

Form and Meaning: Multiple Perspectives

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FIVE TYPES OF INPUT AND THE VARIOUS RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FORM AND MEANING

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The purpose of this paper is to offer a perspective on how the term *input* has been and is used in second language acquisition. To that end, five types of input are identified: comprehensible input, simplified input, enhanced input, interactionally modified input, and structured input. As part of explicating what each of these types of input entails, I will also pay particular attention to establishing the relationship between form and meaning that is associated with each type of input. The relationship ranges from disassociated (one has nothing to do with the other) to inextricably linked (one is the means by which to access the other). I also address classroom concerns.

Introduction: Form and Meaning

What happens when a second language learner of Spanish encounters the following sentence in a passage about the Panamanian singer, actor, and activist, Rubén Blades?

Text. *El mismo admitió esto diciéndome, “Mi música y mis inquietudes son lo primero pero, el cine es un medio que cada día me interesa más.”*

Translation. He himself admitted this, saying to me, “My music and my political concerns come first, but film is a medium that every day interests me more.”

The learner, of course, attempts to make sense of the message, that is, the informational content. The author of the passage has a meaning he wishes

to convey, and the task of the reader is to extract that meaning, to interpret the author's message. The following interpretation is that of a first year learner of Spanish who was engaged in a think-aloud procedure. (This research is reported fully in Lee 1999.) As he encountered the sentence, he stated the following:

Interpretation. (M1) The same admits this. I don't know. He admits the same. And "mi música" . . . but the film is a media that. I don't know. I guess it says he likes film better.

The learner's interpretation of the informational content demonstrates the use of various reading strategies generally considered to be good strategies for dealing with text. He skipped unknown words such as "*esto diciéndome*" and "*mis inquietudes son lo primero*," but he did not ignore them. He marked their place in the sentence with "I don't know," a metacognitive indication that he was aware of his lack of comprehension. The learners stumbled on the initial phrase, "*El mismo admitió*," as evidenced by his switching the order of the constituents. The learner is attempting to make sense of the words. In his lexicon he apparently has only one meaning to assign to "*mismo*," that of *same*, which is one meaning, but, in this case, not the correct one. He seemed to assess his lack of comprehension and move on, concentrating his effort on the more important information given in the quote. The learner's comprehension is neither complete nor exact. It is, however, somewhat accurate to interpret that Rubén Blades likes films. This example serves to underscore how readers create meaning from what they read.

The reading passage also provides the learner input for his developing second-language linguistic system. Not only does the learner make meaning from the informational content, he also has the potential to make form/meaning connections, that is, to process the linguistic data. In other words, the input has a meaning to interpret and that meaning is expressed via formal features of the second language. From an input processing perspective, the example is extremely problematic. The learner rendered the target verb, "*admitió*," in the present tense both times he uttered the word. He did not map a past-tense meaning onto the orthographically marked final vowel. The learner also struggled with the word "*mismo*," which can mean either *same* or *self*. The learner assigned the semantic meaning of *same* and then shifted the word syntactically to object position in English. He did not use the word order in the passage to alter the semantic meaning he assigned to "*mismo*."

The next example, however, demonstrates how learners can process the input for meaning and for form. This second language learner struggled to interpret the verb and in doing so used many different knowledge sources, both textual and extratextual. The following example demonstrates a strong, ongoing interplay of form and meaning:

Text. *En la década pasada, actuó en varias películas, como por ejemplo, Crossover Dream y The Milagro Beanfield War.*

Translation. In the past decade, he acted in various films, for example, *Crossover Dream* and *The Milagro Beanfield War*.

Interpretation. (Y1) So, in the decade past, actually in various films. I don't think that's "actually," but it looks like "actually," so that's why I guessed that. Um, maybe it's act. Act in various films, like the example *Crossover Dream* and *The Milagro Beanfield War*. So that just speaks of like if you know the context of the paragraph, you can follow along and probably guess that, that, uh, it's talking about how he worked on the different.

