Learner Uptake Reports on an EFL Reading Class in Japan

Toshiyo Nabei

　第二言語・外国語教室は、学習者に目的言語によるインプットを提供する貴重な環境だと考えられる。一方、日本の英語教育環境は必ずしも恵まれておらず、学習者は大人数の教室で教師主体の授業を受けていることも多い。そこで本研究では、日本人英語学習者が体験する学習経験を学習者の視点から理解することを目的に、学習者の自己学習報告（learner uptake reports）とその報告の元になった授業展開を分析した。その結果、学習者は、教師が指導する意図を持って提供した語彙を中心とした情報を、学習した事項として報告する傾向があることが分かった。多くの学習者に共通して報告される事項は、授業中に話題になった項目が多く、教師が授業中のやりとりで何度も繰り返し言及した学習目標事項、いわゆる「豊富なインプット (enriched input)」が学習に役だっていると考えられる。

Key words: learner reports, uptake, EFL classroom, teacher talk, feedback, enriched input

1. Introduction

Researchers have investigated the effectiveness of second language (L2) instruction in a variety of ways. Examining the effectiveness of different types of input, either preemptive or reactive, for example, has been a major area of study. In fact, many studies conducted in the experimental context of English as a second language (ESL) have yielded insightful findings: for example, enhanced input can be facilitative for L2 learners (e.g., Doughty, 1991; White 1998), and reactive input on learner errors (i.e., feedback) is important in L2 development (e.g., Ortega & Long 1997). Yet, even though the findings of these studies are insightful, they may not be applicable in all instructional contexts. English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Japan, for example, typically have more than 30 students in a classroom. When there are 30, 40 or even more students seated in front of an instructor, the teaching techniques she is able to apply are limited by the class size. Consequently, learners' L2 learning experiences differ according to the teaching or learning environment. This study was conducted in an attempt to understand Japanese learners' L2 learning experience in a large EFL reading class taught by an experienced teacher.

1.1. L2 Classroom interaction

One approach to investigating the relationship between instruction and learning in L2 class-room settings focuses on classroom discourse. Studies have explored, for example, what features of classroom discourse, in comparison to naturalistic discourse, can create a so-called "acquisition-rich" environment (Ellis, 1992). Studies of teacher talk have shown that the "negotiation of meaning" (Long, 1983) can make language input comprehensible for learners (e.g., Long, 1983; Pica & Long, 1986).

Recent research on feedback has also compiled data on what kind of feedback L2 teachers provide in communicative classrooms (e.g., Long, 1983; Lyster & Ranta, 1997) and to what extent L2 learners make use of such feedback (e.g., Oliver, 1995). These studies suggest that discourse between the teacher and the student as well as among students provides learners with L2 learning opportunities (e.g., Hatch, 1992; Long, 1996; Swain, 1995).

1.2. Learner uptake

Another approach proposed in the investigation of the L2 learning process that takes place within the classroom is to elicit learners' self-reports about their learning, or "uptake" (Allwright, 1984). In response to common mismatches between L2 learners' and teachers' perceptions of classroom events, Allwright (1984) suggested collecting data on learners' under-standings of a given lesson and relating them to actual classroom discourse. Following his suggestion, Slimani (1989, 1992) investigated the relationship between instruction and L2 learning. She defined uptake as "the learner's perceptions of what they have learned from the interactive events they have just been through" (Slimani, 1989: 224) and collected data on learner uptake using uptake sheets distributed to learners. The uptake sheets asked the learners to list information they could recall having learned in the lesson. Slimani traced this information back to the classroom discourse data in order to identify which specific features of classroom interaction were likely to relate to the learner reports.

