研究論文

College Students' Reports on an English as a Foreign Language Class: Output Hypothesis, Output Activities, and Noticing[1]

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学習者のアウトプット活動と気付き、そして第二言語の学びの関係については、実験研究がアウトプット仮説を支持する結果を出している。しかし日本の英語教室で行われる限定的なアウトプット活動が学習者の気づき促進に役立つかどうかは疑問が残る。そこで本研究では、アウトプット活動を含む授業直後に学習者自らが報告する「学んだと思う事項」（uptake: Allwright, 1984）を集め実際の授業活動との関係を調査した。大学生英語学習者対象に行った、当該の授業で学んだと思う事項に関するアンケートデータを分析した結果、学習者の報告は、教師の説明を主要な学習源として報告する傾向があること、授業内のアウトプット活動は必ずしも報告する学習事項を意識するきっかけになっていないことが分かった。

Key words:
the output hypothesis, uptake recall, learner perception, noticing

1. Introduction

As classroom-based second language (L2) researchers admit (e.g., Mackey et al., 2001), the L2 classroom is an important place where "different learning opportunities are provided through the interaction between participants" (Ellis, 1992: 171). This is especially so in the English as a foreign language (EFL) environment, where the L2 learners have limited access to the target language. L2 classroom researchers have investigated the role and effect of instruction. For example, they have studied relationships between different teaching methods and techniques, made hypotheses of L2 learning mechanisms, and suggested effective ways of teaching. Some of the suggestions have been implemented in actual classroom teaching. Output tasks that require learners to produce the target language orally or in writing are supported as effective L2 teaching activities: Swain's (1995) output hypothesis and Schmidt's (1990, 1994) noticing hypothesis theoretically support the value of output tasks, and empirical studies have

shown their effect on L2 development（e.g., Izumi & Bigelow, 2000）.

　　Educators, on the other hand, know that learners do not necessarily learn what teachers teach（e.g., Allwright 1984; Dakin, 1973 as cited in Block 1996）. Breen（1991）, for example, reported mismatches between teachers' instruction and learners' interpretation of it. In his study, graduate students of applied linguistics, who had at least three years' teaching experience, played the roles of teacher, observer, and learner in L2 lessons. After each lesson, all present were asked to write about teaching techniques that had been applied in the class. Their accounts revealed considerable variation in describing the teaching practices. Mackey, Gass, and McDonough's（2000）investigation of the relationship between feedback and learner perception found that implicit negative feedback on ESL learners' morpho-syntactic errors was less accurately perceived as such.

　　In order to better understand the effects of teaching techniques implemented in a classroom, it is desired to study learners' experience of teaching events from their own perspectives. Thus, the current study was conducted to explore if output tasks in an EFL classroom in Japan can facilitate desired noticing, as the hypotheses suggest.

1．1．Output hypothesis

　　Swain（1995）argues that learner output in the target language facilitates L2 development because learners' attempts to produce comprehensible output in the target language are more likely to make them（1）notice linguistic problems,（2）attempt hypothesis testing, and（3）make conscious reflections on the language. In her studies, Swain provided French immersion learners with communicative tasks that stimulated their conscious reflection on French forms. The communicative tasks include the dictogloss（Kowal & Swain, 1994）, the jigsaw task（Swain & Lapkin, 1998）, and story-construction task（Swain & Lapkin, 2001）. As the learners engaged in the tasks, they produced what Swain and Lapkin call "language related episodes," in which the learners identified linguistic problems, made hypotheses, and solved the problems using their existing knowledge and assumptions. Swain and Lapkin argue that the learners' metalinguistic focuses displayed in the pair-work discussion support the hypothesis that output tasks promote linguistic development.

1．2．Output activities in Japanese EFL classrooms

　　People in EFL education circles in Japan consider the incorporation of output activities in Japanese EFL classrooms as extremely important. Researchers who have observed world standardized test scores such as TOEFL or TOEIC scores show concerns about the decline of

average scores earned by Japanese test-takers. They consider current EFL education in Japanese schools does not provide learners with necessary instruction to meet the balanced proficiency in English. Ito（2008）points out that EFL instruction in Japanese schools has been overwhelmingly teacher-centered, and has kept students in a passive role, making them develop mainly receptive skills.