At this point the researcher asked the learner why he thought "actually" was incorrect. He stated the following:

Um, well, "actually" wouldn't be like the word to fit in there. Well, at least to me it wouldn't because it wouldn't make sense to say "actually" in various films. Um, he, he acted in various films. And, also, we just learned the past tense like last night. And it looks like the past tense, *actuó*. I don't know. Good guess at least.

This learner's use of formal features of language is rather strong. His initial rendering of "actually" for "*actuó*" is based in an orthographic similarity between the words. He immediately rejects his interpretation because of the lack of syntactic fit between the words; he rendered an adverb in front of a prepositional phrase. Finally, he refers to the morphological ending on the verb.

The relationship between form and meaning as expressed in this introduction is a rather contemporary view. The meaning in the input is encoded linguistically; input contains forms. Learners must construct meaning and construct a second-language linguistic system. Input is the key to both. In the remainder of this paper I will examine how the term *input* has been and is used in second-language acquisition. I will pay particular attention to the relationship between form and meaning underlying the various uses of the term.

Five Types of Input

Comprehensible Input

It was only a decade and a half ago that the term “comprehensible input” ignited researchers and teachers alike. The term fueled much discussion and, eventually, a great debate whether comprehensible input caused language acquisition to take place. It helped usher in the “Natural Approach” to language teaching (Krashen and Terrell 1983) with its emphasis on teachers’ use of the target language and the ways in which to make themselves understood: linguistically, paralinguistically, as well as through various activity types. The Natural Approach also emphasized an emotionally positive classroom environment. As indicated in the following quote, a learner’s emotional state (referred to as an *affective filter*) was said to hinder or promote language development:

People acquire second languages only if they obtain comprehensible input and if their affective filters are low enough to let the input “in.” When the filter is “down” and appropriate comprehensible input is presented (and comprehended), acquisition is inevitable” (Krashen 1985, p. 4).

In other words, “. . . the true causative variables in second language acquisition derive from the input hypothesis and the affective filter—the amount of comprehensible input the acquirer receives and understands, and the strength of the affective filter, or the degree to which the acquirer is “open” to the input (Krashen 1982, p. 9).

What is appropriate comprehensible input? Answering this question leads to another term that ignited researchers and teachers, $i + 1$, where i represents current competence and $i + 1$ the next stage of competence. With $i + 1$, the input is made useful to the acquirer for language development. More important, the input need not contain only $i + 1$; “. . . if the acquirer understands the input, and there is enough of it, $i + 1$ will automatically be provided. In other words, if communication is successful, $i + 1$ is provided. . . . This implies that the best input should not even attempt to deliberately aim at $i + 1$ ” (Krashen 1982, p. 21). Roughly tuned input will provide $i + 1$. An instructor would not want to seed or otherwise privilege the input with particular forms and structures. Rather, the “speaker ‘casts a net’ of structure around your current level, your i ” (Krashen and Terrell 1983, p. 33).

Krashen and Terrell (1983) provide the following example of comprehensible input. (Italics represent instructor's speech to learners.)

... another technique is to describe several pictures, asking the students to point to the picture being described:

Picture 1. There are several people in this picture. One appears to be a father, the other a daughter. What are they doing. Cooking. They are cooking a hamburger.

Picture 2. There are two men in this picture. They are young. They are boxing.

In all these activities, the instructor attempts to maintain a constant flow of comprehensible input. The students will be successful if the instructor maintains their attention on the key lexical items, uses appropriate gestures, and uses context to help them understand. If the students are literate, writing the key words on the chalkboard will give a visual image for key lexical items and draw students' attention to the content words.

The comprehensibility of input will be increased if the instructor uses repetition and paraphrase: *There are two men in this picture. Two. One, two (counting). They are young. There are two young men. At least I think they are young. Do you think that they are young? Are the two men young? Or old? Do you think that they are young or old?* The instructor can weave these repetitions naturally into discourse so that they do not sound like repetitions. Nor is there need to pause at each potential question point for an answer, since each question is usually paraphrased in two or three ways before the instructor expects a response (Krashen and Terrell 1983, p. 77).

