.88%. But, the results of the test showed that their vocabulary sizes were quite different, so that in order to gain better insights into the effect of their vocabulary size on their ability to learn vocabulary from reading, they were divided into three groups. Group 1 had a knowledge of 76.58%, Group 2 demonstrated a knowledge of 57.54% and Group 3 knew only 34.33% of the words at the five levels of the Vocabulary Levels Test.

**Materials and instruments**

As in the original study, the participants read the text *The Golden Fleece*, which is a Greek myth taken from an intermediate ESL reader. The target words and the instrument that was used to test the participants’ knowledge of these words were the same as in the original study. The participants’ vocabulary size was determined by using the Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation, 1990).

**Procedure**

The participants were asked if they would like to take part in the study, but they were not informed about its aim. All the stages of the experiment were conducted during their regular classes by their English teacher. The Vocabulary Levels Test and the pretest were administered one week before the treatment. The treatment session lasted 30 minutes. As a recording of the text was not available for this study, the teacher read the text aloud while the participants followed it in their copies. The posttest was administered two days after the reading treatment.

**Results**

The pretest results showed that on average the participants knew the meaning of 18.38 target words, so that the average number of unknown words was 11.62. However, as the participants differed greatly in their general vocabulary knowledge, their knowledge of the target words was also quite different. Group 1, who had the highest score on the Vocabulary Levels Test, knew 24.28 of the target words, Group 2 knew 19.82 words and Group 3 had a knowledge of only 11.06 of the target words. This means that the available words for learning differed greatly between the groups as for Group 1 there were only 5.72 unknown words, while for Group 3 there were 18.94 available words. The difference between the pretest and posttest results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Pretest-posttest results by groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group (n)</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Gain</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (25)</td>
<td>24.28</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>80.93</td>
<td>25.44</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>20.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (28)</td>
<td>19.82</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>66.06</td>
<td>23.54</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>78.46</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>36.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (30)</td>
<td>11.06</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>36.86</td>
<td>15.24</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>22.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>18.38</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>61.28</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>71.08</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>25.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the posttest show that the average number of words that were acquired through reading was 3.02, which is 25.98% of the unknown target words or one in four words. A t-test for paired samples (t = 7.23, p < 0.01) showed that the difference between the pretest and the posttest was significantly greater than chance. Thus, the answer to the first research question is positive.

The second question referred to the relationship between the participants’ vocabulary size and the learning gains. As the results show, the greatest gain in absolute terms was noticed for Group 3 who learned the meaning of 4.18 words, while Group 1 had the smallest gain of only 1.16 words. However, as mentioned previously, Group 1 knew 24.28 target words before the reading, so there were only 5.72 words for them to learn, whereas the participants in group 3 knew 11.06 target words before the reading, so there were 18.94 words available for learning. Group 2, on the other hand, had 10.12 words available for learning, of which they learned 3.72 words. The percentage of the acquired words from the number of previously unknown words gives a clearer picture about the rate of acquisition of the target words from reading. As the figures show, the most successful was Group 2 who managed to learn 36.75% of the previously unknown words, which is around one in three words. On the other hand, Groups 1 and 3 who differed greatly in their vocabulary sizes had a similar rate of acquisition. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for the correlation between the learning gains and the total scores on the Vocabulary Levels Test for Group 1 was 0.22, for Group 2 it was 0.26, and for Group 3 it was 0.07. These figures show that the vocabulary size of the participants in this study did not play a significant role in the rate of learning the meaning of the unknown words.

This study also investigated the relationship between the word’s frequency in the text and the learning gains. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for the correlation between the relative gain scores and the frequency of the words in the text was 0.34, and it did not differ considerably between the groups, as for groups 1 and 2 it was 0.35, and for group 3 it was 0.24. These figures show that the frequency of the words in the text might have had a certain influence on the acquisition rate. But, in contrast to the original study, the word frequency was less significant for the participants with smaller vocabulary sizes.

**Discussion**

The aim of this study was to replicate the study conducted by Zahar et al. (2001) in order to find out if the results would be repeated with a different group of learners in a different context. According to the results, the participants learned the meaning of 3.02 (25.98%) of the previously unknown words or one in four words. This result is a bit higher than the result obtained in the original study where the participants learned 2.16 (20.88%) of the unknown target words or one in five words. Both studies investigated only the acquisition of meaning of a small number of words. Since context enables acquisition of many other aspects of word knowledge, we may assume that apart from meaning, learners may have acquired other aspects of these and many other words. The fact that the participants may acquire the meaning of one in every four or five unknown words indicates that reading can enable learners to acquire a significant number of unknown words and it should be taken into account when designing language learning programmes.