Later, additional studies investigated learner perceptions of L2 lessons using uptake sheets. Jones (1992) investigated the relationship between classroom discourse context and learners' written reports about a speaking/listening class. Jones elicited written reports from nine ESL learners in the course. Post-lesson questionnaires prompted the students to list "words, phrases, grammar, and techniques" they had learned from the lesson (p. 141). The learners were also asked to indicate if the items they wrote down were "'known before' or 'new'" (p. 141). After the lesson, all items in their responses were traced in the classroom discourse, the teachers' materials, and students' notes. Palmeira's (1995) study also used uptake sheets to elicit infor-

mation that 18 adult learners thought they had learned in an advanced Hawai'ian language classroom. Palmeira compared learners' self-reports about what they learned in three lessons with the teacher's account of the language teaching objectives in those lessons. Similarly, Mackey's (2000 as cited in Mackey et al., 2001: 290) study of whether ESL learners were able to notice morpho-syntactic feedback in classroom interaction used uptake sheets to identify what the learners noticed during class.

1.3. Learner reports

The previous research has obtained insightful findings on learner reports. Slimani (1989, 1992) found that topics in the majority of learners' uptake reports (89%) had been the focus of instruction. That is, the issues teachers introduced into the classroom discourse and discussed in metalinguistic terms were more likely to be reported in student responses on the uptake sheets. Jones (1992) found that the majority of items reported by learners were linked to teacher-supplied input. Similarly, Palmeira (1995) found that learners tended to report the items the teacher had intended to teach in each lesson.

Slimani (1992) also reported that the learner uptake was highly idiosyncratic. It was unlikely that any item was reported by more than three learners, though the class conduct was teacher-fronted.

Using the same dataset, Slimani (1987) reported that a large amount of items reported by learners were lexical, even though the instruction had been structure-based. The learners tended to frame and report their learning at the lexical level. In Palmeira's (1995) study, as well, learners reported learning lexical items that were not necessarily included in the teacher's teaching targets. Learners' tendency to pay attention to vocabulary is also reported by Williams (1999). She collected and analyzed classroom discourse between learners in communicative classrooms and found that learner-generated attention to language during verbal interaction largely focused on vocabulary. Thus, it is suggested that L2 learners tend to analyze language at the lexical level.

2. The Study

This study was conducted with the aim of understanding Japanese EFL learners' L2 learning experience. The setting was a college reading class, in which a Japanese EFL instructor taught English reading to more than 30 students in a lecture style classroom. The research questions are (1)What do students claim to have learned from EFL reading lessons? and (2) What are

the characteristics of the learner uptake reports?

2.1. Participants and curriculum

Learner uptake reports were collected in three intact freshman reading classes taught by the same EFL instructor. A total of 122 students, 67 male and 55 female, filled out the uptake sheets after each of two lessons. Each class (Classes A, B, and C) was composed of 37, 47, and 38 students, respectively. This student 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. The students' proficiency levels were mixed, as no placement tests had been conducted in the English reading course curriculum. The class met once a week for 90 minutes. Classes A and B met on the same day successively, and Class C met two days after in the same week. The lessons were audio-recorded so that learner reports could be related to the teaching and classroom discourse.

The course instructor was Japanese with over 15 years of experience teaching EFL to Japanese university students at the time of this research. In her teacher-fronted instruction of the EFL reading class, she sought to equip students with effective reading strategies. She also taught class in English in order to maximize students' exposure to English input.

The instructor used the same textbook and lesson plans to teach the three classes. The topic of the chapter in the first lesson was bilingual education in the U.S., and in the second lesson, it was the life of Bruce Lee. Her lessons were typically composed of three phases. The first phase was a review of the previous lesson (i.e., chapter). This entailed a review quiz with 10 questions from the previous lesson. The quiz was scored immediately; the students exchanged their quiz papers and graded each other's by listening to the instructor's model answers with additional explanations. The second phase of each lesson was a warm-up stage for the reading comprehension activities of the target chapter. In this state, the instructor introduced important words, phrases, and ideas related to the new chapter. The final phase was comprehension and discussion time. The instructor asked a series of questions aimed at ensuring that the students understood the content as well as the important words and sentences in the reading passage. She also included an output activity, in which the students were asked to express their own ideas about the lesson content.

During the second and third phases, the instructor usually walked around the classroom, randomly calling on nearby students to answer her questions, so that they would stay alert and pay attention. She rarely wrote on the blackboard. She taught class almost entirely in English, although once in a while, she inserted Japanese translations and explanations into class discus-

sions.

