

Chapter 2 Learning: Factors and Processes

Book name: Understanding Language teaching

Written by: Kumaravadivelu

Prepared by: Saeed Mojarradi - Ph.D. student

Professor: dr.Haniye Davatgari

Five major constructs that constitute the input-output chain:

Input
Intake
Intake factors
Intake processes
Output

2.1. Input

Input may be operationally defined as oral and/ or written corpus of the target language (TL) to which L2 learners are exposed through various sources and recognized by them as language input.

This definition posits two conditions:

- Availability
- Accessibility

Availability: the first condition is rather obvious: either input has to be made available to learners or they have to seek it themselves.

- Interlanguage input: the still-developing language of the learners and of their peers with all its linguistically well-formed as well as deviant utterances.
- Simplified input: the grammatically and lexically simplified language that teachers, textbook writers and other component speakers use in and outside the classroom, while addressing language learners.
- Non-simplified input: the language of competent speakers without any characteristic features of simplification, that is, the language generally used in the media (t.v , radio, and newspaper) and also the language used by competent speakers to speak and write to one another.

Accessibility: the second condition –accessibility- is less obvious than the first but is equally important: input has to be recognized by learners as language input, and accepted by them as something with which they can cope.

In other words, input should be linguistically and cognitively accessible to them. The language input that is available, but not accessible, is no more than noise.

Some segments of language input available to learners has the potential to become accessible, in part, through the process of what Gass (1997) called apperception.

Apperception is an internal cognitive act in which a linguistic form is related to some bit of existing knowledge (or gap in knowledge). It prepares the input for further analysis. It has recognizable features and the learner notices it in some way.

2.2. Intake

For Intake two strands of thought emerge:

- On that treats intake primarily as product.
- The other that treats it primarily as process.

By taking a product view (according to Kimball and Palmer, 1978) it was defined as input which requires students to listen for and interpret implicit meanings in ways similar to the ways they do in informal communication.

Krashen (1981) stated that intake is simply where language acquisition comes from, that subset of linguistic input that helps the acquirer acquire language.

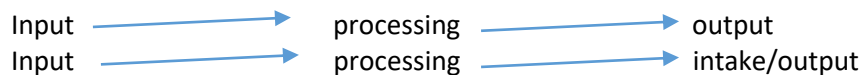
Corder defined intake as what goes in and not what is available to go in. (1967)

Similarly, Faerch and Kasper (1980) defined intake as the subset of input which is assimilated by the IL (interlanguage) system and which the IL system accommodated to.

Intake is input, even though it is only a part of it. Intake is already parts of IL system of the learners.

According to the **product view**, intake then is *unprocessed language input*.

According to the **process view**, it is *processed language input*.



2.3. Intake factors

Intake factors refer to learner internal and learner external factors that are brought to bear on the psycholinguistic processes of language learning.

Corder (1967) suggested that it is the learner who controls the input or more properly his intake.

Hatch (1983) believed that if input is held in memory long enough to be processed.

Seliger (1984) echoed the same idea: long term memory and its effect on the selection of tactics is what determines when input will become intake.

Krashen (1981) asserted that comprehensible input and low affective filter are vthe only two factors that determine intake.

The major intake factors:

- Individual factors : age and anxiety
- Negotiation factors : interaction and interpretation
- Tactical factors : learning strategies and communication strategies
- Affective factors: attitude and motivation
- Environmental factors : social context and educational context

- These factors can be classified into two broad categories:
 - o Learner internal
 - o Learner external

2.3.1. Individual factors

Several individual factors have been studied in order to assess their role in L2 development. They include age, anxiety, empathy, extraversion, introversion and risk-taking.

2.3.1.1 **Age**. It is generally believed that the age at which learners begin to learn a second language influences their ultimate attainment in language knowledge / ability.

2.3.1.2 **Anxiety**. Anxiety refers to an emotional state of apprehension, tension, nervousness, and worry mediated by the arousal of the automatic nervous system.

2.3.2. Negotiation Factors

The term negotiation has been widely used in conversation analysis to refer to the ways in which participants in a communicative event structure their social relationships through interaction. Negotiation is important for language 2 development because it implies the use and constant refinement of both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge/ability.