Recent attempts to incorporate output activities in Japanese EFL classrooms include an emphasis on *ondoku* or "reading-aloud"（Ito, 2008; Saito, 2003）. *Ondoku* or a "reading-aloud" task, which refers to an "activity in which students read aloud a chunk of meaningful sentences, such as a paragraph of a passage in an English textbook"（Ito, 2008: 15）, is a primary output task that eventually helps learners develop applicable production skills in the target language （Ito, 2008; Saito, 2003）. It is considered that reading aloud makes students practice pronouncing English sentences as a unit of meaning, increasing their awareness of individual sounds as well as the importance of prosodic control. This may help students develop phonological proficiency. Further, pronouncing sentences as a unit of meaning helps them develop skills to process meaning directly, without taking a detour to Japanese translation. By practicing sentence-by-sentence pronunciation and meaning processing, students can develop their declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge（Ito, 2008: 12）. Reading aloud models can also be a simulation experience before making authentic production in the target language. Since use of structured output activities in which students verbally reproduce given text, like reading-aloud, are increasing in Japanese EFL classrooms, it is worthwhile to investigate if such activities promote similar learner noticing, as SLA researchers suggest.

1.3. Learner reports on L2 classes

Learner reports have been an mportant data source in recent L2 research. It has been claimed that learner reports about classroom experiences can provide insight into learners' perceptions of the learning opportunities that are available to them. In the past decades, studies have related learners' perceptions of their learning experiences to actual instructions（e.g., Allwright, 1984; Slimani, 1989, 1992; Breen, 1991; Palmeira, 1995; Mackey et al., 2000）. In his classic study into the relationship between classroom events and learners' experience of them, Allwright （1984: 97）defined "uptake" as "whatever it is that learners get from all the language learning opportunities language lessons make available to them." He elicited learners' uptake using uptake sheets or questionnaire sheets asking the open-end question: "What did you learn today？"

Several previous studies using uptake sheets have found insightful tendencies of learner

reports. First, learners are likely to report items treated in a focused discussion in the class（Slimani, 1989, 1992; Nabei, in press）. They also tend to focus on and report items that teachers initiate in the classroom discussion（Slimani, 1989, 1992; Jones, 1992; Palmeira, 1995）. Interestingly, even when discourse transcripts show the original initiation of an item was made by a peer, Jones（1992）found students attribute the item to the teacher. Items on students' self-reports are found to be highly idiosyncratic（Slimani, 1992; Nabei, in press）. Although selective items initiated by the instructor in focused episodes were redundantly reported by several learners, most reported items were mentioned by only a few learners in the class. It is also known that not all items discussed by the instructor were reported on the uptake sheets（Slimani, 1989, 1992）, and learners are not always accurate in perceiving instructional intentions provided by the teacher in class（Roberts, 1995）.

Learner reports are also considered as a useful dataset to represent learner noticing. According to Schmidt（1995）, as a consequence of a person paying attention to an object, noticing occurs: Noticing is the "conscious registration of the occurrence of some event"（p. 29）. Thus, if a student can consciously report information provided and exchanged in a lesson, the reported item is the outcome of learner noticing. As many L2 researchers now accept that learners' attention to and noticing of a target feature is necessary for learning（Schmidt, 1990; Ellis, 1998; Gass, 1997; Long, 1996）, collecting learner self-reports is useful to understand their noticing process.

The current study explored the issues of noticing in the form of L2 learners being able to report something in relation to the L2 learning activities they performed in given lessons. The two research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What do the students report as learned items?

2. What relationship do learner reports seem to have with verbal output activities in the classroom?

2．Method

2．1．Participants

The participants in this study were 47 non-English major freshmen（33 male, 14 female）enrolled in a mandatory English class at a university in West Japan and an experienced EFL instructor. The students in the intact class were of mixed proficiency levels ranging from high-beginner to low-intermediate. The population was homogeneous in the sense that the participants had all received at least six years of EFL education in junior and senior high school prior

to beginning their college EFL education. Their ages ranged from 18 to 21. The instructor had approximately 10 years of experience teaching EFL to university students at the time of this research.