Clearly, Krashen and Terrell emphasize comprehension of meaning and the role lexical items play in that. What was always problematic to account for was the specific linguistic characteristics of roughly tuned input or what linguistic structures would be appropriate for a learner's next level of competence.

VanPatten (1991) also provides an example of an activity designed to provide learners initial input (their first exposure). By way of introduction, he states

Since the learner's job at this point is to process input and get language, it seems more appropriate that communication on the part of the learner at this stage involve more of an interpretation of language. It is the instructor, the materials, reading texts, and other target sources of language that express most of the meaning in the earliest stages. Appropriate communicatively based activities, then, involve having the learners actively process and interpret language they hear and see (VanPatten 1991, p. 58, emphasis original).

To illustrate these points, VanPatten provides an activity in which the instructor describes his family. The activity takes place the first day of a first semester foreign language class. Even though the sample scenario is given in English, it is supposed to be delivered completely in the target language. The instructor would have prepared visuals and overheads prior to the class. The instructor's speech is made comprehensible through the use of visuals, gestures, repetition, and thoughtfully structuring the presentation of information into segments (nuclear family versus extended family). The instructor occasionally pauses to check learners' comprehension. The learners' involvement in the activity is encouraged through comprehension checks, showing visuals in such a way as to reveal the family tree slowly, and provide learners real information about real people. (Instructor's speech is italicized.)

Activity 1 (providing initial input)

Today we are going to talk about my family. I have a most interesting family (displays "My Family" on board or overhead). Here am I. These are my parents. This is my father, and this is my mother. Father . . . mother. My father's name is Bill. My mother's name is Juanita. They are divorced. This is my stepfather, Joe. My stepfather. And this is my sister . . . my only sister. Her name is Gloria (turns off overhead or covers visual).

Let's see what kind of memory you have. What is my father's name—Joe or Bill? (responses) What is my mother's name—Juanita or Gloria? (responses) Right. Gloria is my sister, not my mother. And do I have any brothers? (responses) No (shows visual again). All right, to summarize, my family consists of my father, Bill, my mother, Juanita, and my sister, Gloria. I have no brothers. Oh, I also have a stepfather, Joe. My parents have been divorced since 1972 (writes date on board). Now, that was easy,

but here are some other family members (now reveals grandparents) (VanPatten 1991, p. 59).

For many, it was easier to understand the relationship between comprehensible input and vocabulary acquisition than it was to understand the relationship between comprehensible input and grammar acquisition. The difficulties researchers and teachers had with this theory was determining what learners' current level of competence was, their i , as well as determining what would be the next level, their $i + 1$. The lack of specificity of the linguistic characteristics of i and $i + 1$ concerned many and deeply bothered others. Krashen appealed to a Chomskian notion of a language acquisition device in the brain while teachers and researchers (at that time) were heavily influenced by the psychology of learning, that is, specific cognitive mechanisms for learning information. A common misconception was that instructors talked *at* learners, not *with* them.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis clearly disassociated form from meaning. To move from one stage of acquisition to another requires that "the acquirer understand input that contains $i + 1$, where "understand means that the acquirer is focussed on the meaning and not the form of the message" (Krashen 1982, p. 21). ". . . Language acquisition can only take place when a message which is being transmitted is understood, i.e., when the focus is on *what* is being said rather than on the form of the message" (Krashen and Terrell 1983, p. 55, emphasis original). Krashen advocated against an explicit focus on form. He did not see form as a way to get meaning. Rather, he saw meaning as a way to get form.

