

An Output Task of English Drama Performance and its Effects on Incidental L2 Vocabulary Learning: An Experimental Study

Feng Teng

School of Liberal arts, Nanning University, 8 Longting Road, Nanning 530200, China

E-mail of the corresponding author: tengfeng@uni.canberra.edu.au

The research is financed by Guangxi Education Reform programme No. 2013JGA446

Abstract

This pedagogical practice described in this study is to analyze L2 learners' attitude and vocabulary outcomes based on an output task of introducing English drama performance into classroom teaching. In the controversial context of Swain's (1985) 'output Hypothesis' and Krashen's (1985) 'input hypothesis', this paper discusses the rational, motivation, and ramifications of joining this output task study. It can be learned from the study that almost one third of learners lost motivation and interest after this task. When divided the participants into three groups of HPL, IL and LL. The former two groups performed better in vocabulary gain post this task and sustain a good retention in target words after two months. The LL group performed a relatively unexpected low result in vocabulary learning. The reason assumed for this is that the acceptability and processability of materials for this task is crucial for learners to modify original output to reprocessed forms of using target words which determines whether they could benefit or not from this task. This study also suggests part of the findings is compatible with Swain's (1985) 'output Hypothesis'.

Keywords: task, output, motivation, acceptability, processability, vocabulary gain

1. Introduction

In the process of teaching English, some of the students often posed the questions, "Why can't I speak English after spending so many years in learning English", "I can write, I can read, but the lack of ability in speaking deprive me of the chances to show myself". These questions may be too extreme, but to some extent it reflects the existed situation of "dump English" in learning English as a foreign language in Chinese context. Concerning the straitened communicative circumstances, the acquisition of vocabulary is identified by most learners as the single greatest source of problems (Kang & Golden, 1994). For a long history of teaching English as a foreign language in China, the teaching of vocabulary is often de-emphasized. Although the traditional method of GTM is prevalent, the effects of which are over-focused on the structures or the formation of the language. And the words that are taught out of contextual and meaningful situation are thought to have an ill effect on long-term retention (Lawson & Hogben, 1996) and words are believed to be the central building blocks of communication (Clark, 1993). Therefore, it is needed to have a shift to emphasize on the development of incidental vocabulary learning in the functional complexity and transactional nature of communication. In classroom English learning, the learners are often lack of enough opportunities to conduct authentic practices or training in incidental L2 vocabulary learning. While the input from the teachers, textbooks and audio-lingual materials have already shown importance in EFL learning, assessing the effects of output-based task on incidental vocabulary learning is also regarded as a very important process in vocabulary learning in classroom context. This study focuses on a pedagogical practice by systematically introducing a production-based task of English drama performance into classroom teaching and explores the possible changes that bring to EFL learners' motivation, interests and the related effects on incidental L2 vocabulary learning.

In order to analyze the effects of a specific task on EFL learner, it is necessary to define what "task" is. Task was first proposed by Smith (1971) as a job responsibility that a person was required to do and finish. The task is not from inside instinct, but imposed from outside. Cunningsworth (1984) pointed out that task means an activity for language use or practice, and it range from 'mechanical' 'automatic drilling' and 'guided role-play'. Long (1985) proposed task in teaching and defined a task as a work or a job finished by someone. It can be free or awarded. A task can be something that people do in daily life (P.89). According to this explanation, task-based teaching means taking what happens in real life into classroom setting, a task is indispensable from real life. Breen (1987) added 'workplan' to the definition of task and stresses the importance of 'workplan' in facilitating language use. Littlejohn (1998) referred task to materials used for action to be undertaken by learners. Richards and Rogers (2001) proposed outcome-oriented L2 instructional segment. In this perspective, task should be focused on the outcome that the L2 learner was expected to attain or produce, task is outcome-oriented. Ellis (2003) further used "cognitive process" to describe task, a task can be productive or receptive. The main purpose of a task is to communicate and it requires the learners to do something in the process of communication and interaction with others (Bygate et al., 2001b; Willis, 1996b). Communication is one of the most important forms in EFL teaching

and it reflects a powerful role of conveying meaning. In this study, students have the opportunities to communicate with their peers in order to fulfill this required task and students themselves need to be positioned to accomplish a wide range of communicative goals in the task of English drama performance and series of pre-task instructions on how to do this task, task-cycle supervision, post-task evaluation is the necessities for implementing this task. The designed task in this study should be related to real life, the language use in this task is also related to what happens in real world. The task is 'productive' and 'outcome-oriented'. A person's knowledge about words is expansive and involved interrelated connections that create networks of knowledge in real life and such network can be considered as word schemas which facilitate vocabulary learning (Nagy & Scott, 1990). If this hypothesis is right, it is hypothesized in this study that L2 learners can achieve incidental vocabulary gain and the purpose of which is to evaluate to what extent that the learners are improved.