２.２. Curriculum

The reading course was scheduled to meet once a week for 90 minutes over a 14-week semester. The course aimed to develop students' English reading skills and improve their reading comprehension abilities. The assigned textbook was an English as a second language（ESL） reading book revised for Japanese learners of English（Takeuchi et al., 2010）, which contained reading passages of various themes, some comprehension questions after each reading, and reading strategy instructions. The theme of the class readings during the research period was "war and conflict." More specifically, in one unit, the students read an interview dialogue between a Japanese immigrant and a U.S. solider in a U.S. relocation camp during World War II, and in the other, an American girl's narrative of her initial experience of World War II.

Even though the class size was large with more than 40 students, the instructor implemented several output tasks in her teaching that were applicable to a large EFL class. The in-class activities included reading-aloud tasks, a dictation task, and writing summaries of the reading passages. A typical lesson unfolded in the following order:（1）a quiz on new words or sentences from the previous lesson,（2）confirmation of the students' understanding of the story content,（3）practices of reading aloud key sentences from the passage,（4）recitations of the rehearsed sentences in public, and（5）dictation practice and writing down summaries.

Stages（3）and（4）were distinctive verbal output tasks in this class. Usually, students were given approximately ten sentences; some of them were exact excerpts from the textbook passage, and others were slightly modified. Students worked in pairs to read aloud the model sentences. One student read the model aloud while the other checked the accuracy and fluency of the reading; then, they switched. As they practiced in pairs, they were also able to ask questions and confirm difficult pronunciations or word/phrase meanings. After the pair practice, the students recited the model sentences in front of the instructor. The instructor visited individual pairs, and asked them to recite the model sentences they had practiced independently. When their performance was acceptable, they received a point; otherwise, they had to wait for the instructor's next visit for another trial.

After the verbal practice, the students were given two writing output tasks. The first was the dictation task, which immediately followed the recitation task with the instructor. In the dictation task, the instructor read out a few model sentences aloud, and the students wrote

them down. The students' sentences were immediately graded for accuracy. The other writing task was to summarize a reading passage, which was given as a homework assignment. In the following class, the students read aloud their summary to their partner and gave feedback to each other. The written summary was later collected, and the instructor gave feedback on its content. When the instructor noticed recurrent linguistic problems, she raised the issue in the following class and provided explicit explanations and corrections.

2.3. Instruments and procedures

This study used a modified uptake sheet, adopting elements in the language-focus-format uptake sheet used in Mackey, McDonough, Fujii, and Tatsumi（2001）. In their study to evaluate different formats of uptake sheets, they provided spaces for learners to record（1）which language forms or concepts they noticed (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, case study/business）,（2）who produced the reported items (e.g., the learner, the teacher, or their classmates), and（3）whether the reported items were new to the learner. Similarly, the students in this study were told to write down first an item in the left-hand column and indicate the category of the item（"grammar," "vocabulary," "pronunciation," "spelling," "content," or "other"）. Then, instead of identifying the producer of the items（No. 2 above）, the students were to identify in which lesson context they noticed the reported items（e.g., the quiz, teacher talk, reading-aloud, dictation）. Finally, they were to choose the familiarity of the item by circling the appropriate options on the right side columns. See Appendix 1 for an example.

The learners' self-report of their learning was collected in four lessons in the 8th to 11th weeks of the 14-week semester. The survey was administered at the end of each lesson. The instructor spared approximately 10 minutes of her teaching time for the questionnaire, including distributing the uptake sheets and asking the students to write down as many items as they could recall having learned in the lesson. The students were told not to look back at the textbook or handouts; writings on the board were also erased. The sheets were collected before the students left the classroom.

In case it becomes necessary to relate the students' uptake reports to classroom discourse, the four lessons were videotaped. The video recording captured mostly teacher' talk in front of the class, students' group recitation, and general atmosphere of the class; however, analyses of individual students' output were impossible. The video recording was reviewed, and the sequences of class activities as well as topics the teacher and students discussed were noted.