Simplified Input

Closely linked to the notion of comprehensible input is simplified input. Input can be made more comprehensible in a variety of ways including repetition, gestures, and the use of visuals. Input can also be made more comprehensible through linguistic modifications in the speaker's speech. The key question to understanding simplified input is, What do speakers do linguistically to make themselves understood? When caretakers speak to children (i.e., motherese or caretaker speech), when native speakers speak to nonnative speakers (i.e., foreigner talk), when language instructors speak to language learners (i.e., teacher talk), they naturally, either consciously or unconsciously, simplify their speech in order to increase or ensure the success of the communicative exchange. In other words, given a linguistic imbalance between interlocutors, the more proficient speaker

linguistically modifies his or her speech. These linguistic modifications include speaking more slowly and loudly and articulating phonology. These modifications also include stressing key words, using high frequency vocabulary, using fewer pronouns, selecting simple syntax, creating shorter sentences, and giving learners a choice of responses within a posed question (Hatch 1983).

Simplified input, as a research construct, was examined unidirectionally; speech flowed from speaker to hearer but not vice versa. (*Directionality* is the critical difference between simplified input and modified input.) Learners were exposed to prepackaged input, that is, simplified versus nonsimplified input, and then their comprehension was tested. The learner was not in a position to interact with the speaker; they could only interpret the incoming message but not negotiate their understanding with the speaker. Subjects listened to minilectures (Chaudron and Richards 1986) or heard passages (Leow 1995). By focusing on comprehension effects rather than on language learning, this line of research ignored form and implicitly dichotomized form and meaning. The research only examined meaning but not the relationship between specific forms and creating meaning from them.

Certain speech events are characterized by unidirectional delivery of speech. Listening to the radio or television does not allow the listener to interact with the speaker. In the academic context, the large lecture class is often unidirectional. The approach and methodology used to examine simplified input has ecological validity; listeners often do not have the opportunity to negotiate meaning with a speaker. But what happens when two or more speakers interact with each other and, in a dynamic way, create and negotiate meaning?

Enhanced Input

Enhanced input is a type of input supplied during face-to-face interactions (i.e., conversations) between speakers (as opposed to premodified, simplified input). Language learners actively participate in communicative exchanges with other language learners, native speakers, or simply more proficient second-language speakers. During these exchanges native speakers and more proficient speakers often rephrase, recast, and expand on what learners say to them. These expansions often provide learners a more accurate model of the target language and also confirm to the learner that the other speaker has comprehended the message (although

comprehension is not at stake). I use the term “enhanced input” to refer to situations in which the interlocutors are comprehending each other, but the more proficient speaker expands on what the less proficient speaker has said. Through their interaction, a speaker provides enhanced input to a listener. The key question to understanding enhanced input is, How do speakers respond to each other?

The following exchange, from Lightbown and Spada (1993), shows how a child acquiring his native language is given a correct adultlike model of a past tense verb form when the adult recasts the child’s utterance. The adult enhances her input to the child by providing a more accurate target form. In this instance, the child actually incorporates elements of this enhanced input into his own speech.

Peter (24 months), Lois (adult), Patsy (adult)

1. Patsy: What happened to it [the truck]?
2. Peter: (looking under the chair for it) Lose it. Dump truck!
Dump truck! Fall! Fall!
3. Lois: Yes, the dump truck fell down.
4. Peter: Dump truck fell down. Dump truck.

(Source: Lightbown and Spada 1993, p. 3)

In the example, the speakers obviously comprehend each other. The adult correctly interpreted “Dump truck! Fall!” She provides the child another way of saying his message, “The dump truck fell down.” The child then produces the more adultlike form.

The second interaction shows how an instructor responds to the content of messages when comprehension is not in question. The instructor understood the messages offered by the learners but chose to expand and comment on them, offering them more input.

1. **Instructor:** I have one more question. Do you believe, and I want to see hands, do you believe that a person can be bilingual without being bicultural? That is, a person can speak two languages, but the person does not have two cultures. How many believe it is true? [learners raise hands] Many, many. Why do you believe this?
2. **Learner 1:** A person studies the language in his own country but not go to another country.
3. **Instructor:** That’s it. If someone studies the language without having contact with the culture. It seems to me that the

person would be bilingual without being bicultural. Uh huh. Other reasons?

