

# Current Perspectives on Vocabulary Learning and Teaching



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By

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## PREFACE

### *VERBUM VINCET* (*THE WORD WILL CONQUER*)

Vocabulary teaching is a *conditio sine qua non* in overall foreign and second language teaching as it forms the basis for communication. Vocabulary is vital for all four language skills; therefore, how it can be learned or acquired has drawn the attention of the people engaged in language teaching. The words that we acquire, learn, know, and use are all of crucial importance in communicating meanings and messages. Accordingly, as Vivian James Cook put it in 1996 in his book *Second Language Learning and Teaching*, “language teaching should deal with how vocabulary should be taught”.

With this collection of papers, we aim to provide an updated look at the current perspectives and practices in vocabulary learning and teaching foreign or second languages, specifically English worldwide. Therefore, the volume contains both theoretical and experimental studies that are of value in shedding light on the current status of teaching and learning vocabulary. In essence, there are many approaches and perspectives to be considered. We do not claim that all existing approaches to vocabulary teaching and learning are included in the book. The most eminent objective is to garner and exemplify several perspectives to create an updated picture of the current status of vocabulary learning and teaching in the settings where English is not the medium of communication. It is believed that such a collection will create a growing awareness of the instruction of vocabulary in language teaching.

Five sections are included in this edited book:

- Vocabulary Acquisition
- Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners
- Vocabulary Teaching Strategies and Methodology
- Vocabulary Learning Strategies
- Vocabulary Testing



Foreign and second language teachers, prospective teachers, teacher trainers and trainees, material developers, course designers, administrators and policy makers are the intended audience of the work.

Editors

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**PART ONE:**

**VOCABULARY ACQUISITION**

# CHAPTER ONE

## TEACHING VOCABULARY THROUGH COMPELLING AND COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT

VEDAT KIYMAZARSLAN

### **Introduction**

Vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role for both efficient second language comprehension and fluent language production. Accordingly, for successful second/foreign language (L2) development to occur, vocabulary learning and teaching activities “in language classrooms” are of crucial importance and should be meticulously and intelligently thought over beforehand. It is obvious that learners fail to express themselves properly if they do not have sufficient vocabulary knowledge. Recent studies (Krashen, 1989; Barcroft, 2012; Ray, 2014) have shown that input-based vocabulary teaching, particularly teaching vocabulary through comprehensible input, has gained considerable importance and impetus and should be taken into consideration carefully by foreign or second language researchers and teachers.

However, before going into a discussion as regards vocabulary teaching and learning through comprehensible input, as well as other relevant issues, it is worth looking at current language acquisition theories. There are various ways to classify L2 acquisition (SLA) theories but the distinction to be used in this chapter is between “cognitivist” versus “nativist” theories. It is believed that such a distinction could help us, second/foreign language teachers, better understand how L2 vocabulary teaching and learning should be viewed.

Discussions of the distinction between “cognitivism” and “nativism” (and also between “learning” and “acquisition”) form not only the basis of second language acquisition theories, but also the basis of L2 pedagogy and L2 vocabulary teaching and learning. The doctrine of cognitivism asserts that there is only one (domain-general) cognitive capacity responsible for all types of human learning. From a cognitivist perspective, therefore,



language acquisition is fundamentally similar to learning any other cognitive skill, like learning math or learning how to type or drive. Viewed from this perspective, reductionism, constructivism, connectionism, and even behaviorism can all be grouped under the umbrella term “cognitivism” as they all converge on the denial of a domain-specific mechanism for language acquisition. This is most clearly stated by Karmiloff-Smith, a former student of Piaget in the Geneva School, who confessed that:

Neither the Piagetian [cognitivist] nor the behaviorist theory grants the infant any innate structures or domain-specific knowledge. Each grants only some domain-general, biologically specified processes: for the Piagetians [cognitivists], a set of sensory reflexes and three functional processes (assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration); for the behaviorists, inherited physiological sensory systems and a complex set of laws of association. These domain-general learning processes are held to apply across all areas of linguistic and non-linguistic cognition (Karmiloff-Smith, 1995, 7).

