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**DEPARTAMENT DE FILOLOGIA ANGLESA I DE GERMANÍSTICA**

**Peer Interaction for Vocabulary Acquisition:  
Lexical Language-Related Episodes in ESL/EFL  
Context**

Treball de Fi de Grau/ BA dissertation

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## **Abstract**

Linguists' increasing interest in language development has led to the emergence of various hypotheses to provide further comprehension of this process. Among these, however, the Input, Interaction and Output Hypothesis have been of importance since they inspired the emergence of Peer Interaction (PI), an innovative approach to aid in the acquisition process. Furthermore, this interactive procedure can be analyzed according to the type of discussions learners have, known as Language Related Episodes (LRE). In particular, this paper considers the importance of vocabulary acquisition in the context of English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL). Consequently, it illustrates the benefits and effectiveness of PI and focused on the production of Lexical LREs which appear to be helpful for learners' acquisition and internalization of vocabulary. Following this, it presents an overview of lexically-based tasks that have been performed over the years, since they may be useful to provide ESL/EFL learners opportunities to widen their mental lexicon.

**Keywords:** Peer Interaction, Language Related Episodes, English as a Second/Foreign Language, vocabulary acquisition, Lexical LREs

## 1. Introduction

The development of a language has been of significant interest in the linguistics field. Over the years, researchers have generated different concepts in order to have a better understanding of the acquisition of a new language. Among various investigations, Krashen's *input hypothesis* (1985), Long's *interaction hypothesis* (1981) and the *output hypothesis* by Swain and Lapkin (1998) have all provided further insight on the intricacies of second/foreign language learning (SL/FL). What is more, the establishment of these notions has led to the emergence of innovative approaches such as *Peer interaction* (PI) (Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2014).

Traditionally, learners acquire a new language in class through the figure of the teacher. However, *Peer Interaction* (PI) differs from this conventional approach by endorsing learning through student interaction with the purpose of increasing language and practice opportunities (Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2014). In view of this, this method could aid learners' development of a language as well as encourage their involvement in class. Therefore, various studies have been conducted to assess the usefulness of this practice through their communicative exchanges known as Language Related Episodes (LREs). These episodes are necessary in order to solve any linguistic issues cooperatively and to exchange feedback on the accurate production of the language (Fernández, 2014).

In the context of language learning, there are many linguistic features one can focus on such as vocabulary, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. In particular, the acquisition of SL/FL vocabulary is of greatest importance since its acquisition can aid in the comprehension and communication of the given language. Having established this, in order to assess this linguistic feature in LREs, tasks can be

employed to encourage Lexical LREs, which deal with the meaning, spelling or pronunciation of lexical items (García Mayo & Zeitler, 2017).

All in all, the present dissertation aims to expound the notions of input, output and interaction hypothesis. Following this, it intends to present Peer Interaction and, more specifically, Lexical LREs in the context of English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL). That is, an analysis on the beneficial properties and effectiveness of this interactive procedure for vocabulary acquisition considering the importance of communication in a language. To do this, this paper will also illustrate LREs and its taxonomy to deepen on the comprehension of various important aspects of these exchanges. Lastly, it plans to present a compilation of tasks that have been employed and have appeared to be more beneficial for learners in recent years.

## **2. Language Acquisition**

Investigations regarding language acquisition have been of particular interest in both psychology and linguistics. Consequently, many theories have been developed over the years in order to provide an explanation of this process. Focusing on linguistics, there are two major views: one group known as *nativists* and another group known as *empiricists*. Briefly, the former group bases their notions on nature, that is, they believe that language acquisition is an innate process (Kiyamazarslan, 2011); in contrast, the latter is based on nurture, which considers the importance of interaction and environmental factors (Kiyamazarslan, 2011). Beyond these perspectives, however, there are further theories and hypotheses which attempt to explain the process of language acquisition. Taking this into consideration, the following sections intend to focus on three different hypotheses in



relation to second/foreign language acquisition (SLA/FLA): *Input*, *Interaction* and *Output Hypothesis*.

## 2.1 The Input Hypothesis

The information that is provided to learners of a new language, *input*, is particularly important in SLA/FLA considering that there is reduced exposure to the second language (L2) in comparison to a native context. Due to this, there is an ongoing discussion on *explicit* and *implicit* learning. That is, which of the two would be more beneficial for L2 learners. Broadly speaking, explicit learning requires students to consciously process the input that is given to them and determine the regularities of the language. In contrast, implicit learning refers to an unconscious acquisition of input, in other words, learning without direct instruction (Hulstijn, 2005; cited in Vanpatten et al., 2020).

In view of this, Krashen (1985) hypothesized that *comprehensible input* is of major significance in SLA. To better understand this, Krashen explains that the provision of comprehensible information aids individuals to move from their current level of knowledge  $i$ , to the following one  $i+1$  (Công Nghiệp, n.d.). Moreover, in regard to the aforementioned learning approaches, he further emphasizes that implicit and explicit learning require distinct mental processes. Consequently, although conventionally L2 learners receive additional input through explicit learning, Krashen claims that language teaching should focus on implicit learning to ensure students accessibility of comprehensible input. Namely, understanding input and being able to communicate meaning would aid learners to further develop their notions on the second language.

