CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are two sections in this chapter. The first one is concerned with output

in language learning with related studies. The second one deals with materials,

materials analysis and evaluation, and related studies.

Output in Language Learning

The literature on output in language learning from various viewpoints is vast.

In this section, the significance of output, roles and functions of output, types of

output and related studies are explored.

The Significance of Output

It is clear that fluency and accuracy are different dimensions of language

performance. Ellis (1988) and Schmidt (1992) claim that producing the target

language, in the sense of 'practicing' has one function, that is, it may enhance fluency

rather than improve accuracy. Swain (1995) is concerned with other functions of

output in second language acquisition that relate more to accuracy than to fluency.

She emphasizes three functions of output in the development of morphology and

syntax: hypothesis testing, promotion of 'noticing', and metalinguistic reflection.

These are explained in more detail below.

<u>Hypothesis Testing.</u>

Producing output is a kind of way to test hypotheses about comprehensibility

or linguistic well-formedness. The learners use their output as a way of trying out

new language structures and forms to meet communicative needs. Their output tests

what works and what does not work. Even though immediate feedback may not be

facilitative or forthcoming, this does not negate the value of having experimented

with their language resources. Erroneous output can often be an indication that a

learner has formulated a hypothesis about how the language works and tests this

hypothesis out (Corder, 1981; Selinker, 1972). Overgeneralization is often cited;

learners may say "mans" and "goed" in trying out hypotheses on the rules for

formation of plurals and past tense. Sometimes this output invokes feedback that can

lead learners to modify or 'reprocess' their output.

<u>Noticing/Triggering Function.</u>

Here output has a consciousness-raising role. The learners can fake their

comprehension when they get input. But for language production, they need at least

to produce something. For example they need to express a meaning by using a

linguistic form. When they try to produce the target language, they may notice the

gap between what they want to say and what they can actually say. As such, noticing

linguistic problem leads them to recognize what they know only partially or what

they do not know at all, that is, the learners' activities of producing the target

language prompt them to consciously recognize their linguistic problems, perhaps

not totally but at least to some degree. This also forces them to pay attention to the

means of expression needed in order to successfully convey their own intended

meaning (Swain, 1985). Swain (1993) thinks this may let learners attend to

something they need in their L2, and then may trigger cognitive processes which

consolidate their existing knowledge or which might generate linguistic knowledge

that is new for learners (Swain & Lapkin, 1994).

Metalinguistic Function.

Output may have a reflective role. The output itself can be a hypothesis,

representing the learner's best guess about how something should be written or said.

From the output, the learners' hypotheses of target language are revealed. At this

'level' of output, they do something in order to learn. However, learners also reflect

on their target language use, in an attempt to make sense of it in terms of the

meaning it serves. When their output has a metalinguistic function – using language

to reflect on language, enabling them to control and internalize linguistic knowledge

(Swain, 1995). As a result, metalinguistic reflection becomes one of the major roles

for output in facilitating interlanguage development.

These three functions or any combination of them may operate when learners produce output. The three functions of output promote accuracy and give rise to the pedagogic implication that learners need tasks that focus on form within the communicative settings. This means collaborative tasks that lead learners to reflect on their own language production as they attempt to create meaning are useful for their language acquisition.

The functions of output reveal the importance of output for learners in: a) giving them a chance to test out hypotheses about the target language; b) moving them from semantic, open-ended, strategic and non-deterministic processing, which is characteristic of the early stages of second language acquisition, to syntactic processing, the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production, such as development of syntax and morphology knowledge; and c) pushing learners to express a message precisely, coherently, and appropriately. Output pushes learners to process language deeper with more mental effort than input can do (Swain 1983, cited in Ellis, 1985; Swain, 1995). When they recognize what works and what does not work, they use their internalized knowledge to induct themselves to listen for a solution in future input when they try to solve their linguistic limitations. Swain (1985, 1995) states that output offers ways for learners to play more responsible and active roles in their language learning. Skehan (1998) states that output is able to a) generate better input by letting learners recognize their language limitations which lead to an attention to special language input b) force syntactic processing c) develop

automaticity d) test hypotheses e) develop discourse skills, and f) develop a personal

voice.

Output Hypotheses

Considering the role of output, Ellis (1994) identified two different

hypotheses on the role of output: the skill-building hypothesis and the output

hypothesis.