This designed task in this study is based on the output hypothesis posed by Swain (1985, 1995, 2005). According to this hypothesis, 'comprehensible output' is an indispensable part in language acquisition process. 'Comprehensible input' is a necessary condition for acquisition, but it is far enough to acquire a second language, learners should be pushed to have more output practices. Swain (1995, 1998, 2005) proposes learners' fluency in language use can be improved and she introduced three functions of 'noticing/triggering' 'hypothesis testing' 'metalinguistic reflective'. Other researchers (Izumi, 2002; Swain & Lapkin, 2002, etc) also tested and validated this hypothesis and proposes that language output can grasp learners' attention in linguistic issues. Izumi (2002) validated the function of 'attention' in language output, his research contrasted the differential improvement of 'language output' and 'visually enhanced input' on learning English relative clause and found out that 'language output' provides more prominent stimulus on acquiring relative clause. In the designed activities of 'language output', learners can notice the mismatch between interlanguage form and target language and achieve a longer memory chain by a way of 'integrative processing'. Swain and her colleagues (Swain, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 2002) validated the output activity of 'collaborative dialogue' promotes language acquisition. Swain (2005) further pointed out the language output is the process of language acquisition instead of the result. Swain & Deters (2007: 822) used the language output of speaking and writing to coordinate cognitive tasks. The results showed that learners can improve more both in cognition and emotion. Some researchers suspect the 'output hypotheses'. Krashen (1985) pointed out that language output is the result of language acquisition, not the reason that creates language acquisition, any activities that propel unprepared learners to have output activities will distract them from the attention on linguistic comprehension and input processing which inhibit them from acquiring a language. Krashen (1998) further insisted on the only 'scarcity argument' that 'comprehensible output hypothesis' provides. Ellis, Tanaka & Yamazaki's (1994) experimental study on vocabulary acquisition and Lyster & Ranta's (1997) study based on a French immersion program show that comprehensible output has low frequency in language communication and learners can also acquire the language without output.

In the controversial context of different views of 'input hypothesis' (Krashen, 1985) and 'output hypothesis' (Swain, 1985), and associating with the validation from Clark (1993) that word can be developed incrementally when taking multiple exposures to this word. It can be concluded that when a word is encountered repeatedly over time, information about the word grows and it moves up the continuum toward 'known'. If this were true, then the L2 learners will be greatly improved in vocabulary gain through more output practices. In this study, this experiment is primarily designed to investigate EFL learners' motivation and examine the effects of an output task on Chinese EFL learners' vocabulary learning by providing more exposes to target words. It also tried to find out whether there is any difference on vocabulary gain when concerning students' proficiency level through task-based approach. Regarding the objectives of the study the following research questions were proposed:

- Q1. Will there be differences towards the attitude and motivation of L2 learners after being involved in this output task?
- Q2. Will there be differences in the performance of L2 learners' vocabulary gain by this output task during a semester?
- Q3. Are there any significant correlations between the learners of different proficient levels with vocabulary outcome achieved by an output task-based approach during a semester?
- Q4. Are there any differences in retention of target words with comparing the results between the test post task and the delayed test two months later?

2. Research

2.1 Setting

Due to the lack of opportunities for speaking English inside or outside classroom, this study focuses on implementing a task of requiring learners to have more collaborative work in speaking English. This task requires learners to perform English drama in the classroom once a week for totally five months. In order to motivate students' involvement, a relaxed and friendly setting is needed for this task to be implemented. The two

instructors sometimes need to join their performances in order to eliminate students' anxiety and timidity.

2.2 Materials

The instructor prepares the materials for this task. The materials are mostly chosen from some famous traditional English drama for the learners' output practice. Ten English dramas are finally chosen for the different groups to perform in the class. The average time allocated for one drama is two weeks including performances in and exercises outside the class.

2.3 Participants

A sample of 26 voluntary participants are from low-intermediate and intermediate and advanced intensive English language classes. There are 2 boys and 24 girls. Their ages range from 20-21 years old and they have studied English as foreign language for 7 years. Their native language is Chinese and none of them have any learning experience abroad. According to their teachers' assessment on their daily performances in class and Nation's (2007) vocabulary test, the 26 participants are divided into three groups which are low level group (LL), intermediate level group (IL), and high proficiency level group (HPL). During the process of completing this task which lasts for a whole semester, instructions will be given equally by two teachers to suit the different needs of different students.