2.2. Data collection procedure

The learners' self-reports of their learning were collected in the 10th and 11th weeks of the 12-week fall semester. This study used Slimani's (1992) uptake sheet. The instructions on the sheet told the students to recall the lesson and write down anything they could remember, as concretely as possible, in the appropriate spaces under six subcategories: (1) grammar, (2) words and phrases, (3) spelling, (4) pronunciation, (5) English expressions, and (6) others. All instructions and titles were written in Japanese in order to minimize misunderstandings.

The uptake report survey was administered for approximately 10 minutes at the end of each lesson. The students were asked to close their textbooks and notebooks, and the instructor erased what she had written on the blackboard during the lessons. She repeated the directions on how to fill out the form orally in English and Japanese as she distributed the survey. The sheets were collected before the students left the classroom.

In order to relate the students' uptake reports to the course instruction, the classroom discourse in the 10th and 11th lessons was audio-recorded. The instructor wore a pin microphone that was attached to a mini-disk recorder. The audio-recordings captured the teacher talk and student replies during the two lessons, and these were later transcribed.

3. Results

The present study aimed to understand what Japanese college EFL learners report having learned in their EFL reading lessons. Uptake sheets were collected from the 122 students after each of two lessons. A total of 244 uptake sheets are the main data of the study.

3.1. Initial analysis of the uptake reports

The uptake sheet responses appeared unstructured. They were written in English or Japanese: some students wrote entirely in Japanese, others listed words and phrases in English but wrote comments in Japanese. The English entries included words, phrases, and structural formulas. Some words contained spelling mistakes. The Japanese entries included words (i.e., translated meanings of target English words and phrases) and ideas expressed extensively in a few sentences.

The initial analysis of data from the learner reports revealed that the participants' understanding of linguistic terms such as "grammar," "vocabulary," or "English expressions" were not

necessarily the same as the applied linguists' understanding. Learner reports included not only words and phrases but also prefixes such as "bi-," "tri-," and "multi-," or strategic reading skills such as "Read the topic sentence in the paragraph for information" and "If a sentence starts with 'One', then there is usually a sentence starting with 'Another' (Student 73). These items were scattered across different categories. For instance, prefixes (mono-, bi-, tri-, and multi-) appeared under each of the five subcategories ("grammar," "words and phrases," "spelling," "English expressions," and "others") of the uptake sheet, depending on the students' interpretation of the categories. In addition, students wrote about their understanding of reading strategies under the sections labeled "English expressions," "others," or even "grammar."

If the number of items reported by the students is simply tallied for each category, the results might mislead applied linguists' understanding of the nature of the learner reports. Thus, it was decided to code the learner reports qualitatively, that is, based on the applied linguists' interpretation of the students' written words, phrases, and sentences.

3.2. Further analyses and findings

The learner reports, therefore, were coded according to word tokens (for lexical claims) or idea units. The words and phrases were written either in English or Japanese. English words and phrases accompanied Japanese translations, English synonyms, or English antonyms.[1] English synonyms and antonyms were coded and counted as individual vocabulary items along with the target words. Spelling errors were corrected, and the words were coded accordingly. The vocabulary code also included prefixes such as "bi-" or "multi-"; no parts of learner reports were coded as spelling items. Grammar-related information was often written either in a formulaic manner (e.g., "noun + (that) + subject-verb," "has always been ~") or in a Japanese sentence (e.g., "when to use past tense"). The individual formulaic descriptions and Japanese sentences containing one grammatical rule idea were coded as grammar-related items. Individual words written under the "pronunciation" category were coded as pronunciation items; Japanese comments reporting tips for better pronunciation (e.g., "Add stress to verbs and nouns to make them sounds like English") were also coded as pronunciation items. Many responses written in Japanese were coded according to the idea units represented in them. The coding was performed twice by the author with a one-month interval in between. The intra-coder reliability was 83%.

As a result, a total of 2039 learner reports were identified in the 244 compiled uptake sheets. Table 1 presents the overview. The majority of the learner reports pertained to vocabulary (1513 or 74.2%), followed by comments on text structure (228 or 11.2%) and contents (160 or

7.8%). Item entries in other language areas were less frequently reported: Pronunciation-related reports numbered 88 (4.3%) and grammar-related reports, 50 (2.5%) items.