In the same vein, Krashen's *Monitor model* (Krashen, 1985; cited in Công Nghiệp, n.d.) draws a distinction between learning a language and its acquisition. While the

learned language allows students to *monitor*, or consciously modify their use of language, acquisition is a process that is developed subconsciously. With this, he claims that SLA learners' fluid production of the language is a direct result of acquisition. To illustrate this, he further expands his hypothesis with the *Affective filter Hypothesis*, which claims that learners' level of anxiety and motivation can influence this unconscious development of the language. In bilingual education, for instance, there seems to be a focus on conveying a message rather than its production, which Krashen explains to be beneficial for students' level of confidence and, in turn, it allows a subconscious acquisition to occur. Therefore, his hypotheses explain how acquisition could ultimately aid in the development of L2 learners' cognition.

All in all, Krashen's input hypothesis is centered around the importance of comprehensible input for language development. More specifically, intelligible input can improve students' competence skills, which lead to the acquisition of speech and contributes to the provision of grammar. To achieve this, Krashen construes that this information should be given following a natural progression. That is, an adequate amount of information that is intelligible would aid in the subconscious development of the language (Công Nghiệp, n.d.).

## **2.2 The Interaction Hypothesis**

Krashen's Input Hypothesis inspired the emergence of various hypotheses with the purpose of expanding the notions of language acquisition. An example of such can be seen in Long's (1981) *Interaction Hypothesis*. Before explaining this hypothesis, however, it is important to emphasize the distinction of input and interaction made by Long. As previously mentioned, input is defined as the notions provided to learners.

Considering this, Long describes interaction as a communicative process where these notions are discussed by learners through *dialogue* (Long, 1981; cited in Muho & Kurani, 2014). Therefore, the Input Hypothesis can be linked to the Interaction Hypothesis in that the latter further expands this concept.

Elaborating Long's concept may better illustrate how these notions are interconnected. As Krashen (1985) explains, comprehensible input is important for acquisition, however, Long (1981) explains that in order for these notions to be acquired properly, interaction is necessary since it requires modifying the input to make it understandable. In other words, dialogue encourages learners to negotiate the meaning of linguistic features in order to comprehend the information (Rod, 1999; see also Muho & Kurani, 2014). Therefore, according to Long's Hypothesis, these *negotiations of meaning* can benefit learners' L2 development and performance since it would make the input comprehensible.

More precisely, Long presents three different aspects of his hypothesis which are essential to enhance the likelihood of its effectiveness. Firstly, it is necessary to provide learners with comprehensible input. Secondly, adjust any attribute of the activity which may cause an issue in the process of interaction and consequently, may hinder the comprehensible input. Thirdly, employ tasks which enable students to exchange information while maintaining a communicative structure. Besides this, SLA/FLA learners may benefit more from the tasks if they share similar levels of proficiency since it could increase the frequency of these exchanges (Hoang-Thu, 2009). Hence, taking all these features into consideration during interaction may be useful for the acquisition of a language.

On the whole, the Interaction Hypothesis values the feedback that is provided between learners during interaction. This feedback allows students to discuss the meaning of linguistic features and, consequently, improve their L2 production. What is more, these discussions are what lead to the understanding of input, an important feature in Krashen's Hypothesis as well as Long's'. Nevertheless, there should also be a focus on making any necessary adjustment of possible issues and following a coherent communicative structure, in order to ensure its efficacy.

### **2.2.1 Peer Interaction**

Traditionally, students' cognition of a language is provided through the figure of the teacher. However, as previously mentioned, the exposure to the L2 is reduced compared with a native environment. Because of this, there has been a growing interest in developing other approaches to maximize classroom sessions. A prime example of this is *Peer Interaction* (PI), prompted by the Interaction Hypothesis this innovative approach emerged with the purpose of aiding SLA/FLA (Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2014). In short, PI differs from the conventional approach since it requires unanimous work between peers to solve linguistic issues related to the target language (TL). More specifically, learners employ Long's *negotiation of meaning* through dialogue as a means to complete the activity (Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2014).

To illustrate this, previous research on three prominent theoretical perspectives (Damon, 1984; see also Muho & Kurani, 2014) have expanded on the benefits of PI. The first one follows Piaget's view (1932 and 1965) on how learners' corrective feedback generates a need to assess their views albeit they differ with their peers in order to solve an issue with a coherent explanation. The second one is concerned with Vygotsky's view

(1962 and 1978) which explains that an increased number of communicative episodes can aid learners to further internalize their knowledge. Lastly, the third theory described by Sullivan (1953) explains that this approach allows students to improve their collaborative skills unlike in conventional teacher-student education. Hence, PI could be useful for developing students' social and cognitive skills.

Expanding on these theoretical perspectives, Muho and Kurani (2014) explain how the collaborative factor of PI, could aid in the production and internalization of the L2. As Rod explains (1999), interaction is composed of two complementary categories known as *interpersonal* (i.e. the exchange between individuals) and *intrapersonal* communication (i.e. the conversation one has with themselves), in order to internalize the acquired notions. In other words, interaction enhances learners' language awareness through corrective feedback, which in turn aids in an accurate L2 production. This feedback is therefore necessary during the negotiation of meaning, as through clarification requests, recasts and comprehension checks; learners can learn and improve their performance (Muho & Kurani, 2014).