2.4 Instructors

There are two instructors in this task. The first reason for this is to show fairness on the assessment of students' performance. The second reason is to provide 'substantive instruction' to facilitate students implementing this task. Student learning would be greatly facilitated if they just had more instructions by the teacher or more opportunities to respond (Cook & Friend, 1995). In this task, the teachers are both giving the guidance and instructions, they divide the class group and evaluate them together.

2.5 Research instruments

To carry out this research, two methods of questionnaire and tests are applied during the process of the task.

Questionnaire survey

A questionnaire is designed to investigate the students' subjective feelings of the task of English drama performance in improving spoken English and vocabulary gain and whether their attitudes and learning style will change after this task. Five-points likert scales and SPSS version 19.0 will be used to calculate and contrast the results.

Pre-test with using Nation's (2007) vocabulary test

Nation's (2007) vocabulary test is a substantial and reliable test with closely related internal consistency calculated by Cronbach's Alpha Formula with a high value of 0.95. The 30 multiple choice items in the test are used to test learners' proficiency level in vocabulary usage. The 26 participants are divided into three groups according to the results of the Nation's (2007) test before the task. Group 1 is high proficient levels (n=8), group 2 is intermediate level (n=9), group 3 is low level (n=9).

Teacher-made vocabulary test of 30 target words

The teacher made vocabulary test (see Appendix) with 30 target words for 30 items which is designed to test students' performance in vocabulary gain post the experiment and for the delayed evaluation. Before the task, it is used to test L2 learners' vocabulary competence. After the task, the same test is used to test the learners' vocabulary gain after task-based learning. And two months later, the same test will be used again to assess learners' vocabulary retention.

2.6 Procedure

This study is conducted 2 hours a week and lasted for 5 months which is a whole semester. A questionnaire is given for them to fill before and after the task. The questionnaire survey is one way to understand learners' perception about this task and whether they are motivated or not. Learners can consult the two teachers outside classroom and when necessary, the two teachers shall join the drama performances in order to motivate students' involvement. A special vocabulary examination made by the teacher will be conducted post the task and two months after the task to assess learners' performance and retention in vocabulary.

3. Data collection and analysis

3.1 Questionnaire

To answer the proposed Question 1, a questionnaire was used to understand whether differences existed in L2 learners' motivation and attitude. Of the collected 26 questionnaire, 3 responses were misleading because they may misunderstand teacher's instructions or some other reasons. 23 responses were useful; therefore the 23 responses from the questionnaire after the task were used to show the results. Although it is not a full or authentic result, a part of subjective feelings from the students can be known. In this questionnaire, five-points likert scales are used, strongly disagree=5, disagree=4, no comments=3, agree=2, strongly agree=1.

Table 1 Data from the questionnaire collected before and after the task (n=23)

Question	SD/D(%)	NC(%)	SA/A(%)	M	SD
	Pre/post	Pre/post	Pre/post	Pre/post	Pre/post
1. I like speaking English very much	0/4.3	17.3/26	82.7/69.7	1.65/1.95	0.77/0.92
2. I enjoy the class activities very much	0/13	13.1/26	86.9/61	1.65/2.39	0.71/1.26
3. I enjoy working and studying with my classmates	4.3/17.3	0/21.7	95.7/61	1.56/2.30	0.72/1.32
4. I enjoy using new English words	13/21.7	26/39.1	61/39.2	2.39/2.91	0.94/0.99
5. I enjoy acting in English	17.3/30.4	39.1/43.4	43.6/26.2	2.65/3.17	1.02/1.11
6. I can learn it much from the activities designed by the teacher	13/21.7	8.6/21.7	78.4/56.6	2.21/2.69	0.99/1.18
7. I use English in class	17.3/4.3	17.3/13	65.4/82.7	2.47/2.13	1.03/0.69
8. I use English outside the class	17.3/8.6	34.7/26	48/65.4	2.69/2.39	1.06/0.89
9. I talk with my classmates in English	17.3/4.3	39.1/21.7	43.6/74	2.69/2.26	0.82/0.61
10. I won't speak English unless I am forced to it	82.6/47.8	4.3/21.7	13.1/30.5	4.13/3.34	1.14/1.22
11. Do you think your vocabulary load improved	8.6/30.4	47.8/31.7	43.6/37.9	2.43/3.17	0.94/1.26
12. Oral task can help you overcome anxiety and fear of memorizing vocabulary	4.3/13	8.6/21.7	87.1/65.3	1.56/2.08	0.84/1.31
13. I hope there are more oral tasks in the future	0/13	0/21.7	100/63.3	1.17/2.00	0.38/1.44

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree NC=No Comment SA=Strongly Agree A= Agree M=Mean Score SD=Standard Deviation

