Experimenting the Influence of Input Modality on Involvement Load Hypothesis

Authors : Mohammad Hassanzadeh

Abstract : As far as incidental vocabulary learning is concerned, the basic contention of the Involvement Load Hypothesis (ILH) is that retention of unfamiliar words is, generally, conditional upon the degree of involvement in processing them. This study examined input modality and incidental vocabulary uptake in a task-induced setting whereby three variously loaded task types (marginal glosses, fill-in-task, and sentence-writing) were alternately assigned to one group of students at Allameh Tabataba'i University (n=2l) during six classroom sessions. While one round of exposure was comprised of the audiovisual medium (TV talk shows), the second round consisted of textual materials with approximately similar subject matter (reading texts). In both conditions, however, the tasks were equivalent to one another. Taken together, the study pursued the dual objectives of establishing a litmus test for the ILH and its proposed values of 'need', 'search' and 'evaluation' in the first place. Secondly, it sought to bring to light the superiority issue of exposure to audiovisual input versus the written input as far as the incorporation of tasks is concerned. At the end of each treatment session, a vocabulary active recall test was administered to measure their incidental gains. Running a one-way analysis of variance revealed that the audiovisual intervention yielded higher gains than the written version even when differing tasks were included. Meanwhile, task 'three' (sentence-writing) turned out the most efficient in tapping learners' active recall of the target vocabulary items. In addition to shedding light on the superiority of audiovisual input over the written input when circumstances are relatively held constant, this study for the most part, did support the underlying tenets of ILH.