Table 1: Overview of Learner Uptake Reports

	Number of reported item entries (N=2039)	Number of students (N=122)
Grammar	50 (2.5%)	46 (38%)
Words and phrases	1513 (74.2%)	118 (97%)
Pronunciation	88 (4.3%)	58 (48%)
Text structure	228 (11.2%)	90 (74%)
Content	160 (7.8%)	64 (52%)

The students were more likely to report words and phrases learned from lessons: 118 (97%) students reported learning at least one vocabulary item. Only four students did not mention any vocabulary items. Furthermore, the students frequently wrote comments about text structure (90 students or 74%). Contents and pronunciation items were also reported by almost half of the students: 64 (51%) and 58 (47%) students, respectively. On the other hand, grammar items were the least frequently reported; only 38% (46) students indicated at least one grammar uptake.

3.2.1. Grammar items

A total of 50 grammatical item responses were given by 46 (38%) students. They were distributed among four grammar themes: Two were related to tense (i.e., present perfect and past), and another was partial negation (i.e., "not always"). The other theme was the use of the relative pronoun "that": for example, omission of "that" in a sentence such as "The word people used to describe Bruce Lee was intense."

Among the four items, past tense was most frequently reported (28 students). The relative pronoun "that" was reported by 13 students. Partial negation was reported only by two students.

Reports on grammatical items were the least frequent. Seventy-six students did not write anything related to grammatical rules learned in the lesson. Even among the 46 students who reported grammar items, 43 wrote about only one item. No students reported items under all four themes. Only one student reported items under three themes.

3.2.2. Lexical items

As noted earlier, a majority of the learner responses indicated they had learned certain words and phrases. Among 1513 vocabulary reports, 1442 were in English and 71 in Japanese. These reports were grouped into 186 English items and 26 Japanese items. The items included mostly nouns, adjectives, verbs and verb phrases, adverbs, connectors, and prefixes (i.e., bi-, mono-, tri-, and multi- in relation to "bilingual").

Among the English vocabulary items, 88 (47%) items appeared in the textbook, and 56 (30%) items had been supplied by the instructor in the classroom discourse. Forty-two (23%) English vocabulary items were unrelated to both the textbook and teacher talk. Among those unrelated, twenty-eight (15%) vocabulary items, all adjectives, were derived from the output activity in Lesson 2, in which the students were asked to describe their own personalities. Finally, one student reported four words that were completely irrelevant to the lessons, with a note that read, "studied [them] while I was killing time in class" (Student 25).

Given that the students reported over 1500 words and phrases, it can be noted that duplication of reported items occurred infrequently. That is, among the 186 English words and phrases, 114 items were reported by three or fewer students. Sixty-eight (37%) lexical items were mentioned by only one student, and 31 (17%) by two students. In this respect, the learner reports of vocabulary items are idiosyncratic.

On the other hand, some vocabulary items were mentioned frequently. For example, "sit-up" (from the Bruce Lee lesson) was reported by 74 (60%) students, and the prefixes, "mono-," "tri-," and "bi-" (from the bilingual education lesson) were reported by 65 (53%), 62 (51%), and 58 (48%) students, respectively.

3.2.3. Pronunciation items

Fifty-eight students (48%) indicated they learned about pronunciation-related issues. The pronunciation items were 24 English words and two pronunciation strategies. The learner reports on pronunciation items seem, in general, idiosyncratic as well. Among those who made pronunciation reports, 37 (64%) students reported only one item. Among the 26 pronunciation items, 17 (65%) items were reported by only one student.

When students wrote down the English words whose pronunciation they had paid attention to, they often noted what pronunciation problems the words presented. For example, twelve students who referred to "refugee" noted that the accent should be placed on the last syllable. Some of their comments were more extensive, as in the following two examples:

"(I) pronounced bilingual as /bil-lingal/" (Student 7).

"I thought 'war' was pronounced as /war/" (Student 83).