The differences between the participants in the two studies may reveal some of the factors that influence the rate of vocabulary acquisition from reading. The participants in the original study were ESL learners whose vocabulary sizes were a little bit higher than the vocabulary sizes of the participants in the present study who were EFL learners. Assuming that a bigger vocabulary size enables better comprehension and more favourable...
conditions for inferring word meanings from context, we would expect better results for learners with bigger vocabulary sizes. However, the participants in the original study were seven grade students around the age of twelve and were four years younger than the participants in the present study. As besides vocabulary size, reading comprehension depends on readers’ world knowledge and reading fluency (Hirsh, 2003) as well as the conceptual difficulty of words (Nagy et al., 1987), keeping in mind that the text used in the study was a Greek myth, which might be more difficult for younger readers, it is likely that these factors may have influenced the greater gains in this study.

The second research question looked closer at the importance of the participants’ vocabulary size. The considerable difference in the vocabulary sizes of the participants provided opportunities for investigating this factor. The findings show that the participants with the smallest vocabulary sizes had the greatest gains in absolute terms. But, if we look at the relative gains, Group 2 had the greatest gains, which was higher than the other two groups. These results are similar to the results in the original study where the participants with the smallest and the biggest vocabulary sizes had lower results than those in the middle. Thus, in both studies the vocabulary size was not a decisive factor for learning words from context. However, we need to bear in mind that the number of unknown target words was very small, so that we cannot make any firm conclusions in this respect. But, it is important to mention that other studies have also failed to find a strong relationship between prior vocabulary knowledge and the acquisition rates (Horst et al., 1998; Hulstijn, 1993).

The third research question investigated the effect of frequency on vocabulary acquisition. Many studies have found a positive correlation between the number of encounters of the word and the rate of its acquisition (Huckin and Coady, 1999; Jenkins et al., 1984; Nagy et al., 1985; Horst et al., 1998; Nation, 1990; Nation, 2001; Saragi et al., 1978, Schmitt, 2000, 2008; Waring and Takaki, 2003). The findings in this study confirm this relationship. However, if we compare the results of the present study and the original study we can see that while in the original study the greatest effect was found for the participants with the smallest vocabulary sizes, in this study the effect of frequency was smaller for the participants with smaller vocabulary sizes. But, we cannot make strong conclusions about the role of frequency on incidental vocabulary acquisition from these two studies because of the lack of variability of words with different frequency.

**Conclusion**

The results of the study demonstrates that foreign language learners can acquire a significant number of unknown words through reading. It also shows that apart from vocabulary size, other factors such as learner’s background knowledge, the type of texts, the context, etc, may also play have an important role. The overall conclusion would be that reading can greatly contribute to incidental vocabulary learning; many aspects of word knowledge can only be learned in context. Since reading can be the main source of vocabulary growth in foreign language contexts, and because this and other studies have demonstrated that foreign language learners can acquire vocabulary from reading, an important pedagogical implication would be that language learning programmes would incorporate an extensive reading component which would give learners the opportunity to enrich their vocabulary, to see how the language functions in authentic contexts, to read at their own pace, and to choose texts that interest them, which should increase their motivation and interest in learning the language.

Note: The study was first presented at the 6th International ELT Research Conference in Selçuk, Turkey.
References


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Non-native Speech and Feedback: The Relationship between Non-native Speakers’ Production and Native Speakers’ Reaction

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Non-native Speech and Feedback: The Relationship between Non-native Speakers’ Production and Native Speakers’ Reaction

Abstract

This study investigates the connection between production and willingness to speak and write without the fear of constant correction of non-native speakers of English in the light of the feedback they receive from native speakers of English. Most of the previous literature on this subject studied this behavior in different classroom settings and considered teacher-student and student-student feedback, but not much emphasis has been put on the social aspects of NNS speech and NS feedback. This study explores whether in a social context negative or positive feedback from native speakers of English, intentionally or unintentionally, affects English learners’ learning process, improving or worsening it. Questionnaires are used as the method of data collection to learn about the ESL learners’ experiences. The findings suggest that approximately 80% of the participants acknowledge that their use of L2 is in fact negatively affected by the native speakers’ reaction.

Keywords: native, non-native, English, speech, feedback, ESL, correction.
Introduction

English, as an international language is learned and used all over the world for various purposes such as education, business, communication etc. Hence, unlike other languages English is not possessed by certain people in particular territories and it “belongs to all people who speak it, whether native and nonnative, whether ESL or EFL, whether standard or non-standard” (Norton, 1997). Native speakers of English as Kachru argues, “seem to have lost the exclusive prerogative to control its standardization; in fact, if current statistics are any indication, they have become a minority” (Kachru, 1985, p. 30).

