Applying L2 Vocabulary Research Findings to Classroom Teaching

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Since the late ′60s, the field of second language acquisition (SLA) has grown enormously. Throughout its development, SLA researchers have investigated a wide range of issues including the processes involved in second language learning, as well as the psycholinguistic, affective and social factors that influence its success or failure (Spada, 2014). In light of SLA's relevance and applicability to language teaching, recently a growing number of researchers have taken an interest in second language (L2) learning in classroom settings (Spada, 2014). The term Instructed SLA (ISLA) is currently used to indicate "theory and research that pertain directly to the L2 classroom" (Loewen, 2014, p. 1). One of the main goals of ISLA is to examine which particular types of instruction are more pedagogically effective for a particular learning target. In this short commentary, this question will be investigated in the domain of vocabulary learning. Accordingly, research on instructed vocabulary learning will be briefly reviewed to reveal several insights pertaining to L2 vocabulary pedagogy.

L2 vocabulary learning research has centered around two types of learning, either intentional or incidental learning. Intentional learning takes place through an activity that is intended to boost learners' vocabulary knowledge, whereas incidental learning occurs as a by-product of a main activity that is not particularly intended to enhance vocabulary knowledge (Pellicer-Sánchez, 2015). Due to the influence of first language (L1) vocabulary learning research, a general assumption of early L2 vocabulary research was that pedagogical vocabulary interventions would not be necessary since exposure to sufficient comprehensible input, particularly through reading, would naturally lead to incidental vocabulary learning (Krashen, 1984). This extreme claim is no longer tenable. Nevertheless, the fairly rich vocabulary inherent in reading continues to draw many vocabulary researchers' attention to vocabulary learning from reading.

The findings of recent vocabulary-learning-from-reading studies have demonstrated that certain learning conditions should be satisfied if vocabulary learning from reading is to prove effective. Such conditions include: (1) learners' noticing of unfamiliar words (Laufer, 2003; Pulido, 2007), (2) repeated encounters with unfamiliar words (Pellicer-Sánchez, 2015; Rott, 1999), and (3) a considerable amount of reading (Schmitt, 2008). A key pedagogical issue would then be how to create these conditions that maximize the learning experience that can occur from reading. Correspondingly, various L2 teaching practices have been proposed in the literature. One way to enhance learners' noticing of unfamiliar words from reading would be by highlighting or underlining new words or providing a glossary. In addition, in order to ensure that learners are repeatedly exposed to target words, teachers may employ different reading practices, including repeated reading (Han & Chen, 2010; Webb & Chang, 2012) and narrow reading (Kang, 2015; Krashen, 2004; Schmitt & Carter, 2000). Repeated encounters with new words through reading are crucial because they allow for the consolidation and enhancement of vocabulary knowledge that might otherwise be lost. Finally, encouraging learners to read extensively inside and outside the classroom would improve learners' vocabulary knowledge in general.

There is no doubt that reading is a major vehicle for incidental vocabulary learning. However, recent research also clearly points out that incidental vocabulary learning from reading

occurs at a slow rate, and an explicit attention to words is necessary for greater and faster vocabulary gains (Schmitt, 2008). An important pedagogical concern relates to how to incorporate an explicit component into vocabulary teaching. Hulstijn and Laufer's (2001) involvement load hypothesis provides insights into this matter. According to the hypothesis, increasing learners' involvement with new words is key to enhancing their chances of learning the words. Hulstijn and Laufer suggest that increased involvement can be achieved if learners feel the *need* to know new words, they *search* for the meaning of these words, and they *evaluate* the meanings. In line with this theoretical claim, explicit attention to a target word can be accomplished by: (1) providing learners with a task requiring knowledge of an unknown word, (2) having learners look up its meaning in a dictionary, and (3) encouraging them to use it to evaluate its meaning in context. Empirical studies testing the validity of the involvement load hypothesis have provided compelling evidence that tasks inducing high levels of involvement with words increase the likelihood that target words are noticed and eventually learned. Thus, it would be desirable to offer learners vocabulary-focused tasks in which they can enhance and consolidate their vocabulary knowledge after new words are introduced.

Even though incidental and intentional learning can be distinguished from each other, as suggested by Schmitt (2008), they should be regarded as complementary to each other in the classroom setting. Intentional learning may facilitate the consolidation of newly acquired words, consequently helping learners to gain productive mastery of the words. However, explicit vocabulary instruction through intentional learning alone would be ineffective in developing multiple dimensions of lexical knowledge, such as syntactic behaviors and collocations of target words. Thus, intentional learning should be integrated with incidental learning through which vocabulary can be learned from rich and authentic contexts. This commentary has mentioned only a limited selection of L2 vocabulary research, but, to be sure, continued instructed vocabulary research will provide more insights to guide L2 vocabulary teaching.

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