These comments demonstrate that the students noticed their pronunciation mistakes in the lesson.

3.2.4. Text structure-related reports

The reports written in Japanese under the section "English expression" and "others" often contained ideas related to text structures, such as paragraph and essay constructs, the role of topic sentences, and function of connecting words. Students noted, for example, "Grasp the content of the paragraph by reading its topic sentence" (Student 69) and "'Such as,' and 'for example' are important key words to find the (supporting) examples (of the topic sentence in the given paragraph)" (Student 115). These comments were usually written in Japanese.

The reports coded for text structure were further categorized into four themes: "Essay constructs," "paragraph constructs," "topic sentences," and "transitional words." Reports related to the essay structure and development of argument in the passage as a whole were classified as "essay constructs." "Paragraph constructs" were comments about paragraph components and the characteristics of a paragraph. "Topic sentences" included the notion of "presenting one thematic idea with supporting examples." This category also included comments about techniques useful for effective reading. "Transitional words" included reports referring to the useful function of connecting words.

Among these four themes, "topic sentences" had the largest number of reports, followed by "transitional words": Respectively, 47 and 42 out of 90 students wrote reports on text structure. Each student, however, wrote only a small number of reports. Among the 90 students, 34 students reported only one item. Only five students gave responses that included all four themes.

3.2.5. Content-related reports

The learner reports also indicated that the students learned information related to the content of the passages they had read. For example, they rephrased the information presented in the reading passages in Japanese. They also reported information that the instructor had supplied in her expanded explanations of the texts.

As this was a reading course, learner reports on passage content were desirable. Among the 160 content items, 99 items included paraphrasing of information in the textbook passage. Thirty-eight students wrote about items pertaining to bilingual education in the U.S., the theme of Lesson 1 reading passage, and 34 students reported on the life of Bruce Lee (Lesson 2

passage).

Learner reports about information related to the instructor's expanded talk on the passage numbered 63 entries. These were further categorized into six themes: (1) Vietnamese refugees in the U.S. after the Vietnam War, (2) Hispanic immigrants in the U.S., (3) U.S. taxpayers' mindset, (4) federal vs. state government, (5) Japanese movie directors, and (6) the land value in Hong Kong. Themes (1) to (4) were supplied by the instructor in Lesson 1 during the discussion of the passage, aimed at improving students' comprehension; likewise, Themes (5) and (6) were supplied in Lesson 2 in relation to Bruce Lee's life. More students wrote comments in relation to the teacher talk in Lesson 1. Twenty-one students wrote about Vietnamese refugees and war, thirteen students about Hispanic immigrants and Spanish speakers in the U.S., and nine students on tax. On the other hand, fewer students made comments on the teacher talk in Lesson 2. Three students referred to the value of land in Hong Kong, and only one student referred to movie directors.

The fact that the students were able to refer to passage contents and issues discussed in relation to the passages suggests that they learned something new about the world from the readings. However, their responses also indicate their understanding was not always accurate. For example, two students wrote that Bruce Lee died at age 35, which is incorrect. Moreover, a few reports on Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. indicated that the students misunderstood where the immigrants were from. Their inaccurate reporting may be due to the research constraints, specifically, that the students were not allowed to refer to their textbooks or notes.

3.3. Learner reports and classroom discourse

It is worthwhile to examine the type of interaction in classroom discourse that led to reports of uptake. Student 25 wrote about four vocabulary items (scheme, irrational, barricade, and lightening) that were seemingly unrelated to the classroom discourse; she added a note beside the words that she had looked up them in the dictionary and learned them during the free time in class. All other items of grammar, vocabulary, content, and text structure were related to the classroom discourse.

As noted in Section 2.1, the instructor gave teacher-fronted lessons; her interaction with students took a pattern of initiation, response, and follow-up (IRF), in which she initiated a target vocabulary, sentence structure, and content topic by asking the students questions, and she added follow-up explanations to the student's answers. These IRF exchanges created episodes that were focused on specific, usually teacher-initiated, target teaching/learning issues. In the following sections, learner reports on vocabulary and text structure items are discussed

in relation to these focused episodes.