Nativism, on the other hand, asserts that acquisition of a human language by children in a few years is inexplicable if there is no innate capacity/knowledge in the brain/mind of a child specifically geared to linguistic processing. This is most evident when the immature cognitive capacity of infants is taken into consideration:

[A] child may well not have grasped the property of conservation of volume nor be able to perform but the most rudimentary arithmetic calculations, yet will have the knowledge linguists formulate as the binding principles, none of which is explicitly taught (Carston, 1988, 41).

Left to his/her domain-general cognitive devices alone, no child can sort out the complex rules of his/her mother tongue. The fact that the grammar of any human language has not been deciphered in its entirety so far by a community of thousands of highly intelligent (cognitively mature) linguists (like Chomsky) using their domain-general problem solving capacities (Piaget’s only learning mechanism) leaves no doubt that children exploit a different mechanism to solve the complex puzzle of language:

[W]e’re struck between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, the expressive variety of language demands a complex mental grammar that linguists can’t entirely figure out. But on the other hand, children manage to acquire this grammar. Thus, in a sense the Genetic [Nativist] Hypothesis is a move of desperation ... it’s the only answer anybody has been able to think of (Jackendoff, 1993, 33).

However, it is necessary to note that cognitivists do not entirely disagree with the nativist ideas nor do nativists totally deny the cognitivist ideas. They differ only in how much weight they lay on environmental and innate factors (Kiyamazarslan, 2002). Cognitivists, in fact, do not negate the presence of innate principles as long as they are valid across domains; their reaction is towards the domain-specific innate knowledge or mechanisms. In his famous discussion with Chomsky, Piaget (1980) suggested that “If one wants to introduce innateness into language, why not introduce it into the symbolic function in its totality, and finally into anything that is general” (p. 167) reflecting his readiness to accept inborn capacities or knowledge as long as it is domain-general.

The nativists, however, argue that—in addition to the domain-general learning mechanism, with which cognitivists try to explain any kind of human learning—there must be a number of domain-specific, innate modules, each of which is designed to process complex cognitive stimuli such as vision, music, face recognition, etc. One of these modules is responsible for language processing and its acquisition. This language module is generally referred to as the language acquisition device (LAD) and its functioning is independent of other innate modules or of domain-general cognitive mechanisms. In other words, the nativists assert that language acquisition is “innately determined” and that we are born with “a built-in device” that predisposes us to acquire language. This device predisposes us to a systematic perception of language around us. Eric Lenneberg attempts to explain language development in the child and assumes that language is a species-specific behavior and is ‘biologically determined’ (cited in Brown, 1987:19). It is important to emphasize here that nativists do not deny the importance of environmental stimuli, but say language acquisition cannot be explained merely on the basis of environmental factors interacting with some domain-general mechanism. Therefore, there must be an innate and domain-specific guide to reach this end:

Language is not merely difficult to learn with only general cognitive strategies, it is virtually impossible. This is one important reason for attributing an innate domain-specific language faculty to children (Bley-Vroman, 1989, 44).

At this point, the critical question for the L2 practitioners (i.e. teachers) and learners is “what activates the LAD or what makes it tick?” and the nativist answer is “comprehensible input”:

For the knowledge system of a particular language to grow, the acquirer must have exposure to instances or exemplars of that particular language. Without such exposure language development will not take place (Schwartz, 1993, p. 148).

[A]cquisition occurs in response only to positive evidence, that is, the language that the learner hears in his/her surrounding, ambient environment (Piske & Young-Scholten, 2009, p. 8).