3．Results

A total of 158 uptake sheets were collected after the four lessons. Written items varied from one to twelve on a sheet, for a total of 564 items altogether. The average number of items per sheet is 3.57. They were evenly distributed among the four lessons as shown in Table 1.

3.1．Learner uptake reports: Initial analyses

In order to understand what the students reported as learned items, the learner reports were coded according to word tokens（of lexical claims）or idea units along with the participants' indication of categories.[2] Following the example on the uptake sheet, many responses were concrete, as in "meaning of *mackerel*" or "pronunciation of *war*." Even when the response was simply a word, the mark on the category options suggested reporting of the word related to grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or spelling. When English synonyms and antonyms were reported, the individual words were coded and counted as individual vocabulary items. The coding was performed twice by the same author with a one-week interval in between. The intra-coder reliability was 88％．

As a result, 593 learner responses were identified in the 158 uptake sheets. The majority of the learner reports pertained to vocabulary items（239 or 40％）, followed by pronunciation（148 or 25％）and grammar（128 or 22％）items. These three language-related items accounted for 87％ of the total responses. Table 2 summarizes the distribution of responses across

Table 1：Number of items reported after each lesson

	Lesson 1		Lesson 2		Lesson 3		Lesson 4		Total
	n	（%）	n	（%）	n	（%）	n	（%）	n
Number of reported items	178	（31.6）	122	（21.6）	149	（26.4）	115	（20.4）	564

Table 2：Overview of learner uptake reports

	Number of reported item entries
Grammar	128（22%）
Vocabulary	239（40%）
Pronunciation	148（25%）
Spelling	7（1%）
Content（world knowledge）	40（7%）
Reading strategies	6（1%）
Other	25（4%）
TOTAL	593

Table 3：Contexts and reported items

	Number of context identifications by the students（%）
Quiz	100（17.5）
Teacher talk	231（40.5）
Recitation	61（10.6）
Dictation	19（ 3.3）
Unknown	19（ 3.3）
Other	108（19.0）
No indication	33（ 5.8）
TOTAL	571

categories.

For the analysis of learner identifications of class context in relation to the learner uptake responses, the dataset originally collected on the uptake sheets was used. The students' identifications of class context on the 158 uptake sheets were tallied according to the following six context categories: "quiz," "teacher-talk," "reading-aloud," "dictation," "unknown," and "other." Some students failed to indicate the context, and the items with no indication of contexts were also tallied. The total number of responses to class context was 57.[3]

As seen in Table 3, the majority of responses indicated that teacher's talk was the source of learned items: 231, or approximately 41％ of all items, were attributed to teacher talk. Outside of "teacher talk," students seemed unable to identify specific lesson context; identification of other specific lesson contexts numbered only 180, or approximately 32％ of all responses. Relatively high frequent choices of "other"（108 or 19％）also suggest that students were unable to associate learned items with lesson context. In fact, their choices of "unknown," "others," and no marking on the uptake sheets accounted for 160（28％）out of all the responses. Thus, it seems a difficult task for learners to recall and locate learned items with lesson context.

3.2. Uptake reports and output tasks

The initial analyses of learner reports showed that learner reports alone are not always sufficient datasets for analyzing the learning experience. As several researchers（Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Block, 1996）warned, "less sophisticated" learners（Block, 1996: 169）with little knowledge of linguistics and language study do not necessarily perceive and report their experiences in the way applied linguists would. As a result, further qualitative analyses of the learner reports in relation to the lessons（i.e., notes on classroom videotapes）were conducted.

３.２.１．"Pronunciation" uptake reports

A unique outcome of learner uptake in this study was the frequent reports on pronunciation items. No other previous studies（e.g., Slimani, 1987, 1989, 1992; Palmeira, 1995; Mackey et al., 2001; Nabei, in press）using learner uptake sheets found a large number of pronunciation-related uptake items. As seen in Table 2, 148（25%）items were reported, and 35 students reported at least one pronunciation-related item in the four lessons. The responses could be categorized into 46 themes, which varied from one word reported by one student as a pronunciation-related item（e.g., "sang" with a circle on "pronunciation"）to several students reporting a problematic word（e.g., "pronunciation of *mackerel*"）or problematic phoneme（e.g., "pronunciation of *th*"）.