Apart from this, PI can be a resourceful tool to increase learning opportunities. Although the traditional approach provides activities to encourage learners' participation, it is not always the case that all students get the opportunity to participate. This may be due to learners' individual differences such as their age, gender, level of proficiency or individual skills (Philip and Tognini, 2009; see also Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2014). Considering this, PI operates in a way in which these differences are taken into consideration, which is why these communicative exchanges are carried out by pairs or small groups to incentivize more students to take part in the discussions despite these limitations. Consequently, they could provide their peers with corrective feedback,

which is an important step in order for mutual comprehensibility to occur. Therefore, PI creates more learning opportunities for students to develop their language skills.

By the same token, students' personal characteristics can also be taken into account during task design. That is, when developing and imposing a task, these differences can be considered to create a more balanced situation in which all peers have opportunities to participate and interact with one another. Moreover, tasks can be further adapted depending on the linguistic goal under focus. For instance, some studies may impose activities containing the reconstruction of short texts for the improvement of vocabulary cognition (Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2014). Hence, this interactive approach may be beneficial since it can be adjusted to students' capabilities to encourage their participation and to different aspects of the language to further their notions.

Considering all of this, this new learning approach incorporates an interactive element in order to aid in the process of acquisition of a language. More specifically, in PI, students have communicative exchanges in order to discuss issues related to language to complete activities; and in turn, it can improve learners' L2 output production. Besides this, with the purpose of utilizing the time students of a second/foreign language have, this activity can be adapted to students' capabilities and specific linguistic goals to increase students' engagement and their language cognition. What is more, PI appears to be useful for students' collaborative skills and their L2 performance thanks to peer corrective feedback.

### **2.2.2 Peer Interaction in ESL/EFL classroom**

Having established an overview on what PI consists of and its benefits for L2 acquisition, various studies have been carried out in the field of SLA/FLA in order to further illustrate

its efficacy. An example of such would be Philip and Tognini (2009) study on the benefits of learner-learner (LL) interaction. Besides reinforcing the previous notions explained on the benefits of corrective feedback and individual differences, it also noted the importance of future studies to be carried out in this area, in order to ultimately further students' learning experience. In light of this, this section will present a series of studies which have investigated the usefulness of this approach in the context of English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL).

Investigations on task modality have been carried out to examine which activities may be helpful to maximize class sessions. For instance, Tulung (2013) carried out a study to examine which designs appear to aid generating extensive communicative situations, since these exchanges are of importance to develop L2 production. To do this, this study was performed on a group of 27 university medical students with an intermediate English proficiency. Students completed four activities, which employed two different interactive tasks: *jigsaw* and *decision-making*. Moreover, these medically related tasks were designed to elicit interaction through a reading text as a basis. Data revealed that while both task modalities prompted spontaneous speech, there was a higher oral production in the decision-making tasks. Additionally, researchers observed that students tended to use their L1 in order to regulate how tasks were performed. Therefore, some tasks appear to create more opportunities for students to use the L2 than others, and the use of L1 could potentially aid in the completion of tasks.

Moving forward, taking into account that in PI there is minimal intervention by the teacher, researchers hypothesize that providing metacognitive instruction could be necessary to enhance students' communicative exchange. Shortly, *metacognitive instruction* consists in presenting learners with linguistic samples to provide their peers

more helpful feedback and encourage negotiation of meaning. To confirm this hypothesis, a study (Fujii, Ziegler & Mackey, 2016) performed on 39 students belonging to an advanced EFL program in Tokyo, Japan, examined the usefulness of instructing learners on PI. Results showed that language awareness aided in the provision of corrective feedback and improved the quality of students' discussions. Therefore, it could be said that proper training should be taken into account in PI for students to benefit from the tasks; and, in turn, this could aid in expanding their language knowledge.

Furthermore, although some individual differences have been alluded to, a study (Nguyen, 2017) conducted on Vietnamese learners, provided insight on how cultural aspects may influence interactive tasks. More explicitly, the extent of its influence during PI activities. Considering that this approach intends learners to employ the foreign language to their furthest capabilities, it would be beneficial to observe how fostering a comfortable environment may increase the participation of students. Consequently, the observations centered on the negotiation stage since it is where the exchange of opinions between learners occurs. Primarily, researchers noted an inclination towards negotiating the topic rather than the use of language. In addition, students seemed to encourage each other's participation which created a cooperative environment. However, this was noted as a possible result of their ideals. Lastly, researchers emphasize the importance of the phase negotiation of meaning in PI, since minimal situations of confrontation might limit more opportunities for the use of EFL.

As it could be observed, PI in EFL context has gained interest specially over the last few years. Accordingly, various linguistic features have been investigated to provide ways to efficiently utilize this activity. For instance, the design of tasks can positively influence the amount of oral output that EFL students generate. What is more, language



training could aid students to express their own ideas as well as to accurately provide feedback to help their peers' English production. Lastly, although peer interaction creates an encouraging environment, challenging others' views to an extent could increase their use of the L2. Thus, PI can be modified to provide a more fruitful interaction and to ultimately observe progress on the communicative skills of EFL learners.