3.3.1. Vocabulary reports and classroom discourse

As described in Section 3.2.2., learner reports of words and phrases were, in general, idiosyncratic. However, some specific items were frequently reported by many students. Analysis of the classroom discourse, which mostly consisted of teacher talk, showed a relationship between teacher talk and the items reported by students: The instructor often initiated the target themes or vocabulary in the lesson, creating an episode related to that specific theme or word. In these episodes, the instructor asked questions and gave explanations. The focused theme or word was repeated, and associations and connections were made with similar information and/or students' pre-existing knowledge.

The word "sit-up," reported by 76 students, was focused quite extensively during Lesson 2 in each class. The episode in Class A is an interesting example. The instructor spent about five minutes discussing "sit-up" in relation to Bruce Lee's training. She corrected a student's pronunciation of the word, asked for the meaning of the word in English, and gave students time to look it up in their English-English dictionaries. She even asked a student to perform a "sit-up" in front of the class. While she waited for the students to reply with the definition, the instructor repeated the question "What's a sit-up?" eleven times. When a student read out the dictionary definition, she echoed it to make sure the other students understood. In fact, she repeated "sit-up" 24 times before the topic shifted to another. After this lesson, 23 (62%) out of the 37 students in Class A reported "sit-up" on the uptake sheets as a word they had learned in the lesson. It is also worthwhile to note that 15 students in Class A also reported "sit" in the pronunciation section.

In the "sit-up" episode, the instructor focused on a word from the textbook passage; in other episodes, the words were supplied by the instructor in relation to the target word in the textbook, and students later reported them in the uptake sheets. For example, the instructor introduced the prefixes "mono-" and "tri-" to help students learn the meaning of "bi-" in "bilingual." These prefixes were the most frequently reported items outside of textbook vocabulary in Lesson 1. They were repeated several times, contrasted with each other, and related to the students' pre-existing knowledge. For example, in Class B, the instructor dissected the word "bilingual," explaining that the prefix "bi-" meant "two" as she gave the definition of the word. Then she introduced the other prefixes, "mono-," "tri-," and "multi-," and individual words containing them, such as "monolingual," "monotonous," "trilingual," "multilingual," and "multimedia." This teacher talk and interaction with students lasted approximately five minutes;

repetition of "mono-" occurred nine times, "tri-," four times, and "multi-," seven times. After the lesson, 29 (62%) out of the 47 Class B students reported "mono-" on the uptake sheet, and 26 (55%) reported "tri-."

These episodes, which seemed to have led to frequent learner reports represents an acquisition-rich linguistic environment (Long, 1996). The instructor repeatedly provided a model so that the students would pay attention to and retain the target form. She also provided associating information, such as synonyms and antonyms, to help the students remember the new form. Her input during these focused episodes was enriched input. The results of learner reports and their frequency show that the more enhanced the target form input was, the more likely the students were to retain and report the target form.

When the classroom discourse is viewed as the linguistic environment, the learners reports suggest the importance of explicit instruction. Some focused episodes occurred because the instructor acted on a teaching intention. For instance, "mansion," which appeared in the Lesson 2 reading, was a problematic word: It has become a borrowed word in Japanese, but the meaning changed from the original English to mean a relatively luxurious apartment or a condominium. The instructor, therefore, intentionally drew the students' attention to the word during the passage comprehension activity and introduced the associated words "condominium" and "apartment." Thirty-five students mentioned "mansion" in their responses, making it the fifth most frequent item. "Condominium" was reported by 29 students, and "apartment" by 14 students.

"Consumption," which was reported by 25 students (14th in frequency), was another example of preemptive focus. In association with "taxpayer," the instructor introduced "consumption tax" in the episode to focus on "taxpayer," which was reported by 32 students (10th in frequency).