Kachru (1985) divided English speakers into three different categories; 1) The inner circle consisting of native speakers of English, 2) The outer circle including countries in which English is the second language such as India and Nigeria, and 3) The expanding circle referring to EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and non-native learners of English in various countries around the globe is the fastest growing circle. As the statistics show, 80 percent of verbal exchanges in English are between non-native speakers (Gnutzman, 2000). Pakir (1999) suggested that the number of non-native English speakers triples the number of native English speakers in the world and this number will increase from 253 million to approximately 462 million during the next 50 years (Graddol, 1999).

One plausible argument for some of the immigrants in the United States’ expressing their lack of interest in using English might be because they do not receive motivating reactions from native speakers in different situations. Some of these reactions would not only be not enthusiastic but also disappointing or offensive which could potentially have a negative effect on the non-native speakers’ production and communication in the second language regardless of their proficiency in English. Therefore, it is of extreme importance to pay more attention to native and non-native speech and the factors influencing each.

Literature Review

Although the importance of the listener’s role is acknowledged by many researchers (Schegloff 1982; Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs 1986; Clark & Schaefer 1987, 1989), it is much neglected in native speakers’ attitude towards non-native speakers and attributing their understanding difficulties to that speaker’s language skills (Lippi-Green, 1997). Communication takes place when both of the interlocutors help one another; therefore, it is not only the responsibility of the speaker or as Schegloff (1982) suggests, “conversation is always collaboratively achieved”. This is called the principle of mutual responsibility: “The participants in a conversation try to establish, roughly by the initiation of each new contribution, the mutual belief that the listeners have understood what the speaker meant in the last utterance to a criterion sufficient for current purposes” (Clark & Schaefer 1987, 1989).

In native and non-native conversations this issue may cause many problems such as the NS not considering his or her responsibility as a listener and relating lack of appropriate communication to NNS’s unintelligibility (Perkins & Milroy 1997). As in a study by Rubin (1992), it was shown that failure in comprehension might be the result of expectations from the speaker’s accent. He studied two groups listening to the same recorded lecture by a native speaker but showing different pictures of the lecturer to each group; an Asian and a Caucasian. Even though both of the groups listened to the same lecturer, surprisingly the group which was shown the Asian picture scored lower in the test and claimed foreign accent.

In another study by Taylor & Gardner (1970), communication between English and French native speakers in Canada was investigated in which even though the French and English Canadians had the same level of proficiency, the listeners rated the French Canadian speaker as less proficient. Moreover the same experiment was
conducted to see the results between Tagalog and Chinese native speakers in the Philippines. None of the groups used their native language but on the contrary the listeners expected the Chinese speaker to be less successful.

Lindemann (2002), studied twelve native English speakers’ attitudes toward Koreans by completing a map task and found out that NSs had negative attitudes towards NNS and used avoidance strategies. Lindemann (2002) further concluded that native speakers’ choice of strategies mediates the comprehension between NSs and NNSs.

**Methods**

This is a pilot study to evaluate how non-native speakers of English perceive native speakers’ attitudes towards themselves and the effects they have on their speech and usage of English. For this purpose, 20 non-native speakers of English were chosen from the California State University of Northridge’s IEP (Intensive English Program) Center and were asked to respond to a questionnaire (See Appendix).

**Data Analysis**

The students were from a mixed TOEFL Listening and Speaking class consisting of mostly intermediate students (45%), upper-intermediate (25%), advanced (5%), intermediate (10%) and elementary (15 %) students. Ten female and ten male students within 19 to 29 range of age from seven different countries (Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Kuwait, Korea, China, Thailand and Iran) were the participants of this study. The students’ length of stay in the U.S ranged from one month to two years.
The results show that 80 percent of the participants stated that when talking to native English speakers in the U.S what they say is grammatically correct but NSs do not comprehend what they said and ask them to repeat what they have said again.

Moreover, about 80 percent of the participants gave positive responses to the following question, “Do you feel disappointed when you can’t get your message across when talking to native speakers?” with 35% choosing “Often”, 30% choosing “Sometimes” and 15% choosing “Always”. Also, the same percentage, 80% of the participants, stated that they would not initiate a conversation with native English speakers due to their fear of not being able to make themselves understood.
Do you feel disappointed when you can’t get your message across when talking to native speakers?

- Always (15%)
- Never (20%)
- Often (35%)
- Sometimes (30%)

Has it ever happened to you that you would not initiate a talk with a native speaker because of the fear of not being able to make yourself understood by that person?

- Never
- Sometimes
- Often (40%)
- Always (5%)
- Never (20%)

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Conclusion

The data shows that non-native speech and production is in fact affected by native speakers’ reaction and the feedback they give to non-native speakers of English. As stated above, a high percentage (about 80%) of non-native speakers get disappointed by the feedback they receive from native speakers and are not willing to start a conversation due to this fear/disappointment. This lack of enthusiasm and fear of speaking in L2 may result in non-native speakers’ preference of having non-native friends (more than 70% showed preference towards having non-native friends) and spending most of their time with people sharing the same L1, and as a consequence receiving less L2 input and in turn not improving in the second language.