From Table 1, it can be known that only item 7(65.4/82.7), item8 (48/65.4), item 9 (43.6/74) are positive after this task. More learners agree that they speak more in English in class and outside the class with their classmates under the requirements of the task. But when it is taken into account with item 10 (13.1/30.5), the evidence seems not so positive, although they have more chances to speak English, almost one third of the learners think they are forced to do this. Before the task, more learners show more positive attitude in speaking English, enjoying class activities and working with others, after this task, their attitudes shows more reluctance (82.7/69.7, 86.9/61, 95.7/61). Concerning the role they play in using new words in this task, they show activeness before this task, but after the task is conducted, one part of them become inactive (61/39.2, 43.6/26.2). When it comes to assess the outcome of this task, fewer learners think they can improve vocabulary load greatly from this task and actually have improved from this task and overcome internal anxiety in memorizing English words (78.4/56.6, 43.6/37.9, 87.1/65.3). More than one third of the learners hold negative opinions of more tasks in the future compared with 100% of positive opinions before the task (100/63.3). Therefore, for the proposed question 1 of evaluating whether differences existed in L2 learners' motivation and attitude, it shows that more than one third of the learners reveal negative feelings which is out of expectation compared with the figures before the task.

3.2 Teacher-made Vocabulary Test

3.2.1 Effects of the task on vocabulary outcome

For the assessment of learners' vocabulary gain after taking part in this task which is the proposed question 2, paired-samples t- test with SPSS 19.0 versions is run to compare the results of whether there are significant differences existed in vocabulary gain of the L2 learners before the task and after the task.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of the three groups: pre-task test and post-task test

	N	Max	Min	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. error mean
Pre	8	25	20	21.50	1.603	0.566
HPL						
Post	8	28	25	26.25	1.164	0.411
Pre	9	18	15	16.66	1.118	0.372
IL						
Post	9	23	20	21.55	1.130	0.376
Pre	9	12	8	10.00	1.224	0.408
LL						
Post	9	12	8	10.44	1.236	0.412

Notes: HPL=High proficiency level IL=intermediate level LL=low level

From table two, concerning the participants of HPL group, the mean of their scores for the pre-test was 21.50 and the SD was 1.603, after being involved in this output task-based learning, the mean of their scores and SD

was increased to 26.25 and 1.164 respectively. It showed that there was considerable improvement for the HPL group. When comes to IL group, it reflected a developmental increase after learning in this task for which the mean of their scores and the SD was increased from 16.66 to 21.55 and 1.118 to 1.130 respectively. For the LL group, there was very little change in the mean score and SD (10.00 to 10.44, 1.224 to 1.236), it showed that there was no considerable improvement in LL group.

Table 3 Paired sample t-test of the three groups: pre-task and post-task

	Paired difference							
	95% confidence interval							
	Of the difference							
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. error mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	sig.(2-tailed)
HPL	-4.750	0.886	0.313	-5.491	-4.008	-15.157	7	.000
IL	-4.888	1.536	0.512	-6.070	-3.707	-9.545	8	.000
LL	-0.444	0.726	0.242	-1.002	0.113	-1.835	8	.104

Notes: HPL= High proficiency level IL=intermediate level LL=low level

Table 3 demonstrated the computation of t value. Results showed that the t-value with its 24 degrees of freedom (df) was -15.157 and the observed (15.157) was more than t-critical (2.064). Besides, the significant level (.000) was greatly lower than (0.05). As a result, a significant difference can be noticed for HPL group. For the IL group, the t-value with its 24 degrees of freedom (df) was -9.545 and the observed (9.545) was more than t-critical (2.064) and at 0.05 level of significance ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the difference between pre-test and post-test for the IL group was also significant. For the LL group, the t-value with its 24 degrees of freedom (df) was -1.835 and the observed (1.835) was less than t-critical (2.064) and at 0.05 level of significance ($P > 0.05$), it can be concluded that the differences between the mean of the pre-test and that of the post-test for the LL group was not significant. Therefore, L2 learners' vocabulary gain in the HPL and IL group was greatly improved but the improvement was not achieved noticeably for the LL group based on the analysis.

3.2.2 Correlation between learning outcomes and English proficiency

It is believed that EFL learners' English proficiency affects vocabulary acquisition. To find out whether the role of proficiency level has effects on vocabulary learning which is the proposed question 2, correlation analysis is run between the three groups' English proficiency based on Nation's (2007) vocabulary test scores and their vocabulary outcomes after being involved in the task.