There are at least three dimensions to negotiation:

- **Introspection** is intra-personal, involving a language learner’s lonely mental journey through and about meanings and contexts.
- **Interaction**
- **Interpretation**, the other two dimensions of negotiation – interaction and interpretation- are largely interpersonal involving joint exploration of meaning between participants in a communicative event, and are directly available for investigation.

2.3.2.1. **Interaction Negotiation**, interaction in the L2 context entails the learner’s active involvement in such communicative activities as clarification, confirmation, comprehension checks, requests, repairing, reacting, and turn-taking.

Several experimental studies have revealed that negotiated interaction plays a facilitative, not a causal, role in helping L2 learners develop necessary language knowledge /ability.

2.3.2.2. **Interpretation**, closely associated with the opportunity to interact is the capacity to interpret target language utterances as intended.

Interpretative procedures help learners differentiate what is said from what is meant.

2.3.3. Tactical Factors

It refers to an important aspect of L2 development: the learners, awareness of, and their ability to use, appropriate tactics or techniques for effective learning of the language 2 and efficient use of the limited repertoire developed so far.

2.3.3.1. **Learning strategies** are operations and routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information. They are also specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, and more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations.

The term learning strategies then refers to what learners know and do to regulate their learning.

They classify learning strategies into three broad categories:

- **Metacognitive** strategies refer to higher order executive strategies such as thinking about the learning process, planning for and monitoring learning as it takes place, and self-evaluation of learning after the learning activity.
- **Cognitive strategies** refer to conscious ways of tackling learning materials, and linguistic input. They include specific steps such as note-taking, summarizing, deducing, transferring, and elaborating.
- **Social/affective strategies** refer to interpersonal strategies that are consistent with the learner's psychological and emotional conditions and experiences.

2.3.3.2. **Communicative strategies** in addition to learning strategies, L2 learners also use what are called communication strategies, which are potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communication goal.

One of the earliest taxonomies of communication strategies is the one proposed by Tarone (1977)

It has three broad categories:

- **Paraphrase**, involving the use of an elaborate descriptive phrase instead of a core lexical item.
- **Borrowing**, involving a word-for-word literal translation from native language.
- **Avoidance**, involving the attempt to avoid using a required expression or just to give up the effort to communicate.

The Linguistic strategy refers to the use of features and structures from another language. (Usually L1)

The Conceptual strategy refers to the manipulation of the intended concept.

- o **Holistic approach** involves using a similar referent, as *solve* for *microwave*.
- o **Analytic approach** involves selecting criterial properties of the referent as in a machine that cooks and defrosts very fast by means of waves for microwave.

2.3.4. Affective Factors

The individual learner's disposition to learn has always been recognized as crucial for L2 development. The term affective factors stands for several variables that characterize learner disposition.

As Siegel (2003) observed, motivation is considered to be influenced by the learner's attitudes toward the language 2, its speakers and culture, toward the social and practical value of using the L2, and toward his or her own language and culture.

2.3.4.1. **Attitude.** Attitudes are one's evaluative responses to a person, place, thing or an event. According to social psychologists, attitudes are individually driven, that is, they are one's personal thoughts or feelings based on one's beliefs or opinions, therefore, different individuals develop different shades of attitudes toward the same stimuli.

Attitudes are also socially grounded, that is, they must be experienced as related to subjects or events in the external world.

2.3.4.2. **Motivation.** Motivation provides the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. It is perhaps the only intake variable that has been consistently found, in various contexts and at various levels of L2 development, to correlate positively with successful outcome.

- Integrative motivation, refers to an interest in learning an L2 in order to sociocultural integrative with members of the TL community.

- Instrumental motivation, refers to an interest in learning an L2 for functional purposes such as getting a job or passing an examination.

Gardner, Lambert and colleagues reported that integrative motivation is far superior to instrumental motivation.

-Extrinsic motivation can be triggered only by external cues that include gaining and maintaining peer, sibling, or adult approval, avoiding peer or sibling or adult disapproval, gaining or losing specific tangible rewards.