Skill-building Hypothesis

This hypothesis states that rules and items are first learnt consciously by

learners and then gradually automatized through practice (Krashen, 1989 cited in

Ellis, 1994). Learners practice target structures, for example, they do the same

activities repetitively and through repetition achieve correct application of rules and

items in their output. Practice aims at developing implicit knowledge of the rules and

items instead of contributing directly to acquisition. It is the result of acquisition

instead of its cause. This kind of output focuses on linguistic elements, rules and

items by paying more attention to form than to meaning. It concerns cognitive

process of grammatical structures, items, forms and rules. These opportunities for

output give learners opportunities to practice language in situations controlled by

teachers or materials.

Output Hypothesis

The second hypothesis is the output hypothesis. According to Krashen, this

output hypothesis comes in two forms: output plus correction and comprehensible

output (Ellis, 1994).

Output Plus Correction Hypothesis claims that learners try out rules and

items in their production, then they use both direct corrections and indirect

information that they receive from other speakers to confirm or disconfirm them

(Ellis, 1994). In this process, learners are concerned with both meaning and rules.

They are not expected to be able to use the target structures or rules well in

communicative output yet. They just try out rules or items in production. In this kind

of output, the corrective feedback contributes a lot to learners' acquisition (Schachter,

1991). Both directly formal correction (Tomasello & Herron, 1988, 1989) and

indirect feedback, such as confirmation checks, clarification requests and failure to

understand (Schachter, 1986), provide learners metalinguistic information. Such

explicit knowledge can be mainly used to monitor and improve the accuracy of

communicative output (Krashen, 1977). Explicit knowledge also indirectly helps

implicit knowledge development.

Comprehensible Output means pushed output, which is slightly above

learners' current proficiency (Swain, 1985). "It is necessary to push learners to

improve the accuracy of their production in order to make themselves understood"

(Ellis, 1994, p.282). The production forces learners to pay attention to the means of

expression (Swain, 1985, cited in Ellis, 1994). Meaning and syntactic accuracy are

both focused on in comprehensible output. Learners are encouraged to express

themselves clearly and understandably by uttering complete sentences or extended

discourses rather than broken words. Feedback, both direct and indirect (Pica, 1988),

plays a considerably important role in comprehensible output. Swain (1985)

explained that learners' attempt at achieving a communicative purpose in a

communicative situation pushes them to determine the content, strategies and

expression. Specifically, if the activities stimulate them to 'pushed output', they can

automatize existing procedural knowledge by checking the effectiveness of their

existing hypotheses and develop strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980),

especially if opportunities for using language "are interactive and encourage

negotiation of meaning" (Allwright, 1984, p.157 cited in Tomlinson, 1998, p.15)

rather than "just to practice it in situations controlled by the teacher and by the

materials"(Tomlinson, 1998, p.14). During this process, learners have chances to

become aware of the gap between what they want to say and what they can say. They

may try to meet communicative goals in their output by trying out new language

forms and structures. They have opportunities to practice negotiating meaning,

taking turns and managing interaction too (Ellis, 1994). When they experience

communicative failure, they are obliged to test hypotheses, to make language

choices (Ellis, 1994) and are pushed into making their output more understandable,

precise, coherent, and appropriate. It is an opportunity for meaningful use of

learners' linguistic resources. Learners learn language by experiencing it as a

medium of communication instead by treating language as an object of study.

Shehadeh (1999) summarized many research studies about output, including those by Swain (1985, 1995), Swain and Lapkin (1995), Shehadeh (1991), and Pica et al (1989, 1993, 1996), and he reached the conclusion that output is independent of input and both are equally important. Input cannot replace output. That means input alone is not sufficient for language learning. Output is also necessary. Swain's (1985) research with sixth-grade French immersion students found that students' discourse and sociolinguistic competence performances were similar to native speakers, but their grammatical performance is not equivalent to that of native speakers. The immersion students in her study received enough comprehensible input with limited comprehensible output. Swain conjectures that producing the language, as opposed to simply comprehending the language, may force the learner to move from semantic processing to syntactic processing, thereby facilitating more grammatical competence. Swain also refers to the phenomenon of individuals who can understand a language and yet can only produce limited utterances in it: a ninth-grade immersion student said, "I understand everything anyone says to me, and I can hear in my head how I should sound when I talk, but it never comes out that way" (Swain, 1985, p.248). This indicates that comprehension does not necessarily transfer to production.

