

## Materials for Vocabulary and Grammar Development Based on the Principles of Input processing, Recycling, and Closed-task Output

### Introduction

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Vocabulary and grammar are the building blocks of language learning, yet it is clear that the traditional, building-block approach to teaching them is not sufficient. The traditional approach generally consists of memorizing long lists of vocabulary with the L1 translation and being presented with the grammar rules, memorizing the rules and then practicing the grammatical forms in drills. Although these methods do work well for learners with analytical learning styles and strong motivation, they don't work well for the rest.

After exploring the literature on second language acquisition recommendations for learning grammar and vocabulary (Carter, 2001; Ellis, 2002; Farley, 2005; Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Richards, 2002; VanPatten, 2004), we have focused on three particular techniques: input processing, recycling, and closed-ended tasks or information gap tasks.

*Input processing* (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; VanPatten, 2004; Farley, 2005) is relatively new and quite radical in terms of activity design. Teachers will need to design these activities themselves as no current commercial texts utilize them. The activities help the students to comprehend the form-meaning relation better before they are pressured to produce. Evidence suggests that if learners try to produce forms which are not solidly part of their interlanguage grammar, utterances will be full of errors--wild guesses rather than the educated guesses of true learning. Input processing can be done through consciousness-raising activities which help students to figure out

the rules for themselves. It is also done through "check-the-box" activities where students are asked to show that they understand the form without actually producing it themselves.

*Recycling* is not new and does not require much innovation in activity design. The important thing is systematic re-exposure over the long term. It is clear that students can learn particular forms to do well on a test but then forget them soon after. Recycling over the following weeks and months will help the students to retain. The recycling activities presented for each 'unit' should not be done during the weeks in which the featured form is the goal of the lesson. Instead, the recycling activities should be done in the following weeks after the class has moved on.

*Information gap* activities are not necessarily closed-ended activities, but they come pretty close since the partner has the accurate form. It is important to have students doing closed activities so that they can get feedback on the actual forms they are producing. They need to notice the gap between their version of the forms and the actual target forms in order to keep working at learning a particular form. Information-gap activities are one way to make the form salient—or something worth paying attention to.

The goal in all of the materials and all of the activities included in this set is to maintain the relationship between meaning and form. The first set focuses on vocabulary development, the second and third sets focus on the development of grammar.

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