Table 4 Correlations between three groups' vocabulary outcomes and their English proficiency level

Mean	SD	Nation's (2007) test	Teacher-made test
Pearson Correlation		1	0.939**
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
N		26	26
Teacher-made test		15.84	4.93
Pearson Correlation		0.939**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
N		26	26

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From table 4, the correlation between the 26 participants' English proficiency and their vocabulary outcomes was 0.939. This proves that English proficiency of the 26 participants was a significant predictor of their vocabulary learning and did correlate with their vocabulary learning through this task-based practice. The significant level was 0.000 ($P < 0.05$), it showed that the correlations were significant. This finding made it reasonable to investigate the effects of task on the vocabulary learning with different levels of English proficiency because significant correlations existed in the two elements.

Table 5 Vocabulary outcomes of Pre-test with different proficiency level(ANOVA)

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	sig.
Between Groups	546.291	2	213.145	151.179	.000
Within Groups	41.556	23	1.807		
Total	587.846	25			

As it is shown in table 5, F value is 151.179 and the significant level is 0.000 ($P < 0.05$). It elucidates that the differences of the mean score in every group is significant. This finding makes it obvious that the vocabulary outcomes achieved by the three groups is significantly influenced by their English proficiency level.

3.2.3 Effects of task on vocabulary retention

To answer the proposed question 4 of whether differences on vocabulary retention existed after two months, paired-samples t- test with SPSS 19.0 versions is run to compare the test results of vocabulary gain of the L2 learners post the task and two months after the task (delayed test).

Table 6 Descriptive statistics of the three groups: post-task test and delayed test

	N	Max	Min	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. error mean
Post	8	28	25	26.25	1.164	0.411
HPL Delayed	8	28	25	26.50	1.195	0.422
Post	9	23	20	21.55	1.130	0.376
IL Delayed	9	25	20	21.44	1.666	0.555
Post	9	12	8	10.44	1.236	0.412
LL Delayed	9	11	8	9.77	0.833	0.277

Notes: HPL=High proficiency level IL=intermediate level LL=low level

As it is shown in table 6, the mean of the participants' scores for the post-test in the HPL group was 26.25 and the SD was 1.164. When it is tested again two months later after this output task, the mean of their scores and SD was 26.50 and 1.195 respectively. It shows that there is continual progress for the HPL group. When comes to IL group, it reflects only a very slight difference two months after this task for which the mean of their scores and the SD is changed from 21.55 to 21.44 and 1.130 to 1.666 respectively. For the LL group, there are also very little changes in the mean score and SD (10.44 to 9.77, 1.236 to 0.833). Positive evidence can be seen from the results in HPL group, it shows that the participants with high proficiency level still demonstrate a slightly higher ability in memorizing the target words two months later. Although the mean score for IL groups shows a slightly decreased trend, it is still evidential to demonstrate the participants in IL groups have a good result in vocabulary retention. For the LL group, when they lack of the ability to know and memorize the word, it is difficult for the teachers to help them sustain the facilitative power of the task on achieving the expected vocabulary learning results no matter how frequent they are exposed to the task.

Table 7 Paired sample t-test of the three groups: post-task and delayed test

	Paired difference		Std. error mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	sig.(2-tailed)
	95% confidence interval							
	Mean	Of the difference						
HPL	-.250	0.886	0.313	-.991	0.491	-0.798	7	.451
IL	0.111	1.054	0.351	-.699	0.921	0.316	8	.760
LL	0.666	1.000	0.333	-.102	1.435	2.000	8	.081

Notes: HPL= High proficiency level IL=intermediate level LL=low level

Table 7 demonstrated the computation of t value. Results showed that the t-value with its 24 degrees of freedom (df) was -0.798 and the observed (0.798) was less than t-critical (2.064). Besides, the significant level (.451) was more than ($P < 0.05$). As a result, there was no significant difference for HPL group concerning the results post the task and two months after the task. For the IL group, the t-value with its 24 degrees of freedom (df) was 0.316 and it was less than t-critical (2.064) and at 0.05 level of significance ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the difference between post-task and two months delayed-test for the IL group was also not significant. For the LL group, the t-value with its 24 degrees of freedom (df) was 2.000 and it was also less than t-critical (2.064) and at 0.05 level of significance ($P > 0.05$), it can also be concluded that the differences between the mean of the post-test and that of the delayed test for the LL group was not significant. Therefore, of

answering proposed question 4, L2 learners' vocabulary retention in the HPL and IL group and LL group almost sustained the same level two months later. There are no significant differences in retention of target words with comparing the results between the test post task and the delayed test two months later.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Motivation and interest