4. Learner 2: Someone can learn only the language in his school, school, and not have someone culture than the language.
5. Instructor: If you do not have contact with people who represent the culture and if you only have contact in school, yes, this can be the result.

(Source: Adapted from Lee 2000, p. 64.)

The following exchange took place in a beginning ESL class at the secondary level. The instructor maintains and supports the interaction by expanding on the learners' utterances. The result is that not only does the conversation keep moving forward, but the learners receive a grammatically correct representation of what they intended to express.

1. Instructor: Vin, have you ever been to the movies? What's your favorite movie?
2. Vin: *Big*.
3. Instructor: *Big*, OK, that's a good movie; that was about a little boy inside a big man, wasn't it?
4. Vin: Yeah, boy get surprise all the time.
5. Instructor: Yes, he was surprised, wasn't he? Usually little boys don't do the things that men do, do they?
6. Vin: No, little boy no drink.
7. Instructor: That's right, little boys don't drink.

(Source: Adapted from Johnson 1995, pp. 23–24.)

Enhanced input is the result of a more proficient speaker accepting a language learner's intended message but then recasting it in a more formally correct way. The more proficient speaker is linking form and meaning in his enhanced input. The meaning, however, is not his own but that of his interlocutors.

Interactionally Modified Input

The research on conversational adjustments, or the negotiation of meaning, has tended to focus on communication breakdowns. Negotiation has been rather narrowly characterized as "those interactions in which learners and their interlocutors adjust their speech phonologically, lexically, and morphosyntactically to resolve difficulties in mutual understanding

that impede the course of their communication . . . Negotiation was defined as an activity that occurs when a listener signals to a speaker that the speaker's message is not clear, and listener and speaker modify their speech to resolve this impasse" (Pica 1992, p. 200).

Conversation seems to provide an architectural framework through which language learners can negotiate meaning and get linguistic forms and structures. In her recent book, Gass elaborates on this point. Within the input-interaction perspective, "the input to the learner, coupled with the learner's manipulation of the input through interaction forms a basis of language development. With regard to input, there are two aspects to consider, the functions of simplified input in terms of language learning and the relation between simplifying speech and comprehension . . . It is a given that without understanding, no learning can take place. Although understanding alone does not guarantee learning, it does set the scene for potential learning . . . Through negotiation of meaning [i.e., interaction], learners gain additional information about the language and focus their attention on particular parts of the language. This attention primes language for integration into a developing interlinguistic system" (Gass 1997, pp. 86–87).

The relationship between form and meaning is not dichotomized since it is one person's need to express meaning and another person's difficulty with interpreting that meaning that leads to a focus on form and the potential learning of that form. *Potential* is a key concept to consider. There are many processes involved in language acquisition: comprehension of the form, intake of the form, and incorporation of the form into the developing linguistic system. The research on negotiation of meaning makes an assumption that Lightbown and Spada (1993) clearly point out. The assumption is based on a logical relationship, rather than an empirically demonstrated one, between interactional modification and acquisition. "1. Interactional modification makes input comprehensible. 2. Comprehensible input promotes acquisition. *Therefore*, 3. Interactional modification promotes acquisition" (Lightbown and Spada 1993, p. 30, emphasis mine). The relationship between interactional modification and acquisition is mediated by the relationship between comprehensible input and acquisition.

Structured Input

Comprehensible input, simplified input, enhanced input, and interactionally modified input do not focus on predetermined forms. Rather,

discussions of comprehensible and simplified input usually refer to forms in the input in the most general way. Enhanced input and interactionally modified input result in attention to form, but not necessarily to specific forms. Structured input, by way of contrast, focuses on very particular forms and, as such, is a type of grammar instruction referred to as “processing instruction.”