In fact, even the cognitivists do not deny the possibility of acquiring a new language through input. In that sense, there is a consensus among second language researchers that input is an essential component of second language acquisition (VanPatten, 1996, p. 13). The difference between the two schools of thought is about the underlying mechanism processing incoming messages. While for the cognitivists, the processor is the domain-general learning mechanism responsible for any type of human learning, for the nativist it is the LAD. When a learner is presented with some understandable message in or out of classroom context, his/her LAD goes to work and starts analyzing its morpho-syntactic and lexical content automatically. Therefore, the main responsibility of an L2 teacher is to provide his/her students with an ample amount of input and make it as comprehensible as possible, according to the most prominent nativist SLA theorist, Krashen. As for vocabulary teaching, presentation of new vocabulary has to be made in a meaningful context, like an interesting story or a dialog, rather than a list of isolated lexical items to be memorized. The difference between presenting a new word in a meaningful context versus teaching it in isolation is similar to the difference between planting a tree in soil versus nailing down a wooden pole into the ground. While such a pole can be moved off the ground with a few kicks, the tree would remain intact even after heavy blows, thanks to its rich network of deeply rooted connections with the soil. A new word presented in context is automatically analyzed by the LAD at a subconscious level in terms of its connections with its morpho-syntactic environment. Only after such a subconscious analysis and subsequently formed neural connections can the new word be available during natural and fluent language use (not through some conscious memorization/learning techniques):

The grammatical structure that our minds assemble in milliseconds on-line in order to process utterances (for production or comprehension) is absolutely inaccessible to conscious introspection. One might say that it just has to be so for extremely fast and efficient language use to be possible (Sharwood-Smith, 2008, p. 11).

Although the statement above is about grammatical parsing, the status of lexical processing is not very different. It is highly likely that in order for new vocabulary items to be used effectively and effortlessly, they have to be subconsciously acquired rather than consciously learned.

This brings us to the hotly debated issue of acquisition-learning distinction, which lies at the core of major discussions in the field of foreign language teaching. While Krashen suggests that conscious and subconscious processing of linguistic stimuli is handled by different mechanisms in the brain, many others (especially the cognitivists) deny such a distinction (see Ellidokuzoğlu, 2008 and 2017 for a more detailed account). Krashen claims that (subconscious) acquired competence (AC) and (conscious) learned competence (LC) represent two distinct storage systems in the brain between which there exists no transfer (Non-Interface Position/Non-IP). The only way to develop AC is through exposure to input whereas LC develops through conscious analysis of L2 rules. From a cognitivist perspective, however, learning L2 rules is possible through initial conscious analysis followed by production practice. In other words, AC and LC represent the end points along a continuum (not two distinct knowledge systems). Theoretically cognitivists do not, in fact, deny the possibility of improving AC through exposure to input but they also believe in the existence of an alternative path between AC and LC through which L2 rules are supposed to be acquired through conscious learning followed by production practice (Interface Position/IP). In other words, the cognitivist assertion is that it is always possible to move items from LC to AC through practice, and this forms the backbone of many L2 teaching practices all the way from the Direct Method to present day communicative methodologies. In this sense, cognitivism echoes our good-old intuition that consciously learned items can be made automatic and thus subconsciously acquired through practice. This view is most typically expressed by Sharwood-Smith (1981), who was once an advocate of cognitivist Interface Position, at a time when Krashen's controversial distinction was the basic discussion topic among SLA researchers some four decades ago:

While the empirical evidence for the impermeability and primacy of the acquisition device in the second or foreign language learners is hotly contested, there is every reason to accept the older, intuitively attractive version which says that explicit knowledge may aid acquisition via practice (p. 167).

Without seriously questioning the validity of this intuition, L2 teaching experts designed their methodologies accordingly and as a result “practice makes perfect” has been the name of the game for the last hundred plus

years in language teaching history. Then, there came the 1970s and 80s, during which a series of serious studies were conducted to test whether what was practiced in class was really internalized by students or not (i.e. whether consciously taught/learned rules could really become subconsciously acquired after some practice or not). The results were quite disappointing for the cognitivists, to say the least:

[I]nstruction does not appear to influence the order of development. No matter what order grammatical structures are presented and practiced in the classroom, learners will follow their own “built-in” syllabus (Ellis, 1984, p. 150).

To the cognitivists’ utter disappointment, the results revealed the impermeability of the LAD and the results of research carried out in the following decades did nothing but further approve the nativist Non-IP, forcing former cognitivists like Sharwood-Smith to change their camp:

Thirty years of research has not produced any really hard evidence that making people aware of formal features of the second language has any significant long-term effect on their grammatical development (Sharwood-Smith, 2008, p. 1).