### **2.2.3 Peer Interaction and Vocabulary acquisition**

In earlier sections, it was mentioned that PI could be adapted depending on specific linguistic goals. With this in mind and continuing with this approach in an ESL/EFL context, the following section focuses on implementing PI as a means to aid in the acquisition of vocabulary. However, before moving forward with research on this topic, the following segment will briefly provide some information on the importance of vocabulary acquisition for SL/FL learners as it is one of the main objectives of this dissertation.

#### **2.2.3.1 Vocabulary acquisition**

As illustrated above, communication is one of the crucial components of language acquisition. This component enables SL/FL learners not only to understand a language but also express their own ideas and opinions from their first language (L1) to the second language (L2). Although there are various important linguistic features one could focus on, from a functional perspective, it could be argued that acquiring the lexicon of a language can establish a basis for communication. Considering this, earlier research (Ellis, 1999) on vocabulary acquisition described the intricacies of this process such as learners' individual differences, the complex properties of a lexical item, the quantity and

quality of input and interactional factors; can influence its development. In spite of this, further research (Ellis, 1997; see also González-Fernández, Schmitt, 2017) has noted that guiding learners in creating relations between label-meaning may broaden their mental lexicon of the target language.

What is more, previous research on this topic explained that oftentimes vocabulary acquisition occurred incidentally. As a consequence, language instruction tended to prioritize the production of grammatical patterns, found necessary in order to make demands in the L2. Regardless of this, Ellis (1997) explains that learners tend to seek “sequential patterns with reliable reference”, which can be achieved by focusing on language structure since it simplifies the process of identifying words through pauses and their short length. Moreover, in order for students to use the vocabulary of a language productively, high quantities of oral input are found necessary in order for students to internalize their oral and written use. Therefore, vocabulary becomes productive through persistent practice in order to be able to recognize words and internalize their proper use.

Considering that input and constant practice is of importance in vocabulary acquisition, an interactive approach like PI may become useful since it exposes learners to different situations where their knowledge is challenged. As Ellis (1997) explains, learning in chunks such as lexical phrases and sizable collocation patterns makes this acquisition process more meaningful. Taking this into account, in PI, learners can be assessed through word-focused tasks, which are created with the intent of observing how learners employ a specific set of words (González-Fernández, Schmitt, 2017). Additionally, students can benefit from these communicative-based tasks incidentally and intentionally, which can strengthen these mental connections and, in turn, broaden their

lexicon. Therefore, the implementation of interactive tasks can be helpful for learners' development of vocabulary and communicative skills.

Altogether, research has shown the importance of vocabulary acquisition in order to provide learners with further understanding of the language. Moreover, it would enable students to communicate with others in the L2. However, since the elaboration of a mental lexicon can be an intricate process, it would be beneficial to guide SL/FL students' attention to linguistic patterns of label-meaning. Besides this, it would be necessary to provide learners with opportunities to put their knowledge into practice to have better control on the language production. As a means to achieve this, PI may be functional since it contains an interactive approach that can target specific lexical items in order to gradually increase their vocabulary knowledge.

#### **2.2.3.2 PI for Vocabulary acquisition**

Having an overall perception on the process of vocabulary acquisition and its importance in SL/FL education, this section presents a series of studies performed in the context of ESL/EFL. Expressly, how applying Peer Interaction may be beneficial for developing ESL/EFL learners' communication skills. To have a better understanding of the procedure, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the methodology employed in these studies. Following Krashen's Hypothesis (1985), it is important to provide students with input that is in accordance with their level of knowledge and the following one in order to observe a natural progression. Taking this into account, students are first evaluated on their English proficiency to provide a set of words accordingly. Afterwards, students are asked to complete a variety of tasks over a period of time. Lastly, they are once more evaluated in order to observe any progress on their L2 vocabulary acquisition.

As a case in point to illustrate the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Ahmadian, American and Ahjabajdi (2014) gathered data of 64 Iranian EFL learners to observe their vocabulary development and retention. In order to carry this out, tasks were implemented into two distinct groups; one, which performed the tasks with their peers, and another group, who carried them out individually. Putting Krashen's hypothesis into practice, results of the proficiency test showed that the students had a low intermediate level of English. Besides this, students participated in a set of tasks; as a pre task, students were asked to complete a *dictionary search*, which consisted of providing a definition, a synonym or an antonym of each lexical item; with this, they could create a *glossary*, which is a completed collection of the meanings of the words; and as a post-task they were asked to provide a *vocabulary log* of five words of the list with their corresponding definitions. Furthermore, researchers implemented a vocabulary test, which consisted in fill-in-the-gap activities or elaborating short texts; performed before and after this interactive procedure to evaluate their progress. With this, investigators concluded that peer-group activities instigated more negotiation moments as well as challenged students' vocabulary knowledge in comparison to the individual group. Lastly, data revealed that the interactive group notably improved not only on the acquisition of the lexical items but also in their retention.

Similarly, Kivi et al. (2021) performed a study on 60 EFL students of the Mandazaran Province, in order to display the benefits of working collaboratively. In this study, the competency test revealed that the students belonged to a pre-intermediate level of English. Students were divided into three groups but unlike in the previous study, two of the three groups were monitored, one by a teacher and another one by an assigned peer, and the last group had to perform the activities individually. Additionally, students were

administered two different multiple-choice tests: a vocabulary test and a reading comprehension test; with the purpose of monitoring an incidental acquisition of these lexical items. The results of these showed that the peer-monitored group considerably benefited from these activities due to the group cooperation, especially in the reading comprehension task. What is more, it was noted that students' collaborative behaviours created an environment that encouraged others' participation and ultimately, allowed students to improve their linguistic skills through corrective feedback.