Krashen’s views on the Input Hypothesis and the pedagogical fallout caused much discussion and debate concerning the role of explicit grammar instruction in language teaching. Positions ranged from “you-don’t-need-to-teach-grammar-explicitly-just-provide-comprehensible-input” to “you-must-focus-on-linguistic-accuracy-from-the-beginning-of-instruction” (Omaggio Hadley 1993). VanPatten maintained that the question was not whether to teach grammar but how to teach it (VanPatten 1988). We can add that the question is not only how to teach grammar but when to teach it and what grammar to teach (Lee 1998). Partial answers to these questions are to teach some grammar via structured input and its counterpart, structured output (Lee and VanPatten 1995; VanPatten 1996). Let me focus here, though, on structured input.

In order to arrive at his ideas regarding structured input, VanPatten worked closely with issues surrounding the relationship between form and meaning. His principles of input processing address that relationship from a psycholinguistic perspective (VanPatten 1996). What is clear from research is that language learners “go for” meaning before they “go for” form. That is, when engaged in communicative exchanges where message transmission and reception are the goal of and purpose for interacting, learners find ways to comprehend. They may not, however, find ways to link what they comprehend (the meaning they extract) with the formal properties of language that encoded that meaning. From a language acquisition perspective, if learners are not linking form and meaning, they are not acquiring language. The potential for language development has been missed.

What to do in order to push learners to make these desired links and connections? The answer is, align their attention on forms such that processing the form for meaning would be the only way to comprehend the input. (In its elaborated form, VanPatten [1996] refers to this as processing instruction.) Consider the following examples. There are two “formal” differences between sentences 1 and 2.

1. *Hablo esta tarde con el profesor.*
2. *Habló ayer con el profesor.*

First, the verb forms, while graphemically similar, differ in the placement of stress, which is orthographically indicated in 2 as falling on the final syllable. Stress falls on the penultimate syllable in 1. The difference in stress results in a difference in tense (present to past) and person (first to third). Stress is, then, a rather meaningful difference when trying to comprehend the messages of these two sentences. The other difference is the choice of temporal adverbial. These adverbials clearly indicate the time frame and in doing so give some of the same information as the verb endings do. Research indicates that learners tend to ignore the verb endings when interpreting time frame if lexical adverbs are also present in the input. In a sense, the information supplied by lexical adverbs overrides the information supplied by verbal morphemes.

In order to structure input to push learners to use forms to interpret the input, VanPatten “stripped” off everything that could pull or lure learners’ attention away from form. So, learners would be presented input sentences and asked to assign a temporal reference. For example, they would hear sentences 3 and 4 and select the temporal adverbial that would complete the meaning. The only way to do so correctly is to listen for the verb endings. That is, in order to process for meaning the learners must process the forms.

3. **Hablo con el profesor.**
a. esta tarde b. ayer
4. **Habló con el profesor.**
a. esta tarde b. ayer

The way language learners should listen to Spanish is different from the way they should listen to other languages such as English. The Spanish language is rich in verb-final inflections that provide information on tense, aspect, mood, person, and number. A native speaker of English, for example, is not accustomed to listening to verb endings for this kind of information or this quantity of information. Processing instruction is a means by which to train the nonnative ear to perceive and utilize the target forms during on-line comprehension.

As Blyth (1998), Garrett (1986), and VanPatten (1996) have pointed out, not all grammar is created equal, and certainly one question that faces instructors is what grammar should be taught. The forms that have been empirically examined for structured input all have referential meaning; the forms are not redundant in the structured input sentences in

which they have been presented. Research on processing instruction has examined preterit tense verb morphology (Cadierno 1995), the syntax of object pronouns (VanPatten and Cadierno 1993; VanPatten and Sanz 1995), and the lexical semantics of the Spanish copular system (Cheng 1995). It has searched out sentence-level versus discourse-level task effects (VanPatten and Sanz 1995). It has determined whether explanation or practice is more important to learner development (VanPatten and Oikkenon 1996). As VanPatten states,

the effects of processing instruction are consistently observable. Not only do learners receiving processing instruction gain in the ability to process input better, but also their developing system is affected such that they can access the targeted linguistic features when making output. This is the case with a variety of linguistic items, and in the VanPatten and Sanz study we saw that the effects of processing instruction extend to a variety of output tasks. In addition, the findings of VanPatten and Oikkenon suggest that learners' engagement in structured input activities within processing instruction is the most significant variable; explicit information (explanation) does not appear to be critical (VanPatten 1996, p. 127).