In the light of all these research results (not in line with our sometimes misleading intuitions), we will mainly focus in this chapter on the most effective tool in vocabulary development in language acquisition: comprehensible input.

The following section of the chapter gives some brief information about the importance of vocabulary in learning and teaching an L2. Then we will have a brief look at the history of L2 vocabulary instruction. The fourth section includes a brief account of past and present vocabulary teaching models, techniques, and strategies. And then in the fifth section we will elaborate on the construct of “compelling input” defined as “input [which] is so interesting that you forget that it is in another language” (Krashen: 2013:15). The final part of the chapter, therefore, aims to clarify how to teach and present new vocabulary through “comprehensible and compelling input”.

## **The Importance of Vocabulary in Second Language Learning and Teaching**

Vocabulary plays an essential role in second language teaching and learning. Vocabulary is important because a language is essentially its

lexicon. Hedgcock and Ferris (2009: 284) note that vocabulary knowledge is the backbone of language learning and that it should be “the essential constituent of the L2 literacy curriculum”. Similarly, Krashen (1989) notes that, “a large vocabulary is crucial for mastery of a language.” Because of this, learners “carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books” and they believe that “lack of vocabulary is a major problem” (Krashen 1989: 440). In his article, “We Acquire Vocabulary and Spelling by Reading: Additional Evidence for the Input Hypothesis”, Krashen (1989: 440-463) stresses the significance of vocabulary in a more different way than other researchers. He hypothesizes that “competence in spelling and vocabulary is most efficiently attained through comprehensible input.”

Within the mainstream of L2 acquisition, it is true that a great many L2 teachers began to devote most of their class time to grammar teaching, not to vocabulary teaching or anything else. Even though some teachers and learners think that learning vocabulary is as important as learning grammar, a great majority think that grammar is more important than vocabulary (Shen, 2003: 188). The belief behind that was that the more grammar rules a learner masters, the more proficient and fluent he or she becomes. As a consequence, grammar has been their number one priority. Vocabulary teaching and real L2 issues have been overlooked.

Two of the terms used often in L2 learning and teaching are “planned/unplanned vocabulary teaching” and “incidental/intentional vocabulary learning” (Read, 2004: 147; Krashen, 1989: 440; Barcroft, 2012: 6). Some researchers assume that “vocabulary learning and teaching have been overlooked because of a prevailing view” that lexical knowledge emerges *incidentally*, with little or no intentional effort on the part of the learner and teacher (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009; Sökmen; 1997; Folse, 2004). Some other researchers and educators, however, presuppose that lexical knowledge is acquired incidentally and on its own as long as learners are exposed to L2 input, which is abundant, meaningful, interesting, and compelling (Krashen, 1989; 2013). According to Krashen, “we acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading”. The acquisition process can be viewed as a process which is identical to “incidental learning”. As mentioned in the introduction part, teachers thus face various distinctions between cognitivism (learning) and nativism (acquisition) or between incidental versus intentional learning. Each teacher has to make his or her evaluation of these dichotomies considering their advantages and disadvantages for L2 vocabulary teaching and learning in advance under varying learning and teaching settings.

## **A Short History of L2 Vocabulary Teaching**

As discussed by Zimmerman (1997) and Barcroft (2012), trends in second/foreign language vocabulary instruction have changed considerably over the past two centuries. The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) of the 1800s, for instance, created an environment in which much vocabulary was taught to students in the form of lists of isolated words. The only drills were translation exercises of disconnected sentences from the target language to the mother language. Very difficult and classical texts, which did not include daily words, were studied at early levels. Instruction focused on the form and inflection of words. Bilingual word lists were used as teaching tools, not as reference tools, and the words here were presented in isolation through semantic fields. Little attention was given to the content of texts, and texts were viewed as exercises in grammatical analysis rather than as input-providing materials (Brown, 1987). Classroom instruction was primarily in the mother tongue. As Richards puts it (1986: 5), the GTM is a method for which there is no theory.