Options for non-native speakers in this situation include taking advantage of sources of comprehensible input that do not require interaction (e.g. reading and comprehensible TV shows) and finding those special people who will try to understand them “even though you are miles away from what a native speaker would usually be able to understand” (Lonsdale, 2006; p. 178). In other words, a “language friend” (Lonsdale, 2006; Krashen, 2012).
Appendix

Questionnaire

Age: Nationality: Level: Gender:

1. How long have you been living in the United States?

2. How do you evaluate your English regardless of the level you are currently in?
   Elementary Pre-intermediate Intermediate Upper-intermediate Advanced

3. Do you have any native English-speaking friends?
   Not at all a few some many

4. If yes, how much time do you spend with them?
   Not much sometimes most of the time all the time

5. Do you prefer to spend time with your native or non-native friends?
   Native friends non-native friends both equally

6. Do you have any problems communicating with native speakers?
   Always most of the time sometimes never

7. When talking to native speakers has it happened that you think what you said was grammatically correct but the native speaker you were talking to did not understand what you said?
   Always most of the time sometimes never

8. How do you rate native speakers’ reactions when you are communicating with them?
   Very bad bad not very good good

9. Do native speakers correct you when you are talking?
   Always most of the time sometimes never

10. Do you feel disappointed when you can’t get your message across when talking to native speakers?
    Never sometimes most of the time always

11. Has it ever happened to you that you would not initiate a talk with a native speaker because of the fear of not being able to make yourself understood by that person?
    Never sometimes often always

12. Do you relate an unsuccessful conversation to your lack of proficiency in English or the native speakers’ lack of interest in understanding you?
13. Have you been asked to repeat what you said more than once when you were talking to native speakers?
   Always          most of the time       sometimes        never

14. If yes, do you get irritated by having to repeat the same sentence again? Do you have a memory regarding this issue?

References


Language acquisition proceeds best when the input is not just comprehensible, but really interesting, even compelling; so interesting that you forget you are listening to or reading another language.”

Dr. Stephen Krashen
**How to use MovieTalk to Teach with Comprehensible Input**

_Eric Herman_

**Edgartown K-8 School, Edgartown, Massachusetts**

Eric Herman received his B.A. in Psychology and in Exercise and Sport Science from UNC Chapel Hill. He taught English in Honduras for 3 years as a part of his service as a Youth Development Volunteer in the Peace Corps and after as Director of Operations for the Honduras Educational Development Assistance Corp. He and his Honduran wife return to Honduras in the summer months to volunteer in the schools and to support English instruction. Currently, he teaches Spanish at the Edgartown K-8 School in Edgartown, Massachusetts. Links to videos of Herman teaching can be found at the end of this article.

Following the 2006 and 2014 IJFLT articles by Ashley Hastings on MovieTalk, there has been a surge of conversation on international listservs, such as the moreTPRS Yahoo listserv (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/moreTPRS/join). In response, I will discuss strategies I use to provide comprehensible input in my public elementary and middle school Spanish classroom. MovieTalk appeals to teachers who teach languages by providing comprehensible input, because a compelling video in large part takes care of classroom management concerns and the teacher does not have to worry about being the source of entertainment nor improvising the details of a story as is done in other Teaching with Comprehensible Input (TCI) methods, such as Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS). It’s one more powerful tool to provide novel, compelling, comprehensible input.

**Basic Technique:**

The Narrative/Paraphrase technique, which came to be called “MovieTalk”, consists of the teacher playing and pausing a video clip, while narrating the scenes, paraphrasing any dialogue, and asking questions with short answers in order to check for comprehension (Murphy & Hastings, 2014; Hastings, 2014). This form of video appreciation allows the class to enjoy the richness of the frames, seeing things unnoticeable at full speed. Think of every frame as a page in a picture book. The teacher describes the picture in a way that is comprehensible to the students (pointing, gesturing, drawing, etc.). Teachers should use TPRS skills like circling, point and pause, pop-ups, and Berty Segal’s levels of questioning to increase comprehensibility (Segal, 1992, p. 9; Ray & Seely, 2012, p. 139-173).
In the original design, Hastings would have a movie segment first play without interruption, then replay the video and narrate with the volume lowered or pausing the video to narrate. Some teachers show the entire clip first, without saying anything, just to give the students background knowledge. It has been my experience that student engagement is highest the first time through, so I suggest not showing the clip first.

**Introduction to Students:**
There are three main rules that students follow during a MovieTalk:
1) The students must only speak in the target language.
2) The students must keep their eyes on me and on the screen.
3) All students must respond to my questions or else signal they don’t understand.