This outcome seemed to have related to the instruction orientation. As described in Section 2.2., even though the class was a reading course, the instructor provided the students with many verbal output tasks. In addition, she encouraged accurate pronunciation whenever she found the students produced English with a Japanese accent. When she introduced new words containing English phonemes such as /f/, /v/, /θ/, and /ð/, she drew the students' attention to these phonemes. She also corrected their mistakes when the students repeated after the model during the reading-aloud activity.

Similar to the previous findings that items in learner reports tend to be idiosyncratic（Slimani, 1987; Palmeira, 1995）, learner responses on individual pronunciation themes in this study turned out to be idiosyncratic: Twenty-five themes were reported by only one participant. On the other hand, echoing the tight relationship between learner uptake and teacher-initiated focused discussion in class, two themes were reported by more than ten students. One was the "sound of *th*," to which the instructor drew learners' attention very frequently throughout the lessons. The most frequently reported theme, "pronunciation of *war*," which numbered 31 responses, was also treated by the instructor. Whenever the teacher noticed students pronouncing a vowel incorrectly, she explicitly corrected their pronunciation. Thus, the teacher's initiations in teaching seem to have a strong impact on learners' perceptions of learning.

３.２.１．Output tasks and uptake reports

As seen in Table 3, output tasks were less related to learner uptake: Only 61（10.6%）learner responses were reported to be noted during the recitation task（i.e., verbal output task）, and 19（3.3%）responses indicated noticing items during the dictation task（i.e., written output task）. These results may suggest structured output activities are less likely to stimulate learner noticing in comparison to creative output activities such as information gap or jigsaw tasks. In

fact, studies by Swain and her colleagues suggest the learners' initiation in expressing their own ideas facilitated their noticing. In Kowal and Swain（1994）, participants who produced rich language-related episodes attempted to paraphrase the original dictogloss text during the reconstruction stage. The participants in Swain and Lapkin（2001）, who were strict in expressing their own ideas in the target language, were critical even to native speaker's feedback. Metalinguistic awareness and sensitivity may be facilitated by the genuine process of encoding individual's thoughts in the target language by the learner, rather than simulating communication using model sentences.

Although the structured output tasks provided the learners with limited language learning opportunities, what learners wrote on the uptake sheets indicate that the tasks were still useful in raising students' awareness of certain language forms or meanings. Among the most frequently reported themes was the word "mackerel." Seventeen students reported the pronunciation of "mackerel," which was the second most frequent pronunciation-related response. However, there were no focused discussions of this word and its pronunciation in the classroom discourse. One possible explanation for the frequent learner reports of "mackerel" is that the word was included in one of the sentences in the read-aloud and recitation text. Facing the word in the sentence they were supposed to memorize and recite naturally, many students had to pay attention to and practice it, which might have led to their report of learning it at the end of class. Thus, difficulties they faced in constrained output activity seemed to push the learners to make conscious efforts to overcome the difficulties.

Further analysis of the responses in the self-reports suggests the output tasks, most likely the summary writing task, raised students' linguistic awareness. The descriptions of the items they report contained expressions that suggest productive processing of the linguistic items. For instance, Student 40 wrote "how to use '..., saying...'," Student 9 wrote "how to use exciting," and Student 15 wrote "how to use suspect." Student 2 and 14 other students wrote "how to use happen." The common expression "how to use" indicates the learners were processing the words beyond simple comprehension of the passage; indeed, they processed the words in a productive manner. The model sentences they practiced in the read-aloud and recitation stage of the lesson contained important ideas and expressions, applicable for their final summary. The instructional context may have made them focus not only on word meaning, but also on usage.

Finally, the learner reports suggest the importance of output activities that elicit the instructor's explicit feedback. The "how to use happen" report made by 15 students was attributed to an episode in Lesson 4. In this episode, the instructor presented the sentence "We shouldn't happen a war," because she had found many similar sentences in the students' summaries. She

said the verb "happen" could not be used in this way and provided the students with other possible expressions, such as "war happened," "war occurred," "we shouldn't have a war," "we shouldn't wage war," and "we shouldn't make war." In addition to the 15 students who reported learning "how to use *happen*," five students reported "make war," three reported "wage war," two reported "have a war," and one reported in English and Japanese, "war‒o‒okosu（verb meaning 'make' war）." In total, 29 students reported learning something from this episode. Output activities facilitate learners' development when their output is properly analyzed and necessary feedback is provided.