Francois Gouin's Series Method of the 1850s was a method which taught learners directly and conceptually "a series of connected sentences" that were easy to perceive (no grammar rules and no translation). This sort of vocabulary introduction or teaching is perhaps the first of its kind. The first lesson of a foreign language would consist of a series of fifteen sentences. Only five of the sentences are given here. It is clearly seen that the word "door" is contextualized in the following example: "I walk towards the door. I draw near to the door. I draw nearer to the door. I get to the door. I stop at the door" (cited in Brown, 1987: 35). Gouins' Series Method was overshadowed by the Direct Method's great success. However, his emphasis on the need to present new teaching items "in a context" is still important.

As for the Direct Method (DM) developed by Sauveur and popularized by Berlitz at the end of the nineteenth century, it can be noted that vocabulary was introduced in context. In other words, as also pointed out by Barcroft (2012), words were introduced in sentences that provided sufficient context for learners to deduce the meaning. Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were presented. Speech and listening comprehension were regarded as important skills. Concrete, simple and familiar vocabulary was taught through demonstration, pictures, and objects, and abstract words were introduced through the association of ideas. Classroom instruction was exclusively in the target language. It was successful because of its emphasis on small classes, intensive study and individual attention. The DM failed in the 1920s because of its

inapplicability in public education and its weak theoretical foundations. It was also unable to deal with the issues about “which words L2 learners should acquire”. With the advent of the Reading Method (a modified version of the GTM) in the USA and Situational Language Teaching (SLT) in Great Britain in the 1930s, principles of vocabulary control and vocabulary syllabus design began to gain profound importance, thanks to British linguists such as Harold E. Palmer and Michael West.

Under the Audiolingual Method (ALM), developed by Charles Fries in the 1940s (and improved by Lado, Baldwin, and Lobo in the 1960s), vocabulary teaching and vocabulary were regarded as less important than grammar. Vocabulary was strictly limited and learned in context. Oral repetition and substitution drills focused on grammar. Massive expansion of vocabulary is allowed only after establishing control of grammar. ALM has failed in L2 vocabulary teaching because it overemphasizes mimicry, imitation, memorization of set phrases, and over-learning. Wilga Rivers’ criticism in 1964 (cited in Brown, 1987: 96) is important in that the ALM classes fail to teach long-term communicative proficiency and help students acquire long-term vocabulary. From a Krashenian perspective, however, the basic reason why ALM has failed is that it does not provide a sufficient amount of comprehensible input before forcing students to produce in their early L2 development, and that the emphasis is on form (rather than on meaning) throughout.

James Asher’s TPR (Total Physical Response) of the 1970s is a technique that uses commands and gestures to help students acquire the target language and the target vocabulary. TPR is a registered trademark owned by James Asher, and one of the best methods using the concept of comprehensible (if not compelling) input. The TPR class is one in which learners do a great deal of listening and acting. They are exposed to various commands and gestures. The teacher is like a guide in dealing with a performance (Asher: 1977: 43). Commands are good for learners to move about and loosen up, thus to acquire new vocabulary. From a cognitivist and communicative perspective, TPR was limited in that it lacked “spontaneity for unrehearsed language” (i.e. fluency) in a classroom setting. It was also inadequate in presenting abstract vocabulary and vocabulary at more advanced levels of language proficiency. However, it should be kept in mind that commands and accompanying (teacher) talks are an invaluable source of comprehensible input for learners, which leads to lexical development, according to Krashen.

At the end of the historical continuum, there are three approaches or methods: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the Natural Approach (NA) and Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS).



As is well-known, CLT is a method which stresses the development of communicative competence (Richards and Rodgers: 1986). The subcomponents of communicative competence are discourse and pragmatic, linguistic, and strategic competencies. Being a part of linguistic competence, lexis is highly critical for second language acquisition to develop. In a CLT classroom, students are exposed to words in meaningful contexts to develop lexical competence.