-Achievement motivation, on the other hand, refers to the motivation and commitment to excel.

2.3.5. Knowledge Factors

Knowledge factors refer to language knowledge and metalinguage knowledge. All adult L2 learners exposed to formal language education in their L1 inevitably bring with them not only their L1 knowledge /ability but also their own perceptions and expectations about language, language learning, and language use. Both language knowledge and metalinguage knowledge play a crucial role in L2 development.

2.3.5.1. **Language knowledge** represents knowledge /ability in the native language, in the still developing target language, and in other languages already known.

All language learners (L2) learners possess varying degrees of implicit and explicit knowledge/ability in their L1.

2.3.5.2. **Metalinguage knowledge** also known as metalinguistic awareness, refers to one's ability to consider language not just as a means of expressing ideas or communicating with others, but also as an object of inquiry.

There seems to be knowledge. A strong relationship between language experience and metalinguage knowledge.

2.3.6. Environmental Factors

It refers to the wider milieu in which language learning and teaching take place. These include the global, national, social, cultural, political, economic, educational, and family contexts.

The impact of these overlapping factors on L2 development is not fully known, partly because, as Siegel (2003) pointed out, one shortcoming of the field of SLA is that generalizations have been made on the basis of research carried out in only a limited range of sociolinguistic settings and involving only standard varieties of language.

2.3.6.1. **Social context.** Social context refers to a range of language-learning environments such as the home, the neighborhood, the classroom, and the society at large.

Specific social settings such as the neighborhood and the classroom, in which learners come into contact with the new language have also been found to influence L2 development.

2.3.6.2. **Educational context.** Closely related to the social context is the educational context. Studies on educational contexts grounded in educational institutions and settings in which learning and teaching operations are embedded.

2.4. Intake processes

Intake processes are cognitive mechanisms that at once mediate between, and interact with, input data and intake factors. They consist of mental operations that are specific to language learning as well as those that are required for general problem-solving activities.

The intake processes that appear to shape L2 development may be grouped under three broad and overlapping categories:

- 1- Inferencing
- 2- Structuring
- 3- Restructuring

2.4.1. Inferencing, the intake process of inferencing involves making a series of intelligent guesses to derive tentative hypothesis about various aspects of the TL system.

Inferences are normally made by using all available, at times inconclusive, linguistic and nonlinguistic evidence based on the learner's implicit and explicit knowledge base.

- Implicit knowledge refers to information learners intuit about the TL, even though they cannot articulate that information in the form of rules or principles.
- Explicit knowledge refers to the learner's knowledge about the TL, their L1, and their knowledge of the world

2.4.2. Structuring

I use the term structuring to refer to the complex process that governs the establishment of mental representations of the TL, and their evolution in the course of IL development.

It refers to how L2 system is framed in the mind of the learner. It combines elements of analysis and control proposed by Bialystok.

2.4.3. Restructuring

The idea of restructuring as an intake process is derived from the work of Cheng (1985) and others in cognitive psychology and applied with some modification to L2 development by McLaughlin and his colleagues.

Restructuring can be traced to the structural approach stating that cognitive development is characterized by fundamental, qualitative change when a new internal organization is imposed for interpreting new information.

2.5. Output

Output refers to the corpus of utterances that learners actually produce orally or in writing. In addition to well-formed utterances that may have already been structured and / or restructured, the learner output will contain, as discussed in section 2.1 deviant utterances that cannot be traced to any of the three major sources of input because they are the result of an interplay between intake factors and intake processes.

2.6. An interactive framework of intake processes

SLA is a terribly complex process, that understanding the process requires the contributions of numerous fields, from linguistic theory to anthropology to brain science, and that the process is not yet very well understood.

Before we posit two criteria that any framework of intake processes must necessarily satisfy:

- A) It must be capable of including all the intake factors known to play a role in intake processes.
- B) It must reflect the interactive and parallel nature of intake processes.

Top down processing a knowledge governed system characterized by a step-by-step progression where output from one level acts as input for the next, or a bottom-up processing, an input-governed system characterized by a serial movement of information from the lower to the higher levels.