Structured input and processing instruction make a direct link between form and meaning. By being exposed to structured input and being taught how to process the form in input, learners begin the process of making form-meaning connections. This direct association was missing in previous discussions of comprehensible and simplified input. While the link between form and meaning was made with interactionally modified input, the link was not to specific forms as it is with structured input.

Classroom Concerns

Input is the critical element in language development, but language classrooms, especially foreign language classrooms, have often been described as input-impoverished. The input that learners are exposed to is limited in both quantity and quality. The need for input is undeniable as is the need for instructors to make themselves understood to language learners for, as Gass (1997) indicated, there is no learning without understanding (i.e., comprehension of the message in the input). Processing instruction

with its recommendations for structuring input represents an important step forward in classroom language learning. When we understand what learners do with input, what they do to understand the meaning of what they hear or read, we can then intervene and help shape the processes. We want learners to make more and better form-meaning mappings. We want them to understand the messages directed to them, and we want them, as a result of understanding these messages, to get more language.

Krashen and Terrell's (1983) various recommendations for supplying learners with comprehensible input are still valid. Many instructors can make themselves understood by linguistically simplifying their speech; they naturally use teacher talk when addressing language learners. They naturally modify their speech to learners when, during interaction, learners signal a lack of comprehension or misinterpretation. The research on interactional modifications has helped underscore the importance of negotiation in language teaching. As explained in Lee (2000), the reasons for emphasizing negotiation vary. First, we have an interactionist theory of language acquisition that accounts for aspects of both first- and second-language acquisition (see Lightbown and Spada 1993 for an explanation of various theories of language acquisition). We also know that input alone is insufficient for complete language development. The roles of output are to push learners to develop communicative language ability (Lee and Van-Patten 1995) as well as to help learners become better processors of input (Swain 1985). Classroom research comparing various activity types shows a connection between negotiation and particular linguistic structures said to promote language development (e.g., Rulon and McCreary 1986). And, finally, many researchers and instructors have adopted a social view of communication that emphasizes the interpersonal, dynamic, and context-specific nature of communication (e.g., Kinginger 1996; Brooks, Donato, and McGlone 1997) and deemphasizes any justification based on analyzing linguistic elements of speech. The pedagogical fallout has been to re-think classroom practices in order to privilege the negotiation of meaning. Learners are given communicative tasks that require them to exchange information.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to examine various types of input: comprehensible input, simplified input, enhanced input, interactionally modified input, and structured input. Each of these types of input entails

a particular relationship between form and meaning. When engaged in communicative exchanges, language learners make meaning from the propositional content of messages. Language learners must also make form-meaning connections; they must use the linguistic data in the input to construct a linguistic system.

At one end of the spectrum, we find types of input that disassociated the relationship between form and meaning. Comprehensible input and simplified input in essence claim that, through making meaning, learners would naturally make form-meaning connections. The forms in question would be whichever forms happened to be in the input. As long as the learner understood meaning, the forms would follow. Enhanced input and interactionally modified input underscore the importance of verbal interactions in language acquisition. Interlocutors will provide learners the correct form with which they should have expressed their meanings. At other times, when learners need to make meaning they will negotiate it. Forms will emerge during the negotiation as speakers modify their speech. In doing so, learners make form-meaning connections. The forms in question would be whichever forms happened to emerge during the interaction. Interaction is the mechanism that draws attention to forms. At the other end of the spectrum, structured input inextricably links very particular forms with the meanings they encode. Input is structured in such a way that learners must process particular forms in the input in order to make meaning from the input sentences. Form and meaning are thereby linked. In the case of structured input, the overlap between comprehension and input processing is total.

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