Other research also supports Swain's argument that output in second language acquisition is independent of comprehensible input. Nagata (1998) performed research to test comprehension practice and production practice in the

acquisition of a second language (SLA) in consideration of the relative effectiveness

of computer assisted language learning (CALL). Fourteen students in second

semester Japanese courses were randomly divided into two groups. One group had

an input-focused computer program providing them with explicit grammatical

instruction and comprehension exercises and the second group used an

output-focused program providing the same grammatical instruction together with

production exercises. The results of this study shows that the output-focused group

performed significantly better than the input-focused group for the development of

skill in producing of Japanese honorifics and equally well for the comprehension of

these structures when given the same grammatical instruction. Increased

effectiveness of production practice over comprehension practice was observed in

both written and oral production.

DeKeyser and Sokalski (1996) examined the effects of two types of output,

comprehension practice and production practice, in both interpreting and producing

two different target structures (the Spanish direct object and the Spanish conditional,

which is more complex and difficult to produce). The study eliminated extra

variables by providing the same grammatical instruction and exercise content, so the

comparison was entirely between comprehension practice and production practice.

The results of the immediate post-test show that for the direct object, the input

practice group performed better in the comprehension tasks and the output practice

group performed better in the production tasks. For the conditional, the output

practice group out performed the input practice group in both the production and the

comprehension tasks. The results show that only input is not enough for learners' language learning. Output contributes to better understanding and language production.

Cohen (1998) carried out a study among 24 college level immersion students and 17 non-immersion students. The immersion students emphasized the unique social context of immersion as supporting and extending target language use, both within and beyond the classroom. Cohen acknowledged that the greater extent of direct target language cognitive processing was attributable to both the linguistic and social dimensions of the immersion context. This result also proves that using target language to make output helps learners to make better gains in the target language.

Exploiting Output to Promote Language Learning

There are various taxonomies to describe types of output, focusing on the different roles and functions of output. Three types are discussed below:

Reciprocal Output and Non-reciprocal Output.

Ellis (2001) uses degrees of reciprocity to categorize tasks, including input tasks and output tasks. Only output is focused on in the present study.

Reciprocal output tasks are tasks requiring a two-way flow of information between participants. They are speaking tasks that can be accomplished successfully

if the participants interact to ensure mutual understanding. An example is an

information gap task where the information has been split among the learners.

Non-reciprocal output tasks are tasks require only a one-way flow of

information from one participant to another. Entirely non-reciprocal tasks do not

allow listeners to interject even if they understand or want to say something.

Widdowson (1978) calls it an information-transfer task. Pica et al. (1993) identify it

as a one-way information-gap task.

Between these two types of tasks is another task that provides the learners

with some restricted negotiation rights, for example, an interactive class presentation

where listeners have the opportunity to interrupt the speaker.

Practice and Production.

As far as language teaching methodology is concerned, there is another way

to categorize learner output. The abbreviation "PPP" describes three phases of a

language lesson (Richards, 2001). Presentation is input – introduction of a new

teaching item in context including the opportunity for learners to recognize new

language forms, functions, grammar items etc. Richards (2004) sees dialogs and

other activities that provide an opportunity to display new language items, as having

this function. Practice and Production are two types of output in a PPP lesson.

Practice refers to controlled activities of elements of the context in which the

learner can focus better on experimenting with new rules and items. It emphasizes

the repetition of items that are learnt consciously. It is similar to Krashen's (1989)

skill-building hypothesis.

Production is a free activities phase. Learners try to produce new language

items by highlighting items learnt in the presentation phase and practiced in the

practice phase. Richards (2004) considers it as the period when real communication

is produced and where the focus is on fluency. He also argues that many people

today also move these phases around. For example, one can start with a production

activity, and then later on follow up with presentation, i.e. based on students'

performance.

Richards (2004) thinks that the terms PPP are also considered to be

somewhat old fashioned, other terms are preferred to describe this sequence, e.g.

input, experimenting, communication, and the like.

Accuracy-focused and Fluency-focused Activities.

Richards (2004) has another way to distinguish activities. He states features

of accuracy-focused activities as reflecting typical classroom use of language;

producing language for display (i.e. as evidence of learning); reflecting controlled

performance; focusing on the formation of correct examples of language use; calling

on explicit knowledge; eliciting a careful (monitored) speech style; practicing

language out of context; practicing small samples of language without requiring

authentic communication).