When you first start MovieTalk, the kids may protest the frequent stopping of the film. It is important that the teacher explain the purpose of the activity. I tell students that I want to show them fun videos, but the ultimate objective is to listen to the target language. I choose short clips so that I can replay the clip without stopping at the end of the period. If I replay, I may narrate without pausing or ask the students to tell the story to themselves in their heads as the video plays.

**Length:**
Originally, MovieTalk was used more for feature-length films, but it was designed for use in 4 hour classes of university ESL students and was part of a multiple week listening module. The shorter periods in middle school and high school lend themselves to shorter clips. I’ve had the most success with MovieTalk when the clip has a repetitive plot and is short (1-4 minutes). Longer clips (4+ minutes) can work if they are repetitive. You can let the video play for longer periods of time, until the repetitive scene occurs. The longer, repetitive clips can be effective, because less frequent pauses are often more tolerable by students and allows for embedded brain breaks.

**Interactive:**
Although a MovieTalk utilizes storytelling, rather than the “StoryAsking” (a term coined by Jason Fritze) the teacher can decide the level of interaction. That interaction can range from low (mostly narration) to high (asking questions after every statement). Your strategy depends on your intent. If the number one intent is pleasure and not repetition of targeted structures or vocabulary words, then ask fewer questions. If the objective is to focus on comprehension skills (prediction, evaluation, etc.) and repetition, then ask a circle of questions and also ask higher order thinking questions.

Without student actors, as in TPRS, you are at risk of not getting the other verb forms into the input. To include first person input you can “speak your mind,” modeling your own thought process about predictions, reactions, etc. Additionally, ask your students personal questions that parallel the characters, utilize students as the characters of the MovieTalk as you would in TPRS, and read the story from different points of view.

There can be a tendency in a MovieTalk to spend more time on narration, which could cause students to zone out during a MovieTalk and doesn’t give the teacher feedback on the students’ comprehension. To maintain attention, strive to ask a question after every 1 to 2 statements, in order to check that the students have actually comprehended. Additionally, you do the same things teachers do in TPRS to hold kids accountable, e.g. requiring choral responses, exit quizzes, and timed rewrites of the story. Likely, you will find a mix of narration and questioning to be ideal. You can always ask your way through a segment, then rewind and narrate, just like we often do in TPRS to retell the story and gain more repetitions.
The 4 C’s of Optimized Input:
In two studies, students in the Focal Skills’ Listening Module, of which instruction time was mostly spent on MovieTalk, showed three times greater listening comprehension gains compared to standard ESL classes, while equaling progress in reading and writing (Hastings, 1995; Yu, 1998). I imagine the effects can be further enhanced by teachers who do the best they can to apply the 4 C’s of optimized input.

1. Comprehensible
Comprehension suffers when students do not understand 95-98% of the input (Coady and Nation, 1988; Laufer, 1989). During a MovieTalk, the teacher’s speech is much more comprehensible than the original soundtrack (more of the teacher’s speech is visually reflected in the movie) and teachers use a higher frequency vocabulary (Hastings, 2014). The combination of more comprehensible speech, pointing at the content in the visual, the teacher’s use of gestures, and establishing meaning for pre-selected target structures makes for high quality comprehensible input (CI). Video selection is important. Choose videos with action, easy to describe scenes, and that have little to no dialogue. There are 2 student C’s that are the result of Comprehensible Input.
   a) Confidence – When students can easily understand the message and successfully respond to questioning, then confidence soars.
   b) Comfort – In terms of Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), MovieTalk makes for more effective acquisition. It lowers the students’ affective filters since they understand, are only required to respond orally with one-word answers, and due to the relaxing nature of watching a movie. Furthermore, during MovieTalks students may be invited to lounge on a carpeted floor and in comfortable chairs.

2. Compelling
The right selection of a video clip (e.g. humorous videos, like Pixar or Mr. Bean) make the story inherently compelling. While the volume of video clips can be lowered during MovieTalk, a good soundtrack can make a video more compelling. The story is not customized to the class-given details, which is the greatest source of compelling input for TPRS. The teacher and students aren’t responsible for making the input compelling, which can make TCI easier and less stressful for the teacher. You can personalize the story if you desire, by asking questions to compare the characters to the students.

3. Contextualized
All the vocabulary happens within the framework of a story. We can do more than just point at objects and say them in the target language (e.g. point at a tree and say “tree”). We contextualize the vocabulary by giving sentence-level input (e.g. “There is a tree. What color is the tree?”) and that input is part of an event in the story.

4. Concentrated
If you want to build aural knowledge that will be retained, which in turn eventually leads to output, you need to provide repetitive input. Studies suggest that the memory of a word requires dozens of exposures in meaningful contexts and many more exposures are needed to comprehend the word in a new context and use it in fluent speech (Nation, 2001). Within a MovieTalk you can be repetitive by targeting structures, utilizing the questioning technique known as circling, selecting videos with repetitive plots, replaying the video, and including a Screenshot BookTalk (see below).