Other focused episodes occurred in response to learner errors. This type of focusing often occurred with pronunciation problems. Among the 26 pronunciation-related issues, 14 students from Class A reported learning the pronunciation tip, "In order to avoid Japanese-like flat pronunciation, emphasize content words in the sentence." Their report related to an episode in which a student who was called upon to read aloud a topic sentence in a paragraph read it with strong monotonous Japanese accent. The instructor disapproved of her pronunciation, asked the class possible strategies for better pronunciation, provided them with pronunciation tips, and modeled correct pronunciation. The episode was short, but the explanation was concrete. Even though it was initiated due to one student's pronunciation problem and the episode was short, 14 students recalled and reported the teaching.

Another reactive focused episode centered on the pronunciation of "sit." As described earlier, a student's pronunciation was corrected in the early stage of the "sit-up" episode. When some students pronounced the word, it sounded more like "shit-up" than "sit-up." In response, the instructor contrasted "sit" and "shit," warning that "shit" was not a good word. Reflecting the pronunciation part of this focused episode, 15 students in Class A and eight students in Class C reported having learned the pronunciation of "sit." Interestingly, no students in Class B made the report because the student who was called upon and pronounced the word "sit-up" in Class B did so correctly and clearly. As a result, the "sit-up" pronunciation episode did not occur in Class B.

Findings in many studies on the effectiveness of explicit teaching and feedback in the ultimate acquisition of an L2 are inconclusive. However, the learner reports in this study suggest, at least, the items explicitly addressed in a lesson were more likely to draw learners' attention and, thus, were better retained in their memory.

3.3.2. Text structure reports and classroom discourse

Text structure was a frequently reported category alongside lexical items and passage content. Students text structure reports were related to focused episodes in classroom discourse, which often occurred during the final comprehension stage of the lesson. In order to confirm that the students read and understood the reading passages accurately, the instructor asked comprehension questions.

For example, in Lesson 1, in which students were expected to understand types of bilingual education as well as their advantages and disadvantages, a major comprehension question was, "How many bilingual education models are mentioned in this essay?" The instructor gave a few minutes for students to re-read the text and find answers; as she observed them re-reading, she coached them to use effective reading strategies: e.g., "As I mentioned before, scan topic sentences (in each paragraph)." Her repetition of a reading strategy was as if to give procedural guidance to achieve the goal. Furthermore, when students found answers, the instructor highlighted discourse markers such as "one," "another," and "finally" in the topic sentences and emphasized their listing functions. The teacher talk in this episode may relate to the students' frequent reports on "topic sentences" and "transition words" (47 and 42 out of 90 students who reported on text structure issues, respectively).

Equipping students with reading strategies was one of the instructor's major teaching goals (Personal communication, June 2004). She realized her instructional intention in her lesson by giving explicit strategic guidance when her students were engaged in reading, and she referred

to such reading strategies in several lessons throughout the semester. When she guided the students to scan the passage and read the topic sentences, she used the phrase "as I said before," thereby reminding them that she had mentioned this strategy in other lessons. In Lesson 2, she guided her students to grasp the main theme of each paragraph in Bruce Lee's biography. In other words, she frequently reminded the students about reading strategies. Her teaching intentions are not unrelated to the learner reports written by her students.

4. Summary

The current study of learner reports of their own learning in an EFL reading classroom at a Japanese college and the relationships of reported items with actual classroom discourse revealed that the learners were able to learn and report teacher-initiated target items. The items most frequently reported were vocabulary and reading passage content, reflecting the nature of the students' comprehension of the lesson. The fact that the most frequently reported items were vocabulary terms corresponds to the same tendency found in previous studies (Slimani, 1987; Palmeira, 1995; Williams, 1999). This indicates that when instructors create lesson plans, they should take into account the likelihood that learners' primary analysis of language is vocabulary.

The present study also found that the teacher-initiated focused episodes tended to result in learner reports. The more repetitively the target form and instructional themes were presented, the more frequently the students would report learning them. Thus, enriched input and explicit feedback were observed to have worked to make student aware of target forms in this particular teaching context. The teaching strategy that the instructor in this study developed for her class of more than 30 students with various levels of English proficiency, using reading materials, was effective to some extent in helping her students learn target words, world knowledge, and some reading strategies.