Along the same lines, Ariffin (2021) conducted a small study on a group of 19 intermediate ESL learners to discern the effects of collaborative tasks for vocabulary acquisition. It is important to note that these students had different L1 backgrounds including: Iraqi, Vietnamese, Malaysian, Yemeni Yemenite, Thai, Bosnian and Filipino. Furthermore, these students were taking a course that deals with improving their reading skills, which is why the main activity consisted in working cooperatively to comprehend the meaning of specific passages in their textbook. Before this, however, students received instruction on ways to interpret these. After the main activity, students were then individually assessed on a set of lexical items that appeared in the passages. At the end of the procedure, students were evaluated to monitor their progression. Results indicated that the implementation of this cooperative task improved learners' overall linguistic skills such as speaking, reading, listening and spelling but explicitly, their vocabulary acquisition. Aside from this, it could be observed that these activities fostered an encouraging environment to participate in the discussions, which in turn, aided in improving their communication skills.

Further research has been performed by Homayouni (2022) with the purpose of investigating the extent to which peer assessment may be beneficial for learners'

vocabulary acquisition as well as their oral skills. To do this, 42 Iranian EFL learners, 37 of which had a low-intermediate level of proficiency and 5 who had an intermediate level were divided into a control group and an experimental group. Focusing on the latter, they were subdivided into 5 different groups, and they completed a narrative task, which consisted in narrating a story through the use of some images; and they were assessed on a set of lexical items that appeared in a chapter of a vocabulary book instructed to them. After both of these activities, students were asked to provide their peers corrective feedback on their language performance. Considering the initial purpose of the study, data showed that these activities and most importantly, the provision of feedback enhanced students' oral skills as well as increased the retention and recollection of lexical items.

### **2.2.3.3 The effectiveness of PI for vocabulary acquisition**

In view of the studies presented in the previous section, research suggests that PI may be an effective approach for the vocabulary development of ESL/EFL learners. Particularly, the implementation of collaborative activities have shown to generate encouraging environments, which increase learners' participation to have fruitful discussions. That is, through instances of negotiation of meaning and the provision of peer corrective feedback both have had a positive effect on the production of the language compared to initial tests. Moreover, instructing learners to provide useful feedback should be considered to further improve students' oral performance. Besides this, taking into account the competence of learners may be necessary in order for the tasks to be feasible for them. Focusing on the activities, it would be worth acknowledging the diverse tasks employed in these investigations such as dictionary search, vocabulary log, narration-based tasks, vocabulary and reading comprehension tests as well as tasks based on the comprehension

of meaning of passages, which have aided in furthering ESL/EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge. More specifically, these tasks have elicited the use of the language which might have had an influence on the retention and recollection of the use of lexical items. Thus, these findings support the effectiveness of PI, as well as present a collection of lexically-focused tasks which, to an extent, have shown to motivate discursive exchanges to boost their English vocabulary knowledge.

### **3. The Output Hypothesis & Language Related Episodes**

Thus far, the Input Hypothesis and Interaction Hypothesis have been explained in order to introduce Peer Interaction and its benefits for vocabulary acquisition in ESL/EFL context. To provide further insight on the usefulness of PI, it is important to also focus on the Output Hypothesis and its relation to Language Related Episodes (LREs). Expressly, on how valuable the production of the language can be for ESL/EFL learners' acquisition of vocabulary.

#### **3.1 Output Hypothesis**

In the framework of second language acquisition (SLA), the term *output* was previously used to refer to the *product* of what has been learned. Over time, however, and owing to various research, this term has been known to refer to a component of the *process* of learning (Swain, 2005). From this notion, Swain developed a hypothesis known as the *Output Hypothesis* (OH), which explains how learners need to focus not only on comprehensible input but also on the production of the language, whether oral or in written form. Hence, by practicing the target language, there could be an improvement of learners' L2 performance.

For a better understanding, Swain further describes three different functions of this concept. Firstly, the *noticing/triggering function*, which proposes that L2 production stimulates learners' recognition of linguistic issues. In other words, by producing the language, they become aware of their language use and consequently, generate intrapersonal mechanisms to either acquire or consolidate their knowledge. Secondly, the *hypothesis-testing function*, explains how learners may view output as opportunities to produce their thoughts in the target language. That is, there could be an increase in attempts to articulate or write an idea. Thirdly, *the metalinguistic (reflexive) function*, which claims that output is a mediator for language acquisition by means of reflection. That is, learners' outward verbalization of the L2 causes learners to reason and attend their own production as well as their peers.

What is more, through the years, various investigations regarding L2 production have taken place in the context of collaborative dialogue. For instance, Swain and Lapkin (Swain, 2005) found that writing-based tasks increased students' engagement in these exchanges in order to express their ideas in the L2. In the same vein, Tocalli-Beller (Swain, 2005) observed that discussions of the use of the language to solve tasks such as explaining the meanings of riddles and puns enhanced learners' comprehension as well as the spontaneous use of what they learned. Besides this, post-tests suggest that a prolonged use of this joint practice could be beneficial at an individual level as well. In other words, output is a useful component of the learning experience which causes an internal adjustment that aids in the development of L2 learners.