Although Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach (1983) is sometimes viewed as one of the communicative methods (Richards and Rodgers: 1986), there are some dramatic differences between the two. First of all, the underlying learning theory of CLT is cognitivism while the Natural Approach is based on the nativist SLA theory of Krashen called the Monitor Model. Dependence on cognitivism renders CLT a production-oriented method in which a main principle is "practice makes perfect" (Thornbury, 2006, p. 172). The Natural Approach, however, is a heavily comprehension-oriented method whose aim is to provide students with an ample amount of input before expecting them to speak or write in the target language. Unlike the heavily production-oriented CLT which urges students to speak from the very beginning, the Natural Approach allows students to remain silent and display their comprehension through non-verbal means (such as nodding, giving bodily/physical responses or simply answering yes/no questions, etc.) during the initial stages of their L2 development. Another highly critical difference is that CLT requires a blending of conscious focus on form and meaning (FOF&M) during each classroom activity while the Natural Approach urges the separation of (conscious) focus-on-form (FOF) from focus-on-meaning (FOM) activities. In other words, in a typical CLT classroom while the meaningful elements such as lexical items are presented in context there is also a structure of the day in the hidden agenda of the teacher. For Krashen, FOF&M is against the basic operational principles of the human mind/brain which can consciously focus on only one thing at a time. Therefore in the Natural Approach, whenever students are to consciously focus on form (as is the case in pop-up grammar sessions), they are not also forced to deal with a meaningful activity at the same time, such as listening to a story or talking to others. In a typical CLT class, on the other hand, the students are expected either to discover or to use the structure of the day while getting involved in some meaningful activity at the same time. Nonetheless, there are some similarities between CLT and the Natural Approach. For instance, both methods emphasize contextualized vocabulary-building tasks. Contextualized vocabulary activities are encouraged since they promote the type of incidental or implicit acquisition which is desired for ultimate L2 fluency. Therefore, it is believed that

decontextualized tasks (for example, tasks based on word lists or glosses only) are of little or no value for they do place constraints on comprehensible input (Krashen, 1989; Krashen, 2013).

Finally, we will examine TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) which enjoys widespread popularity nowadays, particularly after the advent of the new millennium. It is necessary to note here that TPR Storytelling is a registered trademark owned by Blaine Ray. As the name suggests, it simply uses “reading” and “stories” to develop lexical competence. Of course, the aim is not to develop vocabulary competence per se. Fluency is the ultimate goal as in other communicatively oriented approaches and methods. It makes use of various techniques such as circling and other context-based techniques to help learners develop their vocabulary building, thus their fluency (Seely, 2006; Barcroft, 2012; Hedstrom, 2102; Ray: 2014).

As is the case with the Natural Approach, TPRS is also viewed by some people as a version of communicative approach but again there are strong reasons not to categorize it as such. Most of the aforementioned remarks about the differences between the Natural Approach and CLT are also valid for TPRS. First of all, TPRS is a highly comprehension-oriented approach compared to production-based CLT. However, the underlying learning theory of CLT is not as clearly articulated as is the case in the Natural Approach’s Monitor Model. And when the classroom applications of TPRS (especially of Blaine Ray’s) are examined closely, one can notice the impact of cognitivism rather than nativism in their syllabus design. While the nativist Monitor Model does not recommend a structural syllabus or even a natural order based syllabus (see Ellidokuzoğlu, 2008, for details), TPRS activities circle around a pivotal structure of the day, the underlying assumption being that “the more exposure to the same structure, the faster you acquire” it. This is of course a bit different from the cognitivist assumption that “the more you practice, the faster you learn” but it is also against the nativist point of view which suggests that L2 structures are acquired in a pre-determined (natural) order which cannot be changed through instruction. So the TPRS idea of having a pre-specified structure for each day (although sometimes what they select as structure is a lexical chunk, namely a thematic/semantic unit rather than a morpho-syntactic one) is against the operational principles of the LAD whose functioning cannot be specifically tailored through form-focused instruction. So the classification of TPRS along the nativist-cognitivist continuum is a bit tricky: on the one hand it exploits the most effective tool, comprehensible input, that nativists recommend we use in teaching a foreign language. But on the other the hidden agenda behind TPRS activities is to instill a specific

structure into the minds of learners at the end of the day. This makes TPRS closer to a cognitivist learning theory, according to which consciously learned items can be perfectly acquired through some practice, as is the case in other domains:

To learn a second language is to learn a skill, because various aspects of the task must be practiced and integrated into fluent performance. This requires the automatization of component subskills (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 133).