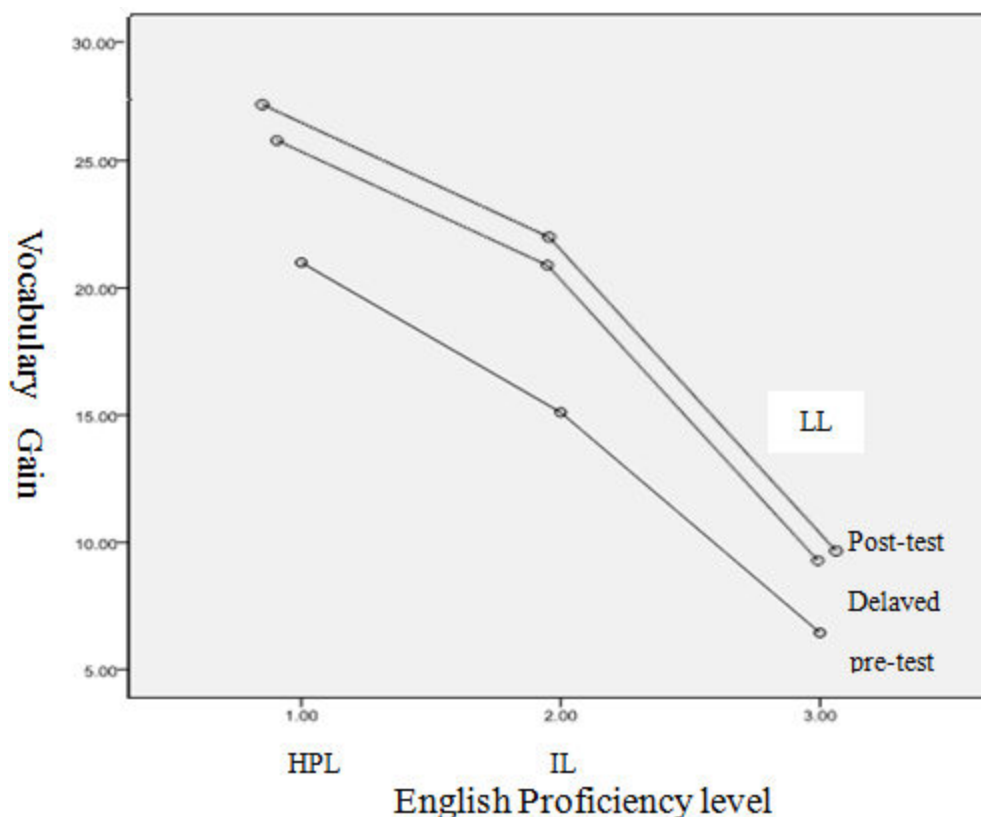
One of the findings from implementing this task was that some learners still keep very strong and passionate attitude towards speaking in English. Some of the formulaic expressions and vocabulary were understood by learners implicitly which created later successful communication for them. After this task, it was delighted to see some learners actively and consciously take part in communication which could be considered as a dynamic interactive process. Since the materials for this task was pre-written by and re-edited by the instructors, accidents of communication breakdown sometimes happened during the task because of some unknown words to the learners, under this circumstance, some of the learners would try repeated comprehension checks, clarification requests, recasts, repeats, explicit corrections during the interaction which self-awareness of target words was considered to happen in this process and conscious process was explicitly improved by this way. The negotiation of meaning was facilitated by combining self-awareness and conscious process. And if Long (1996)'s hypothesis of negotiation of meaning during interaction creating second language acquisition is right, then some of the learners are believed to master some target words after taking part in this task.

Another striking finding was that some of the learners lost interests in this task. They began to show a pessimistic attitude toward speaking in English during the task, they thought they were forced to speak which didn't want to. Although they were very optimistic and active towards speaking and had very obvious expectation of oral activities before the task, gradually they lost the motivation for this task and even expressed negative opinions of dropping out of the task. When probed into this phenomenon, one of the main reasons was that it was difficult for some of the low proficiency level learners to understand the materials for this task, even when edited by the instructors for several times, they still seemed not to have a clue for the materials. When the input was not comprehensible for them, they shifted their attention from linguistic understanding and input processing, they didn't feel motivated and finally they lacked of the interests for this task, they even wanted to escape from it. For the proposed question one of whether the learners feel motivated and interested after implementing this output-based task. Negative evidence of almost one third of the learners lacking of motivation and interest can be seen from this experiment.

4.2 Teacher-made vocabulary test

The task demonstrated a facilitative power in memorizing the target words embedded in this task for HPL and IL group. During the process of evaluating the learners' vocabulary gain pre and post the task and two months after taking part in the task, the outcome of different group with different proficiency was analyzed. Different group demonstrated different characteristics. The three groups show greatly significant difference pre and post the task and two months after the task.