The characteristics of fluency-focused activities are different from the features of accuracy-focused activities. Fluency-focused activities reflect natural language use; elicit a vernacular speech style; call on implicit knowledge; utilize repair and reorganization; produce language that is not always predictable; reflect automatic performance; require the use of improvisation and paraphrasing; allow students to select the language they use and require real communication.

To sum up the above discussion, there are different ways to categorize output by emphasizing its features. However, there are still some overlaps and agreement among these taxonomies. For example, some of them focus on form or meaning, while others consider information flow in one way or two ways. The central argument raised by these researchers is that different kinds of output have different contributions to language learning. Generally speaking, output with focus on form, such as repetition, or practicing language rules, items and forms, contributes more to learners' skill building. On the other hand, output with focus on meaning, such as production, on the other hand, contributes more to learners' communicative abilities. Both form and meaning (content) are important and not distinctively separable in language learning. Learners need both fluency and accuracy in their language output.

Widdowson (1978b) states the acquisition of linguistic skills does not seem to guarantee the consequent acquisition of communicative abilities in a language. Bygate (1987) illustrates the difference between language knowledge and productive skill (cited in Haymes, 2005). He argues that even native speakers have to produce sentences and adapt them to the circumstances. While the value of linguistic

knowledge should not be underestimated, it would seem that learners need something more in order to transfer the interactive speaking skills they possess from L1 to L2. Richards (2004) argues the activities should provide three opportunities to help the learners develop good communication skills and at the same time gain a good command of grammar with a low level of fossilized errors, which may have become permanently established and continue to appear. They include a) noticing, which refers to the learners' awareness of the presence of a linguistic feature in the input b) comparing, in which the learners compare the linguistic feature noticed in the input with their own mental grammar, registering to what extent there is a 'gap' between the input and grammar, and c) integrating or restructuring, in which the learners integrate a representation of the new linguistic feature into their mental grammar. Learners need activities that focus on form and communicative activities that give them meaningful interaction in the target language. All meaningful language communication typically combines formal accuracy and relevant content within every utterance or written sentence. The two components work together to serve communication needs. Output that facilitates language acquisition is more than simply speaking or writing. This point of view gains supports from the following review of the related studies.

Toyoda and Harrison (2002) suggest from the results of a number of CALL studies that the potential benefits of network-based communication for SLA, focusing on its nature of inducing negotiation of meaning. They did a study to examine negotiation of meaning that took place between students and native

speakers of Japanese over a series of chat conversations and attempted to categorize

the difficulties encountered. The data showed that the difficulties in understanding

each other did indeed trigger negotiation of meaning between students even when no

specific communication tasks were given. Using discourse analysis methods, the

negotiations were sorted into nine categories according to the causes of the

difficulties: recognition of a new word, misuse of a word, pronunciation error,

grammatical error, inappropriate segmentation, abbreviated sentence, sudden topic

change, slow response, and inter-cultural communication gap. Through examination

of these categories of negotiation, it was found that there were some language

aspects that are crucial for communication but have been neglected in teaching. In

addition, students may not notice this lack when they have the opportunity to chat

with native speakers. In light of these findings, they make pedagogical

recommendations on some classroom tasks for improving chat conversations.

Brumfit (1984) states that for most people natural language use is primarily

discussion and conversation. Shehadeh (1999) argues that educators should

introduce activities such as problem solving, decision making, opinion exchange,

picture dictation, and jigsaw tasks. He thinks these types of activities can provide an

ideal atmosphere for negotiating meaning in appropriate contexts. During these tasks,

the learners have opportunities to receive input that they have made comprehensible

through negotiation and at the same time, to produce comprehensible output to other

learners. He also thinks these types of communicative exercises can help learners to

develop fluency in the target language. He suggests that the teachers who use the

communicative approach justify these types of activities for encouraging the learners

to produce comprehensible output in the direction of target language-like

performances. The findings of interactional studies he cites support the importance

of interaction and the negotiation of meaning in developing proficiency in the target

language, thus confirming the importance of negotiated interactions in the

production of comprehensible output, one of the basic principles of the

communicative language approach.

The analysis of different types of exercises in Nagata's research (1998)

suggests that the relative advantage of production activities may be greater in tasks

involving complex syntactic processing than in tasks requiring less syntactic

processing.

Egbert and Hanson-Smith (1999) points out a set of important environmental

conditions for the language learning classroom including interaction, authentic

audience and opportunities for exposure and production. He argues that learners

need to have opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning; learners should interact

in the target language with an authentic audience; learners must be exposed to and

encouraged to produce varied and creative language.

