
Some New Terminology: Comprehension-Aiding Supplementation and Form-Focusing Supplementation

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Abstract: We introduce two terms in order to facilitate research and clarify practice: Comprehension-Aiding Supplementation (CAS) is designed to promote language acquisition, while Form-Focusing Supplementation (FFS) is designed to promote conscious learning.

Comprehension-Aiding Supplementation

New terminology is needed to make a distinction that is at the core of second and foreign language acquisition theory and practice. The new terms are the following: Comprehension-Aiding Supplementation (CAS). Form-Focusing Supplementation (FFS).

The purpose of this short paper is not to argue in favor of or against the use of one or the other of these kinds of supplementation, but rather to facilitate further discussion and research on the topic of supplementation. Our goal in this short paper was not to discuss all forms of supplementation, but only to focus on two types, CAS and FFS.

Comprehension-Aiding Supplementation (CAS) is consistent with the Comprehension Hypothesis (Krashen, 2003). Comprehension-Aiding Supplementation attempts to make input more comprehensible. At the same time, it can also serve to make input more interesting by adding detail and depth.

The primary means of aiding comprehension is adding context, either linguistically by supplying background information, explanation, or a

simple definition in the L1 or L2, or non-linguistically, through other modes of input, for example, visual.

There is no expectation of immediate mastery, nor any expectation by the teacher or student that the student will immediately be able to use previously unfamiliar items in output after CAS is applied. Also, there is no attempt by students to try to remember the previously unfamiliar item.

The assumption is that when students are engaged, when input is compelling, and as unfamiliar items; i.e. words, phrases, and expressions are encountered in comprehensible contexts, they are gradually and firmly acquired.

Form-Focusing Supplementation

Form-Focusing Supplementation (FFS) is consistent with the Skill-Building Hypothesis and has been referred to as “targeting.”

The goal of Form-Focusing Supplementation is conscious learning and mastery, and it is assumed that this can be accomplished in a short period of time, e.g. a few class periods plus homework. Also, the mastery is assumed to be so complete that the language learner is able to correctly use the item in output, on a written test, for written assignments, and even in unrehearsed speech.

FFS usually includes forced repetition in order to achieve a certain number of exposures to the unfamiliar aspect of language. “Forced” repetitions are not designed to aid comprehensibility or add interest to the message but are only meant to be a means to mastery. Natural language acquisition does not depend on forced repetition but relies on natural repetition provided by large amounts of comprehensible input.

FFS typically includes forced output, demands for production using aspects of language that have been consciously studied but have not yet been acquired. FFS usually includes correction of student output as well.

Correction is thought to help language learners modify their consciously learned rules.

Real World Supplementation

Real world supplementation is typically Comprehension-Aiding Supplementation. When we look up a word in a dictionary while reading in a second language, our usual goal is to make the text more comprehensible, not to master the unfamiliar word.

Works Cited

Krashen, S. (2003). *Explorations in Language Acquisition and Use: The Taipei Lectures*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.