4．Summary

This study investigated learner reports on an EFL reading class with structured output activities. The learner reports revealed tendencies similar to those found in previous studies. Many of the learner responses were idiosyncratic, and items frequently reported were often treated in focused discussions in class. The instructor's teaching intentions influenced the students' perception of learning, as well. In fact, this tendency may have resulted in a unique characteristic of the learner reports in this study: the relatively large number of pronunciation‒related reports.

With regard to the role and effectiveness of output activity in relation to learner uptake, there seem to be no clear relationships. The students did not make frequent indication of output activities in relation to items they reported. This may be due to the limitation of struc‒tured output activities often used in an EFL classroom.

However, careful reading of the students' responses suggests the output activities may have shifted their mindset from a receptive one to a productive one. Foreseeing themselves using the words and expressions in their own writing, the learners seemed to raise their awareness of the language they encountered. The instructor's feedback on their output after completing the task seemed to further raise this awareness. The results do not deny possible effects of output activities in promoting L2 development.

This study was exploratory in nature, and it contains many shortcomings. The major problem is methodological. The uptake sheet was confirmed as not successful in eliciting learner reports in relation to linguistic categories. Thus, collecting additional data, such as post‒survey inter‒views, should be conducted in a future study. This is a problem any L2 researchers may face when eliciting learner perceptions in learning. Researchers must consider the limitations in elic‒iting data from unsophisticated language learners.

Another limitation is that the "learners' learning" that this study has revealed may represent only a partial or preliminary level of their knowledge. No linguistic tests were conducted to evaluate the students' actual learning: i.e., the level of their understanding or their retention of the new knowledge. What they reported on the uptake sheets may not completely be retained in the later stages of L2 acquisition.

Although the amount of data collected through the uptake sheets are large, the present study is still a preliminary case study. The findings cannot be generalized to every L2 teaching/ learning context. Nevertheless, investigation into learners' L2 learning from the learners' perspectives will deepen our understanding of the process of L2 acquisition and its effects on L2 instruction.

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Notes

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2. Block（1996）, among others, was concerned about insufficient and inaccurate description of self-reports by learners with unsophisticated linguistic knowledge and skills in describing language.

3. The difference between the reported items according to the focus on language/content and the classroom contexts is due to the redundant reports of the same items for different language/content categories.

Appendix 1
Sample: Uptake Sheet

気付いたこと・ 注意を払ったこと	種　類	意識した時	新規度
	・語順／文法 ・単語 ・発音 ・スペル ・話の内容 ・その他	・クイズ ・教師説明 ・暗唱練習 ・書き取り ・分からない ・その他	・全く知らなかった ・聞いたことはあった ・知っていた
（例）uptake の発音	・語順／文法 ・⟨単語⟩ ・発音 ・スペル ・話の内容 ・その他	・クイズ ・⟨教師説明⟩ ・暗唱練習 ・書き取り ・分からない ・その他	・⟨全く知らなかった⟩ ・聞いたことはあった ・知っていた
（例）what looked like a large car... の what の使い方	・⟨語順／文法⟩ ・単語 ・発音 ・スペル ・話の内容 ・その他	・クイズ ・⟨教師説明⟩ ・暗唱練習 ・書き取り ・分からない ・その他	・⟨全く知らなかった⟩ ・聞いたことはあった ・知っていた
	・語順／文法 ・単語 ・発音 ・スペル ・話の内容 ・その他	・クイズ ・教師説明 ・暗唱練習 ・書き取り ・分からない ・その他	・全く知らなかった ・聞いたことはあった ・知っていた
	・語順／文法 ・単語 ・発音 ・スペル ・話の内容 ・その他	・クイズ ・教師説明 ・暗唱練習 ・書き取り ・分からない ・その他	・全く知らなかった ・聞いたことはあった ・知っていた
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