Therefore, in accordance with preceding research, output is claimed to be a fundamental part of the ongoing process of learning. An outward expression of the language, increases students' language awareness, encourages them to attempt to produce



their thoughts in the L2 as well as reflect on their language production. Moreover, as a result of working as a collective, students can benefit from these interactions since they can acquire new knowledge on the use of the language and modify their output accordingly. Therefore, output is a learning procedure that enhances learners' comprehension skills and further develops their notions to produce what it is intended in the L2.

### **3.2 Language Related Episodes**

Closely related to the Output Hypothesis, Language Related Episodes (LREs) are described as instances during collaborative dialogue “in which students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or other-or self-correct their language production” (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p. 326 cited in Dobao, 2014). Accordingly, these episodes have been of importance in order to evaluate the development of learners' acquisition of a second language. With this purpose, analysts have categorized different aspects of these episodes in order to observe how particular features may affect the overall comprehensibility and development of the language in the process of collaborative acquisition of a foreign language.

In relation to assessment of students, researchers have categorized different interaction dynamics (Storch, 2002, p.127 cited in Ganem-Gutiérrez & Roehrn-Brackin, 2020). Besides focusing on aspects such as age and gender, some analysts have described the types of engagement as elaborate or limited (Azkarai & Mayo, 2016 cited in Martínez-Adrián & Gallardo-del-puerto, 2021). However, others have carried out investigations to further provide insight on these types of interactions. Overall, there have been two distinct features to describe these relationships: *equality* and *mutuality* (Ganem-Gutiérrez &

Roehrn-Brackin, 2020). The former measures the extent of the control it is presented throughout the task, and the latter refers to the level of reciprocal engagement in the exchanges. Taking this into consideration, among various possible interactions, there are four categories which are frequently observed. Primarily, there is the *collaborative* group, where there is a moderate to high level of uniformity and cooperation; the *dominant/dominant* group, where there is moderate to high uniformity but moderate to low level of cooperation; the *dominant/passive* group, where there is moderate to low uniformity and cooperation; lastly, the *expert/novice* group, where there is a moderate to low uniformity but a moderate to high level of cooperation.

Moreover, analysts have also analyzed further characteristics related to the use of metalanguage. For instance, different instances of metalanguage can be categorized depending on the type of feedback peers provide to each other such as: “recasts, clarification requests, confirmation checks and explicit metalinguistic explanations” (Lyle, 2015). Similarly, other studies have considered the *value* and the *nature* of the LREs. Briefly, value refers to aspects such as the *length* and the *weight* of learners' metalinguistic use of the L2. What is more, the term length is employed to refer to the duration of the episodes where it ranges from short to long, as long as they are reflecting on their L2 use (Fortune & Thorp, 2001). Additionally, the term weight refers to the extent learners discuss their linguistic decisions and explanations. In contrast, nature further analyzes the various types of interaction that occur when discussing the use of the language. Consequently, these episodes can be either *continuous*, where learners discuss a linguistic trait without shifting their focus; *discontinuous*, which is similar as the previous one except that they briefly deviate from it and later revisit it; *embedded* episodes are known as the in between instances of the discontinuous episodes;

*overlapped*, where two or more episodes overlap; and lastly the *entangled* episodes refer to the episodes which contain a mixture of the previous ones (Fortune & Thorp, 2001).

In the same vein, other classifications of LREs can be related to task-modality. Particularly, features such as *nature*, *outcome*, *directness* and the degree of *complexity* of the episodes. In regard to nature, they can either be lexically-based episodes, centered around the acquisition of the meaning, spelling and phonology of lexical items; or, form based episodes, which focus on morpho-syntactic features of the language (Mayo & Zeitler, 2016). Moreover, episodes can also be based on grammar which considers grammatical features of the language (Dobao, 2014). Regarding the outcome of the episodes, they can be either correctly solved, incorrectly solved or unsolved (Mayo & Zeitler, 2016; Martínez-Adrián & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2021). Along with this, some analysts classify LREs to describe their directness, which can be direct or indirect, as well as their level of complexity, which can be complex or simple (Martínez-Adrián & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2021). Nevertheless, not all of these classifications are necessarily employed since they might vary depending on the purpose of the study.

All in all, language related episodes can be illustrative of learners' language experience. What is more, as it could be observed, there are various aspects researchers can analyze and measure. From the different types of interactions between peers, characteristics of the metalanguage employed in the episodes, to the varying task-modalities. Consequently, the conjunction of various investigations has led to the creation of a taxonomy for these episodic exchanges, which depict the intricacies of this activity.

### **3.2.1 Lexical Language Related Episodes**

#### **3.2.1.1 Task modality in Lexical LREs**

Earlier research alludes that task-modality may have an influence on students' metalinguistic use as well as their L2 oral performance. (García Mayo & Zeitler, 2016). That is, tasks which encourage situations of negotiation of meaning create learning opportunities by solving possible misunderstandings of the language (Lyle, 2015). What is more, task-modality together with interaction can be beneficial not only for the acquisition but also for the retention of linguistic features (Robinson, 2003). Therefore, having observed the importance of output and metalinguistic discussions in LREs, this section intends to present a collection of tasks which may be beneficial for EFL/ESL learners. As aforementioned, depending on the nature of the episodes, they can be divided into lexical or form-based LREs. Furthermore, the metalinguistic talk between learners in these types of episodes can be surrounding the clarification of the meaning of certain words, seeking new lexical items, choosing the correct word or discussing either phonological or spelling features of a certain word. However, considering the importance of the acquisition of the meaning of L2 vocabulary, there will be a focus on lexically-based episodes.