Slavin's (1995) research, in particular, demonstrates strong improvements in

student learning when students work in groups that have structured objectives, have

group goals and rewards, promote individualized accountability, and provide each

student in the group with equal opportunities for success.

In conclusion, output is important in language learning and different kinds of output have different contributions. The opportunities for repetition and practice of language items, rules and forms - which focus on forms - contribute more to language skills building. The opportunities for production and use of the target language to achieve communicative purpose with two-way information flow, which focus on meaning, contribute more to learners' communicative abilities. Both of them are necessary, important and useful to learners' language learning.

Learners need different kinds of output to improve both target language skills and communicative abilities. For example, learners must have first developed their declarative knowledge as part of activities that often are not integrated with meaningful communication to assure the later success of meaningful communication. Chapelle (1998) suggests: a) learners need to have opportunities to produce target language; b) learners need to notice errors in their own output c) learners need to correct their linguistic output d) learners need to engage in target language interaction, so that their language structure can be modified for negotiation of meaning e) learners should engage in target language tasks designed to maximize opportunities for good interaction. These five items, combines with the other two input hypotheses, produce seven hypotheses relevant for developing a CALL environment.

Materials, Material Analysis and Evaluation

In this section, the significant roles of materials, especially textbooks are

stated first, followed by the difference between analysis and evaluation.

The Roles and Potential Benefits of the Textbook

Textbooks are often the core materials in language programs. "The textbook

is the basis for everyday teaching, and it is the visible heart of any program"

(Sheldon, 1988, p.237). Textbooks tend to be the main resource and convenient

teaching-learning aid in many language teaching and learning programs.

Textbooks benefit teachers to a large extent. Yuen (1997) holds that textbooks

are inevitable teaching partners (cited by McGrath, 2002). They offer support to

teachers. Use of published textbooks can save teachers' time in development of their

own materials. A textbook provides "what" is to be taught, and offers a basic source

for "how" to teach, influencing and ensuring to some degree of standardization and

continuity (McGrath, 2002).

Textbooks have different roles and value in learners' learning as compared to

teachers' teaching. McGrath (2002) maintains textbooks influence what and to some

extent how learners learn. They introduce to learners linguistic knowledge in a

systematic way. Besides, texts, explanations and activities in textbooks provide

learners plenteous input. The nature of the learning tasks in textbooks reflects the

"materials designers' assumptions about the best route to language learning"

(McGrath, 2002, p.25). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) share the same opinion.

Textbooks guide learners' learning by showing where to go and how much has been

covered. They also provide methodological and cultural support.

Good textbooks provide a stimulus for learning. They provide structured

guidance that can bring change into the classroom (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994).

Tomlinson (1998) argues that material "design relates to the thinking underlying the

materials"(p.193), "such as the apparent aims of the materials, how the tasks,

language and content in the materials are selected and sequenced and the nature and

focus of content in the materials. Also of central importance in this will be the nature

of the teaching/learning activities which are suggested by the materials"(p.193-194).

Littlejohn (1998) shares the similar opinion that materials designers' assumptions

about the best route to language learning become clear in the nature of classroom

tasks. Teacher and learner roles become defined in consequence, for example, if the

tasks rarely require complex mental operations but instead involve repetition, this

reveals that the designer of these tasks is not concerned with cognitive work and

problem-solving. Text type and task reflect the authors' belief of language learning

and purposes. For instance, authors may design different output tasks for the same

context due to their different insights about output. This understanding has guided

the design of this study.

Analysis and Evaluation of Textbooks

Analysis and evaluation can help teachers to make judgments in deciding which books to select, and which parts of books to use and how to use them. From analysis and evaluation, they can also develop replacement or supplementary material for their special learner groups (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; McGrath, 2002).

A close analysis of textbooks lets the textbooks speak for themselves. Analysis is a preliminary step to evaluation which is a process leading to an objective. It is a verifiable description of what is there (McGrath, 2002). Many frameworks can be used as a helpful source for guidance in analysis and selection of materials. The purpose of evaluation can help in choosing the framework to focus on particular aspects of materials (Littlejohn, 1998).

Evaluation puts a value on data generated from analysis. "Evaluation is more concerned to discover whether what one is looking for is there or not, and if it is there, to put a value on it. Evaluation involves the making of judgments" (McGrath, 2002, p22). The present study's purposes are to evaluate opportunities of output in four textbooks by considering quantity and types of output.