This study was exploratory in nature and has many limitations. One of the major problems is methodological: The uptake sheet was not successful in eliciting learner reports in terms of their linguistic categories. The learners' inaccurate categorization of items could have been avoided if post-survey interviews had been conducted. Thus, multiple methods of eliciting learner report are desired in future research.

Another major limitation is that the "learners' learning" that this study has revealed may represent only a partial or preliminary level of an actual knowledge shift. No linguistic tests were conducted to evaluate the level of students' understanding or their retention of the new

knowledge. Although asking the learners about their awareness and understanding of their learning experience is certainly an important step toward deepening our knowledge of the L2 learning process, it must be admitted that what learners say that they have learned may not be completely retained in the later stages of L2 acquisition.

Although the number of students who participated and actual amount of data collected through the uptake sheets are large, the current study is still a preliminary case study, so the findings cannot be generalized to every L2 learning/teaching context. Nevertheless, as understanding the L2 learning process from the learners' perspective through analysis of their L2 learning experiences is a worthy goal, more carefully designed studies are required to gain a better understanding of L2 learners' language learning processes.

References

Allwright, R. L. (1984). Why don't learners learn what teachers teach? The interaction hypothesis. In Singleton, D. M. & Little, D. (Eds.). *Language Learning in Formal and Informal Contexts*, 3-18. Dublin: IRAAL.

Doughty, C. (1991). Second language instruction does make a difference: evidence from an empirical study on SL relativization. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 13*, 431-469.

Ellis, R. (1992). The classroom context: An acquisition-rich or an acquisition-poor environment? In Kramsch, C. & McConnell-Ginet, S. (Eds.). *Text and context: Cross-disciplinary perspectives on language study,* 171-186. Lexington, MA: DC Heath.

Hatch, E. (1992). *Discourse and language education.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, F. (1992). A language-teaching machine: Input, uptake, and output in the communicative classroom. *System, 20*, 133-150.

Long, M. (1983). Native speaker/non-native speaker conversation and the negotiation of comprehensible input. *Applied Linguistics, 4*, 126-141.

Long, M. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In Ritchie, W. C. & Bhatia, T. K. (Eds.). *Handbook of Language Acquisition,* 413-468. New York: Academic Press.

Lyster, R. & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake: Negotiation of form in communicative classroom. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 19*, 37-66.

Mackey, A., McDonough, K., Fujii, A. & Tatsumi, T. (2001). Investigating learners' reports about the L2 classroom. *IRAL, 39*, 285-308.

Oliver, R. (1995). Negative feedback in child NS-NNS conversation. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 17*, 459-581.

Ortega, L., & Long, M. (1997). The effects of models and recasts on the acquisition of object topicalization and adverb placement in L2 Spanish. *Spanish Applied Linguistics, 1*, 65-86.

Palmeira, W. K. (1995). A study of uptake by learners of Hawaiian. In Schmidt, R. (Ed.). *Attention and awareness in foreign language learning* (Tech. Rep. #9), 127-161. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii.

Pica, T. & Long, M. (1986). The linguistic and conversational performance of experienced and inexperienced teachers. In Day, R. (Ed.). *Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition*, 85-98. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

Slimani. A. (1987). *The teaching/learning relationship: Learning opportunities and learning outcomes: An Algerian case study*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Lancaster.

Slimani, A. (1989). The role of topicalization in classroom language learning. *System, 17*, 223-234.

Slimani, A. (1992). Evaluation of classroom interaction. In Alderson, J. C. & Beretta, A. (Eds.). *Evaluating second language education,* 197-221. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swain, M. (1995). Three functions of output in second language learning. In Cook, G. & Seidlhofer, B. (Eds.), *Principle and practice in applied linguistics: Studies in honor of H.G. Widdowson,* 125-144. New York: Oxford University Press.

White, J. (1998). Getting learners' attention: A typographical input enhancement study. In Doughty, C. & Williams, J. (Eds.). *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition*, 85-113. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, J. (1999). Learner-generated attention to form. *Language Learning, 49*, 583-625.

Notes

1) The students often indicated synonyms by connecting them with the target word by an equal sign, as in "fond of = like." Antonyms were often indicated by arrows, as in "opponent <-> proponent."