This alone does not make TPRS a cognitivist method like CLT, but it is not a purely nativist method like the Natural Approach, either. No matter how you classify it, though, it is a very effective method basically because of the ample amount of comprehensible and interesting input it provides for the students. So long as teachers provide an ample amount of such input, the LAD takes care of the rest, and picks up the lexical items and grammar rules on its own (in accordance with the natural order). The grammar rule that the LAD picks up at any given class may not be the same structure of the day that the TPRS syllabus dictates but this is not such a big problem as long as the students' focus is on meaning (i.e. on the story) and so long as meaning is made clear by the teacher:

Once a message is understood, the LAD is automatically triggered and starts analyzing the grammatical content of the incoming messages at a subconscious level. The only way, therefore, to develop subconscious grammar (i.e. AC) is through the LAD's own processing of incoming messages, when the learner's conscious focus is on meaning, not on form. The processing of form (i.e. grammatical aspects of input) by the LAD occurs at a subconscious level and is immune to conscious intervention (Ellidokuzoğlu, 2017, p.32).

To make a long story short, although they are not crystal clear in their theoretical rationale, TPRS practitioners are inadvertently doing the best thing to do in language teaching by giving their students ample amounts of input, by making input as comprehensible and interesting as possible, and by not forcing them to speak or write at initial stages (i.e. during silent periods).

## **A Brief Look at Existing Vocabulary Teaching Models, Techniques, and Strategies**

According to a classification of vocabulary teaching techniques by Oxford and Crookall (cited in Shen, 2013: 191) in 1990, common vocabulary teaching techniques can be classified into three categories: (1)

de-contextualizing, (2) semi-contextualizing, and (3) fully contextualizing. Figure 1 indicates a dynamic continuum of various approaches (adapted from Shen, 2013: 192). It is believed that contextual, semi-contextual and de-contextual strategies are necessary for learners to learn or acquire words. It is true that using context clues to guess word meanings is important in learning vocabulary. But the issue in question here is not how learners learn in context but how teachers should present new words in language classrooms for learners to acquire new words. In addition, it is equally emphasized that more “native-like input” is needed for more “native-like proficiency”.

⇐ LESS INPUT/LESS CONTEXT		MORE INPUT/MORE CONTEXT ⇒	
decontextual	semi-contextual	fully contextual	
1. word lists	1. bilingual word lists	1. listening (stories)	
2. monolingual word lists	2. physical response	2. reading (stories, readers)	
3. flashcards	3. semantic mapping	3. writing	
4. dictionaries/glosses	4. word grouping	4. speaking	
5. structure/phrase lists	5. imagery: aural/visual	5. high freq. words in context	

Figure 1. Common vocabulary learning strategies from *less input* to *more input*.

Shen (2013: 202) indicates that teachers tend to use a limited range of methods to teach vocabulary in L2 classrooms. For example, they often make use of decontextualized words when they want to introduce new words through providing their synonyms or dictionary definitions. Some teachers even think that memorization (or rote learning) is the most efficient way of learning words. In order to create a better and systematic vocabulary teaching and learning in classroom settings, Shen proposes a model called a 2C (contextual and consolidating) “model for teaching vocabulary”. Shen also proposes another model called a 5R (*receiving, recognizing, retaining, retrieving, and recycling* in four language skills) “model for learner’s vocabulary learning process”. This means that word lists, flashcards or other decontextual tools should not be used on their own. They should therefore be introduced in context as much as possible. If teachers understand the value of the contextual and consolidating model mentioned above, they can benefit from this second five-step model effectively to teach vocabulary in their classrooms. Shen then proposes a third model by combining teaching and learning models in one model called the “2C-5R model” for classroom contexts. Without the need to go further into too much detail, it is obvious that all these models proposed by Shen can be beneficial to vocabulary teaching and learning. However, teachers should be cautiously attentive before they hastily integrate such models into their own lesson plans and

classrooms; moreover, they should consider other studies and models beforehand as well.