Targeted Input:
TPRS targets a few structures and often spends several classes on the same structures. The ultimate goal of focusing on a few structures is to concentrate the repetitions the students would receive from more natural input
in order to accelerate acquisition of the vocabulary contained in the structures. Limiting structures is another way to improve comprehensibility of the input. Greater comprehensibility and repetition leads to greater acquisition and retention, which ultimately results in greater fluency. While targeting structures means narrating with a limited vocabulary, teachers should strive to not limit grammar.

The 3-step TPRS process (establish meaning of vocabulary structures, ask a story, read) works for any type of story. TPRS teachers have taken MovieTalk and fit it to this process by choosing clips with repetitive plots and turning the MovieTalks into short story scripts with 1-3 pre-selected target structures. Establish meaning with TPR and/or PQA (asking personalized questions about) the structures. Optionally, you can BookTalk the screenshots (explained below). Also, the class can read one scene of the story that has the targeted structures, translate, and discuss, with the objective of getting more repetitions of the structures and increasing the comprehensibility of the MovieTalk. In a way, this is the base reading of an Embedded Reading done before viewing the clip and an extended reading is completed after (for more information on Embedded Readings see Clarcq, 2012, p. 21-24 and visit http://embeddedreading.com). Then, play the clip, stopping on the frames that have the repetitive scene to narrate and circle the structures. Then, read, translate, and discuss the text. Finally, students are ready for more output-driven activities, such as pair retells and timed rewrites. You can play around with the order of the 3 steps and can do more than one simultaneously (e.g. combine PQA and story), just as you can with TPRS.

Non-Targeted Input:
MovieTalk is an opportunity to match pedagogy to theory. Krashen (2013) reminds us that the net hypothesis calls for non-targeted comprehensible input. The net hypothesis indicates that non-targeted comprehensible input automatically differentiates instruction, because it will include the vocabulary and grammar all the students are ready to acquire. Krashen explains some of the problems of targeted input, e.g. students don’t always receive input they are ready for and it can constrain the interest of the messages. The power of the visual in a MovieTalk to make input comprehensible allows for “loosening up class discussions.” MovieTalks can be done without targeted structures and they are still largely comprehensible, although less transparent (translatable), but this is how vocabulary is acquired. Each time we come across a word in a new context, about 5% of its meaning is acquired (Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985).

In a non-targeted approach, students don’t get the same concentrated repetitions they get from a targeted approach, but if continued throughout the year, the repetitions would be received, albeit over the long term. MovieTalk was created for intensive instruction and the high volume of comprehensible input ensures repetition, but that is not the case in a daily, 40 minute foreign language class. Without concentrated repetitions around targeted structures, I would be concerned with retention loss and a likely delay in output. The same happens in TPRS if we choose too many target structures or use too much vocabulary. Then, students generally have less memory and output of the words, because they received fewer repetitions of each structure.

Embedded Listening:
One way to balance targeted and non-targeted input is to present a MovieTalk as if it were an aural Embedded Reading, what I call here an Embedded Listening. You start with aural narration and questioning of a base version that is easy for the entire class to comprehend. Upon subsequent repetitive scenes or on replays of the clip, add to the base version so that each successive version injects new information. The base version provides the most concise, targeted input and each successive version is longer and hence less targeted. The new information should not all be unfamiliar and more challenging. Rather, it should be of varying difficulty. In this way, you are able to manage comprehensibility and exposure to unfamiliar language, while each level provides
more repetitions of the language from previous versions. One strategy is to add 1-3 new target structures at each level, as is done in the Extended Versions of TPRS story scripts (see Tripp’s Scripts: Tripp, 2012). You can embed the same short and compelling clip in consecutive classes and students will still pay attention. Or embed a clip that was introduced earlier in the year and go back and add a second and third level to the listening. MovieTalk lends itself nicely to this, since students don’t have a problem re-watching compelling clips.

Reading:
However you present the MovieTalk, combining the MovieTalk with a reading of the text is a great way to teach literacy skills and provide more optimized input. Reading the text of a MovieTalk is great training in an important reading skill: visualization. There is a large amount of research showing that mental imagery enhances comprehension, memory, and higher order thinking (Sadoski, 1998). The Lindamood-Bell programs, such as Visualizing and Verbalizing, have had notable success in making students better readers by improving their abilities to visualize (Bell, 2007). These programs align with dual coding theory which explains that cognition consists of a verbal system interconnected with a nonverbal system (Paivio, 1971). The birth of the Lindamood-Bell programs came from a student who was good at reading comprehension who told Nanci Bell, “I make movies when I read” (Bell, 2007, p. 3-8). Expert TPRS teacher Susan Gross subsequently defined reading as students “seeing a movie in their heads.” The discussion of the visual image during a MovieTalk primes the mental imagery, which can be accessed during reading. Reading the text of a video clip has great power to recreate that movie in their minds.