Figure 1 The developmental trend of mean score in each group pre and post the task and two months after the task



It can be obviously understood from the figure that after taking part in this task, learners in HPL and IL group achieved a significant upgrading in vocabulary outcome post the task and sustain a good retention of vocabulary two months after the task, especially HPL group, the learners who were proficient in English achieve beneficial facilitation in vocabulary gain under this task. One of the reasons assumed for this phenomenon was that 'comprehensible input' is available for their input processing and the combining effect of input and output facilitate the 'automaticity' of language use of the embedded target words which is in line with Swain's output hypothesis (Swain, 1985). The learners in LL group performed almost the same after the task and two months after the task, this fully demonstrated the failing effects of this task on vocabulary learning for low proficiency level learners. The reason assumed for this is that when learners' current English level is not enough to uptake 'comprehensible input' and process the input, they can not benefit from output task, then this output task is meaningless for learners to test the linguistic form propitious or not in target language and no matter how frequent you compel them to conduct the output activity, it is meaningless and useless because they can not be attentive to linguistic understanding of target words. This output-based task only inhibits the acquisition process of their L2 language. This part is in line with Krashen's input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985).

5. Conclusion

This study is to testify L2 learners' change of motivation and relevant ability in vocabulary gain by systematically introducing a task of English drama performance into classroom teaching. A questionnaire was administered before and after the task to measure the possible role of participants' attitude towards learning English. The learners expressed their cheerfulness before participating in the study, after the task the results of the questionnaire indicated that two thirds of the participants found the activities interesting and beneficial for improving their English but one third of the participants pointing to the uselessness of the activities. The reason assumed for this phenomenon is that the processability of input goes beyond some learners' acceptable level and when they are forced, they become discouraged.

A vocabulary test measured by two teachers is also used to evaluate learners' vocabulary gain after taking part in this experiment. After the task, the learners in HPL and IL group performed better in vocabulary outcome. And they can also sustain a good retention ability of target words two months after the task. This was in line with the output hypothesis (Swain, 1985) which argued for the promotional benefits of forced output. A device of attention getting was formed in their mind and they are frequently self-motivated to conduct linguistic analysis

of target words. The output task for them may set 'noticing' and trigger mental processes which lead to modified output. During this process, new forms with using target words may become internalized when they modify their output and when they try to produce new words, the learners may have already noticed the gap between the words they have known and the unknown words for them to master. But the learners LL group didn't perform better post the task and two months after the task. For them, language output is not a tool of facilitating language acquisition including vocabulary learning. It could be assumed that language output activity is invaluable for the low-proficiency learners when their processability of input is not available. The reason assumed for this is that when learners' capability reached to a level of processing input, they can easily and effectively benefit from the output task. If the learners' current ability can not process the input for the task, language output will not be beneficial to them.

In the task, the opportunities for 'automaticity' of target words provided by this task of English drama performance might be enough to convert some explicit knowledge into implicit knowledge, but this strong interface position was not analyzed in this study which is one of the biggest limitations and further research would be appreciated to elaborate this. The process of original output to reprocessed form of using target words was not analyzed in this study; instead the study only used the results post the task and two months after the task to make a direct comparison. Another limitation is that the sample sizes are very small, so the results and analysis may not be in-depth and detailed. And also, the time is too short and other conditions are restricted to interest learners in more activities to elicit more production. And another limitation is that it is very difficult to identify learners' achieved vocabulary outcome is not from other sources and a solution for low proficiency level learners' vocabulary learning should be a priority in future research.