In addition to the models above, the following techniques are proposed for successful vocabulary acquisition to occur (Tongpoon-Patanasorn & Patanasorn, 2010): (1) repeating and recycling; (2) noticing; (3) reflection; (4) teaching different aspects of vocabulary knowledge; and (5) task-induced involvement. For classroom contexts, these techniques can be clarified as follows (adapted from Tongpoon-Patanasorn, A. & Patanasorn C., 2010: 70):

(1) *Repeating and Recycling*: It is important for learners to encounter a new word several times to acquire the word successfully. It is not meaningful to see it only once or twice separately. A meaningful course of action is required in retrieving the new word. Otherwise, the acquisition of a word is improbable. As stated by Patanasorn (2010:71), “meaningful retrieval of words engages learners in a deep level of processes”. Repeating the target words (teachers repeat) plays a crucial role in helping the student have a chance to acquire them. Words also must be recycled by teachers in the same line with repeating to help learners retain them. In case recycling is ignored, all the effort spent on learning and teaching them can be wasted.

(2) *Noticing*: Another significant issue is that teachers need to make learners aware (conscious) of what they are learning (not acquiring). Students need to convert input to intake. One strategy to make words more noticeable is by means of “input enhancement”. For example, displaying the target word in bold or in a concordance format may help learners improve their receptive skills. Similarly, asking them to use the target word in their production might be of great value.

Noticing is a typically cognitivist idea as it presupposes that when learners consciously notice something they will be able to acquire it later. From a nativist standpoint, however, we can never be sure which input becomes intake since internalization of input depends on the impenetrable processing of the LAD, not on the teachers’ or learners’ conscious learning attempts. The only way to help the LAD acquire something new is through making input more comprehensible, according to nativism. When the LAD picks up a rule or a vocabulary item it is basically beyond our control.

(3) *Reflection*: This technique refers to the monitoring of a learner’s own learning. Reflection results in a process of good quality learning because there is “self-assessment” in it and this is a sort of meaningful learning (Nation, 2001). There are three interrelated strategies to keep track of one’s own vocabulary learning. One: a record of how many words a learner has learned. Two: a record of how fast learning occurs. Three: a record of examples of students’ language use regularly.

(4) *Teaching Different Aspects of Vocabulary Knowledge*: Obviously knowing a word does not simply mean knowing the definition of a word. It involves knowing various aspects such as collocations, word parts, and grammatical functions and so on. Learners need to possess such aspects of knowing a word. Using the target word in the right context and time is of great value. Of course, creating chances for exposure for the successful acquisition of a word is of crucial value.

(5) *Task-induced involvement*: Such an involvement requires designing language tasks for incidental vocabulary learning. In fact, this is a model proposed by Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) (cited in Patanasorn, 2010). They believe that three components are important for retention of words: the need to know a word (motivation), searching to find the meaning of unknown words (curiosity), and evaluation to find out whether a word fits the context or does not fit it. Tasks increase learners' involvement in a meaningful vocabulary learning setting and result in high levels of vocabulary retention. It is important to note that tasks can also provide compelling, interesting, and comprehensible input for learners.

It is well-accepted that the best way to teach vocabulary is to use as many ways as possible in class. However, as mentioned earlier, it has been found that there are certain weaknesses of vocabulary teaching in class. This may be because of teachers' false belief that giving the meaning of a word directly is less time-consuming. In addition, teachers tend to use relatively few and ineffective techniques and strategies in class. Then there is a strong argument whether vocabulary should be learned by students or taught by teachers (Folse, 2004; Shen, 2013). The reason why such an argument has appeared is probably that learning a word requires a lot of time and exposure for students and such a difficult activity cannot be carried out in the classroom, or can only be done partially. To put it another way, trying to teach complicated lexical items in limited class time or presenting vocabulary items in isolation cannot be a solution to the issue of helping students acquire L2 vocabulary. Input-based teaching and using comprehensible input in and out of class time can be a solution to help learners attain a better place in this process.

In addition to the techniques, models, and strategies which have appeared as a result of varying theories of language and language learning, recent advances in information technology have also led to important changes in L2 vocabulary teaching and learning, which is the subject of another chapter in this collection. In the following section, input-based teaching and CI will be introduced in more detail.