For the same reason I wouldn’t show the entire clip first, i.e. lower engagement, I wouldn’t read the text before the MovieTalk. Furthermore, providing the aural input before the visual input increases the comprehensibility of the reading and increases the pronunciation of that “voice in our heads” that we can hear when we read. If the MovieTalk has a cliffhanger, then you could stop the clip before the ending, read the text excluding the ending, and then go back and MovieTalk the final part. Finally, put the readings into folders made accessible during self-selected reading time.

BookTalk
When applied to videos, the Narrative/Paraphrase technique is called MovieTalk, but teachers can use the technique with picture books, and in this case, it could be considered “BookTalk.” Fluency Through TPR Storytelling (Ray & Seely, 2012, p. 360-61) suggests “Kindergarten Days,” reading aloud to students from a picture book. During a BookTalk you can tell a different story than what is written, just as pre-literate children “picture read” (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999). A good way for a teacher to improve his/her MovieTalk skills is to practice with a single picture or a children’s book.

Screenshot BookTalk
You can turn a video into a BookTalk by creating and narrating screenshots of the frames. It requires more preparation, but you can also subtitle the screenshots. The subtitles can include narration, comprehension questions, or personalized questions. When the Screenshot BookTalk comes before the MovieTalk it helps to establish meaning and increase the comprehensibility of the MovieTalk. This previewing of the story is a recommended pre-reading comprehension strategy called a “picture walk” (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999). When the Screenshot BookTalk comes after the MovieTalk, it serves as repetition. With subtitles, this could be the reading, in which case the screenshots aid in the comprehensibility of the subtitles.
Conclusion
There are many ways to do a MovieTalk that will be effective to the degree to which they satisfy the four tenets of optimized input. Teachers are encouraged to experiment and find what works for them. It is likely that students will be most engaged if the teacher varies his/her approach and presentation style with every few MovieTalks. MovieTalk is still emerging as a common TCI tool and will continue to evolve.

Watch videos of Eric Herman teaching with MovieTalk and other CI methods:
teaching English in Honduras
teaching Spanish at the Edgartown K-8 School in Edgartown, MA
Additional resources can be found on Eric Herman’s website

References


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Excerpts from Ben Slavic’s Stepping Stones

Ben Slavic

Edited by Karen Rowan

Slavic teaches French in Denver Public Schools, writes a blog and presents workshops on teaching with comprehensible input.

Let’s not mince words. Kids of today have few reasons to believe in themselves. The scene in most schools is still all about competition and testing and dominating and winning and excluding others.

But if we learn to teach using comprehensible input we can change that culture of competition into one of cooperation and mutual understanding and the building of community. We can bring success in languages to many more than just the few dominant winner students.

We really can. Let’s give the kids something to believe in – themselves. By setting up classrooms in which we speak to the kids in ways that they can understand, in ways that make them want to understand, we give them hope enough to believe that they can do something, that they can be very successful in at least one of their classes.

Let’s learn how to teach in such a way that our kids experience hope. Let’s stop teaching in ways that crush hope. That is what the old system did – it crushed hope in kids. We just weren’t aware of it. But the sad looks on our students’ faces when they were in our classes before we made this change should have tipped us off that something was wrong.

All that is done now - it’s over. There is no blame. The time has finally arrived for us to change how we teach so that we can change the looks on our students’ faces. That is reason enough to get up in the morning and go into our schools.

We can do it. We can help kids believe in themselves. We can help kids believe that they can be good at something: a language. We can help kids believe in life. It’s not really about teaching a language at all, is it? It’s not. It never was. We do so much more than teach languages.
One activity from Stepping Stones to increase personalization and comprehensible input:

One Word Images (OWI)

One Word Images is a term that I use to describe a way I have of using comprehension based techniques. OWI is a lot of fun for the kids and for me. I could do it for hours and hours on end, just to see what the kids come up with.

To start, just pick a noun. Animals are good choices. Write the word down on the board in the target language and translate it. Next, do the word association process. Ask the kids to associate the sound of the new word with some other sound or gesture, anything that they can think of. For the image of a house, for example, when a shy student puts her hands over her head like a roof, you respond as if this is just a brilliant suggestion, praising the student and having the other students do that motion, glancing with great approval at the originator of the gesture. Now the student will pretend to be the house for the duration of the activity. Support her in consistently playing the part of a house. This is training the class to later perform as actors in stories.

Then start asking the kids the following specific set of questions about it:

- its name
- its quantity
- its size
- its color
- its intelligence level
- rich or poor
- mean or kind
- hair color
- eye color
- its mood
- where it is
- what it is doing
- when this occurred (time, day of the week, etc.)
- other physical characteristics

As you ask more and more questions (circling), the image will develop almost like a photograph in the minds’ eyes of the students. To middle school students in particular, and especially when it is an animal, and especially when they create it, and when the animal has a silly name, and does strange things, the image becomes very compelling.