References

- Bygate, M., Skehan, P., & Swain, M. a. (2001b). Introduction. In M. Bygate, P. Skehan & M.Swain (Eds.), *Researching pedagogic tasks: Second language learning, teaching and testing*. Harlow: Longman.
- Breen, M. (1987). Learner contribution to task design. In C. Murphy & D. Candlin (Eds.), *Language Learning Tasks*. NJ: Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs.
- Clark, E. (1993). *The lexicon in acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, L., & Friend, M. (1995). Co-teaching: Guidelines for creating effective practices. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 28(3), 1-16.
- Cunningsworth, A. (1984). *Evaluating and Selecting EFL Teaching Materials*. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd: London.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R., Tanaka, Y & Yamazaki, A. (1994). Classroom Interaction, Comprehension, and L2 Vocabulary acquisition. *Language Learning*, 44(3), 449-91.
- Izumi, S. (2002). Output, input enhancement and the noticing hypothesis: An experimental study on ESL relativization. *Studies in Second language Acquisition*, (24), 541-77.
- Kang, H., & Golden, A. (1994). Vocabulary learning and instruction in a second or foreign language. *International journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 57-77.
- Krashen, S.D. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. London: Longman.
- Krashen, S.D. (1998). Comprehensible output. *System*, (26), 175-82.
- Lawson, M., & Hogben, D. (1996). The vocabulary-learning strategies of foreign-language students. *Language Learning*, 46(1), 101-135.
- Littlejohn, A. (1998). The analysis of language teaching materials: inside the Trojan Horse. In Tomlinson, B. (eds.). *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Long, M.H. (1985). A role for instruction in second language acquisition:task based language training. In K. Hyltenstam and M. Pienemann (Eds.), *Modelling and assessing second language acquisition*(pp.377-393). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Long, M. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. Ritchie and T. Bhatia, (eds.), *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Lyster, R. & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classrooms. *Studies in Second language Acquisition*, (19), 37-66.
- Nagy, W., & Scott, J. (1990). Word schemas: what do people know about words they don't know? *Cognition & instruction*, 7(2), 105-127.
- Nation, I.S.P. (2007). A vocabulary size test. *JALT*, (31), 11-14.
- Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, D. (1971). Task training. *AMA Encyclopedia of Supervisory Training*. New York: American Management

Association.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury

Swain, M. (1995). Three functions of output on second language learning. In G. Cook & B. Seidlhofer (Eds.), *Principle and practice in Applied Linguistics* (pp. 471-83). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Swain, M. (1998). Focus on form through conscious reflection. In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), *Focus on Form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 64-81). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swain, M. (2005). The output hypothesis: Theory and research. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook on Research in Second Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 471-83). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Swain, M. & Deters, P. (2007). "New" mainstream SLA theory: Expanded and enriched. *The Modern Language Journal*, (5), 820-36.

Swain, M. & Lapkins, S. (2002). Talking it though: Two French immersion learner response to reformulation. *International Journal of Educational Research (Special Issue on the Role of Interaction in Instructed Language Learning)*, (37), 285-304.

Swain, M. (1985a). A critical look at communicative approach (1). *ELT Journal*, 39(1), 2-12.

Feng Teng received his Master degree in TESOL from University of Canberra in 2009 and now works as a lecturer and researcher in English with the department of English, Nanning University, China. He has done intensive research on the TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching), especially the effects that TBLT provides on L2 vocabulary learning.

Appendix (Teacher-made vocabulary test)

1. Look at the text and try to translate the meaning of following words into Chinese. Use the context to understand the meaning of the target word.

Mr. Darcy is a young and arrogant man who seems to always feel superior. Elizabeth is a quiet and clever girl who always has her own opinions. This story is indeed the representative of the society in Britain in the 18th century. It concludes the stratum situation and economic relationships at that time. What I know from the story is that the foundation of the marriage at that time is not emotion but possession from the sentence 'It is a truth well known to all the world that an unmarried man in possession of a large fortune must be in need of a wife.'

2. Information-gap task: Teacher would have the vocabulary words written on strips of paper and student B would have the definitions of those words. The students pair words and definitions.

Teacher	student
<i>Baffle</i>	<i>a process of deceasing</i>
<i>decline</i>	<i>Sad because you think something is not improved</i>
<i>faithful</i>	<i>When something that is not understood or explained</i>
<i>gloomy</i>	<i>able to read and write</i>
<i>literate</i>	<i>remaining loyal to a person or belief</i>

3. Matching: students should write the correct letter to match items on the right column.

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. majority | a. having suitable knowledge, experience or qualifications |
| 2. sarcastic..... | b. to find new people to work in the company |
| 3. motivation..... | c. the ability to change so as to be suitable |
| 4. smooth..... | d. open |
| 5. noisy..... | e. make someone lose the ability to move |
| 6. adaptability..... | f. most of the people or things in a particular group |
| 7. paralyze..... | g. eagerness or willingness to do something |
| 8. qualified..... | h. making a lot of noise |
| 9. recruit | i. saying things that are the opposite of what you mean |
| 10. unfold..... | j. everything is ok |
| | k. to damage something |
| | l. someone who takes something illegally |

4. Fill in the blanks. The first three letters of the target words is given.

1. The company went ban.....because of its poor management.
2. The old man has some ecc.....behaviors.
3. He dwe..... in a ruined cottage on the hillside.
4. Her father for this marriage.
5. Even the fortunetellers can not for.....the future.
6. This is the key to build a har.....human relations.

7. Blindness is a great han.....
8. Record profits in the retail market ind..... a boom in the economy.
9. A typ.....working day for me begins 8:00 am.
10. Happiness is the ult.....aim of everything we do.

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Recent conferences: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