Having established this, McDonough and Hernández (2019) conducted an investigation to assess ESL learners' linguistic discussions and development of vocabulary. In order to obtain such information, 13 students with different L1 backgrounds enrolled in a Canadian community center were administered this procedure. Expressly, the L1 languages varied between Spanish, Albanian, Portuguese, Korean, Farsi and French. Regarding their level of proficiency, they all had a high-intermediate level of English knowledge. Besides this, in terms of the tasks, students had to complete

six different pre-collaborative writing tasks. That is, students were given a prompt and then had to elaborate: a blog post, a narration, a letter to an editor, a summary and an opinion task. The latter was employed in order to evaluate ESL learners' development of vocabulary acquisition, which is why these tests were performed at the beginning and at the end of the program. Along with this, researchers used a rubric as a means to measure their overall vocabulary and grammar performance. The outcome of the study revealed that there were a high number of correct lexical LREs. Moreover, a further analysis of these episodes showed that the discussions regarding use of vocabulary were mostly simple rather than elaborate negotiations of meaning, as the following example illustrates:

(1) \* CHI1: so actors were alone

\* CHI2: alone?

\* CHI1: yeah the two actors were alone there was no one else

As it could be observed, example (1) shows an instance where speakers have a simple communicative exchange on the meaning of *alone*. Additionally, post-test data revealed an improvement in the vocabulary, specially in students who engaged the most in the discussions. Lastly, this peer interaction activity seemed to also be beneficial for the incidental acquisition of lexical items. In other words, written texts revealed that students acquired new words not necessarily discussed in the oral episodes.

In the same vein, Ahmadian and Tajabadi (2020) conducted a study centered around the collaborative dialogue of EFL students. More specifically, they intended to analyze if there was any observable progress in learners' vocabulary acquisition through the outcome of Lexical LREs. In order to carry this out, researchers assessed 18 Iranian EFL students between the ages of 16 and 25, with an intermediate level of English proficiency. In this study, students were evaluated on a total of 90 words ranging from

verbs, nouns, to adjectives and adverbs, which were split into 15 lexical items per instructional session. Consequently, they were administered 6 different tasks, an example of which is *Picture Story*, which consisted in organizing a set of pictures and narrating a story in relation to them. Besides this, as in previous research, learners' vocabulary expertise was evaluated before and after the intervention and they completed a dictionary search as well as a vocabulary log collaboratively. An assessment on the outcome of Lexical LREs reported that learners who solved the activities correctly showed a progression in their vocabulary. Particularly, this type of interaction has shown to benefit EFL learners' vocabulary production by negotiating and reflecting on their knowledge, as observed in example (2):

- (2) \* STU1: then they went to the nearest hotel
- \* STU2: uhum...
- \* STU1: because it was midnight they talked to the manager to give them some place to sleep –
- \* STU3: what was the meaning of weird?
- \* STU1: Unusual
- \* STU2: yeah, it means unusual
- \* STU1: weird means unusual, or (.) a *strange* man who (sound of searching among papers) someone who wears very strange clothes.
- \* STU3: yes, means not normal

As it can be seen, example (2) depicts how this interactive approach aided in the comprehension of the meaning of *weird* by providing synonyms such as *unusual* or *strange*. What is more, as the last utterance shows, CHI3, who initially asked its meaning, is then able to recall it when she says: “not normal”. In other words, they were able not

to only acquire but also internalize new lexical items thanks to learning opportunities provided by this type of interaction.

Providing further insight on this topic, a study carried out by Storch and Alshuraidah (2020), analyzed instances of languaging and feedback provision. Additionally, they also considered task-modality in relation to the production of form, meaning and mechanic-based episodes. In terms of mechanic-based episodes, these episodes are in relation to orthographic and spelling features, as well as the space between words and clear handwriting. While form-based episodes focused on syntax and morphology, meaning-based episodes focused on word choice and lexical meaning, as previously explained. To do this, they evaluated 38 Saudi-Arabian EFL University students, who had an intermediate to advanced level of English proficiency. Regarding the task, the tasks consisted in the collaborative production of a text, followed by an exchange of these texts with other groups in order to provide feedback and lastly, a revision of the text considering the feedback. Data extracted from this study showed that there was an overall high level of engagement and metalinguistic use in these episodes, particularly in the first part of the procedure which involved a writing component. An instance of this can be seen in example (3), where the second speaker provides orally the correct lexical item *crime* during the elaboration of a text. Following this, researchers indicate that learners proceed to modify it correctly in the written text.

(3) \* STU1: poverty makes people commit money

\* STU2: HM!!!!?