I have a laminated copy of the above questions on a clipboard at my desk for ease of access. It is my prompt sheet for this activity. The process of creating these images can last from a few minutes to an entire class period. When the animal has a silly name, and does strange things, the image becomes very compelling.

Circling permits the addition of details. The repetitions build the CI, and the new details build the (personalized) interest. This activity is easy for teachers and develops listening skills in students.

In the work we do with comprehensible input, we are not teaching images or stories, we are teaching little chunks of language. The kids think that we are teaching an image, because they forget that the instruction is in another language, but your focus is on the structures used, getting far more repetitions of them than we feel are needed.
All the while the child is beginning to acquire the language in the real way, by focusing on meaning and not individual words, freeing up the unconscious mind to do what it does naturally—processing sound into language unconsciously.

Slow repetition is the key to this work. If you were really to go slowly enough while getting these reps, you could conceivably take more than one class period to create just one image, because you repeated things so much. This would be painful for you but great for the kids. The kids are brand new to the language; you cannot afford to get complicated on them when doing one word images. Give them brain breaks. Invite different kids to sit on the stool and pretend to be a house, or a fish, etc. Hang out in the language with them. It beats conjugating verbs.

A house becomes a little red house. If it develops into anything more than that, great. If not, the kids are hearing and understanding simple language via interesting, repeated and slow questioning, which is the entire point of everything we do.

These and other great ideas are in Stepping Stones: Ben’s System of Starting the Year with Comprehensible Input

This is another in a series of articles on personalizing the Comprehension-Based language classroom. Previous articles can be found here:
Is Input More Interesting When It’s About Me?, Karen Rowan
10 Ideas for Personalizing the Language Classroom Every Day, Karen Rowan
The Special Person, Bryce Hedstrom

Upcoming workshops on personalization include:
Karen Rowan, Austin, Texas, June 19, 2014
Karen Rowan, Los Angeles, August 8, 2014
Sessions at iFLT, Denver, Colorado
Sessions at NTPRS, Naperville, Illinois

Submissions for future editions by teachers on their experiences with personalization are invited.
How Can Language Teachers Improve Their Own Language Abilities Independently? 9 Practical, Research-Supported Suggestions for Finding Comprehensible Input

By Karen Rowan

1. Read for pleasure. Teachers who implement Free Voluntary Reading programs in their classrooms create time for themselves to model pleasure reading during class. They also give themselves the opportunity to improve their own vocabulary and language acquisition, which is crucial to maintaining our own level of language ability. Do not use that time to tackle difficult reading material. Students need to see that reading can be fun. If you are not currently teaching, set aside a dedicated time every day for pleasure reading. If you’re on vacation, even consider very easy reading so you’re more likely to look forward to it. Consider quantity over quality.

2. Listen to audio books in the language you teach. Audio books of book with which you are familiar in your first language or on a topic of great interest to you are the best. Listen to the same chapters multiple times at the beginning until listening feels easy and comprehensible.

3. Listen to music in the language you teach.

4. Watch movies with audio in the language you teach and subtitles in the language you teach.

5. Watch TV, particularly documentaries, histories and news programs to expand your vocabulary into subject matter you don’t usually teach.

6. Be brave. Seek out opportunities in your community to spend time with native speakers on your own time. If you teach Spanish, go learn to dance. There are meet-up groups in many languages that gather just to chat in a different language.

7. Can’t travel this year? Consider hosting a traveller from Couchsurfing.org who speaks the language you teach.

8. If you decide to take a local class, seek out classes on content taught in the language rather than language classes. (i.e. The History of the Mexican Revolution or French cooking).

9. Look for opportunities to create your own immersion environment. Are you going wine tasting? Ask if you can have a French-speaking guide and conduct the entire tasting in French. Were you thinking of working with a personal trainer? Look for one whose first language is German and refuse to speak anything else. Your vocabulary will expand and your comprehension will increase.
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4. References and tables can be done in any of the following styles: APA, Chicago, or MLA.
5. Biographical information of approximately 25 words, including name, title, university or affiliation, location, and area of expertise. A photo is requested, but optional.
6. Please submit in MS Word, not .pdf. Submission should be attached to email. No cover page. Text in 14 pt. font, Times New Roman. Title in 16 pt. font, Times New Roman. Biographical information must be included within the article and include name and degrees, current position, relevant previous positions, if desired, and previous research and articles or books, if desired. Contact information is optional. Sample: Dr. Smith is a professor of Language Acquisition Research at the University of Hawaii. He holds a PhD in Swahili. He is the author of Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Swahili and previously taught at the University of California. drsmith@email.com

Submissions should be sent electronically to: ijflteditor@gmail.com.