\* STU1: commit money

\* STU2: لحظة” lahdha” (a moment)

\* STU1: commit money...commit crimes كان يكتب” kaan yaktub” (he was writing) grammatical mistakes صح” sah” (yes)

\* STU2: Commit

\* STU1: commit money ما تجيء” maa taji” (is not appropriate) commit money

\* STU2: commit crime

Moreover, of the three types of episodes assessed in this study, Lexical LREs were predominant since peers had discussions on the accurate use of lexical items to elaborate the text. Therefore, learners appeared to focus on features related to meaning rather than grammar, and to a lesser extent, orthographic features.

Similarly, Gallardo-del-Puerto and Martínez-Adrián (2022) performed a study to analyze the effects task-modality may have on young EFL learners. This study assessed 24 Spanish-Basque students, 12 of which belonged to 5th grade while the remaining half belonged to 6th grade. Moreover, in terms of procedure, there were four different assessments: a questionnaire regarding relevant background information, a proficiency test, which revealed they all were at a beginner level and two different tasks, one referred to as OW task, which contained a combination of oral and written elements, and another task known as OE, which included an editing step besides the oral element. Furthermore, this study focused on enhancing instances of negotiation of meaning and language awareness. In order to achieve this, the OW task was based on decision-making, where students had to collaboratively write a brief text to guide a dog to its corresponding owner. In addition, the OE task consisted in the narration of a story, where students had to record themselves, then, they had to hear their recording and edit and re-record it if they thought necessary. Therefore, as can be observed, these tasks included both meaning-based and



form-based activities. In the end, results revealed that OW tasks prompted more language engagement, and there seemed to be more meaning-based LREs than form-based LREs. Lastly, regarding meaning, in the OW task, learners focused on word-choice, whereas in OE they focused on word-meaning. For instance, example (4) shows an instance of both word-choice and word-meaning.

(4) \* CHI1: and all have the same eh (..) eh how do you say eh *apellido* [surname]?

\* CHI2: but eh.

\* CHI3: surname *creo* [think]

In contrast, regarding form, in the OW task, learners focused significantly more on spelling as in example (5), while in the OE task, they focused more on morphosyntactic features.

(5) \* CHI2: has got the t-shirt with a glass and a snake. (*CHI2 writes*)

\* CHI2: *ay lo tacho?* [Shall I cross it out?]. (*whispering*)

\* CHI1: eh with is (.) is with eh eich.

\* CHI2: ah.

\* CHI3: *xxx hache xxx al final* [h at the end]. (*whispering*)

### 3.2.1.2 The effectiveness of Lexical LREs

By and large, the studies presented above have provided further insight on the impact task-modality may have for the acquisition of vocabulary by assessing ESL/EFL learners' communicative episodes. The tasks that have been employed have varied from elaborating a variety of short texts, narrating a story through pictures, dictionary search and vocabulary log. What is more, these tasks have been implemented through a combination of written and oral elements, which supports the idea of adding a writing

component to Lexical LREs as it might be beneficial for learners' vocabulary development. Furthermore, corrective feedback has been found useful in order for learners to revise and modify their output production. Besides this, further analysis on the data of these studies has reported that these activities have aided in the intentional and incidental acquisition and retention of lexical items. Centering on the last two studies, where there is a comparison of form-based and lexically-based, these tasks have illustrated a high level of engagement in the oral discussions. As researchers suggest, this may be due to the elaboration of written text, which caused students to focus on an accurate use of the lexical items and consequently, there were more instances of negotiation. Therefore, what could be extracted from these investigations is that in order to ensure the effectiveness of this approach, tasks should combine the production of oral and written L2 output to further ESL/EFL students' vocabulary cognition.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In light of the above, it could be said that the Input, Interaction and Output hypotheses have established a basis for the development of Peer Interaction as an innovative tool to aid ESL/EFL learners. Expressly, these hypotheses claim that providing learners with a combination of comprehensible input, corrective feedback and opportunities for the outward production of the L2 can enhance students' language acquisition. Consequently, the creation of Peer Interaction integrates these valuable characteristics with the purpose of increasing students' language awareness. What is more, this procedure consists of students completing a set of tasks collaboratively in order to solve a linguistic issue without the aid of a teacher. Taking this into account, over the years, various studies have been carried out to investigate the effectiveness of PI for the acquisition of vocabulary

since an accurate production of the L2 can aid in conveying an L1 message. In regards to this, results show that PI is a helpful tool since it encourages students' participation by challenging their knowledge and, in turn, furthers their language comprehension. Besides this, since vocabulary acquisition appears to be of significant importance for communication, a further analysis on its effectiveness revealed that lexically-based tasks, such as the narration of a story, appear to elicit higher instances of discourse. As a result, these tasks appear to expand ESL/EFL learners' vocabulary repertoire. Additionally, a mechanism of assessment that has provided further details on students' communicative exchanges have been Language Related Episodes. As observed in LREs taxonomy, there are various elements that can be measured in these exchanges. Nevertheless, researchers have considered task modality to be worth investigating in order to create meaningful interactions. That is, provide learners with tasks which widen their learning opportunities. In regards to vocabulary acquisition, tasks which encourage Lexical LREs have shown to boost ESL/EFL learners' retention of lexical items. Particularly, recent research has revealed that perhaps a combination of written and oral tasks for the elaboration of a short text, for instance, may further expand their mental lexicon. Therefore, this paper has had the objective of illustrating the benefits and effectiveness of PI, and more specifically Lexical LREs, as a way to maximize class hours for ESL/EFL learners' vocabulary development.

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