The Effect of the Production of Modified Output on the Interlanguage of EFL Learners

Baqer Yaqubi
Assistant Professor,Mazandaran University
Sajedeh Rayati Damavandi
MA Student, Mazandaran University

Abstract

The comprehensible output hypothesis, introduced in a seminal paper by Swain (1985), posits that when learners experience communication difficulties, they will be pushed into making their output more precise, coherent, and accurate. Interaction among learners helps them to get their meanings across despite their incomplete knowledge of the target language. Assuming the significance of production in the process of language learning, the present study investigated how interaction leads to the production of modified output in second language learners. Besides, attempts were made to test the effects of output on the English learners' interlanguage modification as they were engaged in interaction with each other. A picture description task was employed to collect data from 16 participants reading literature at Mazandaran University in Iran. The participants were assigned to eight dyads, each comprising of a high and a low proficiency level learner such that the former had to draw a picture based on the instruction given orally by the latter. The interactions were audio-taped and analyzed for one or more occurrences of modified output production. The results revealed that the lower group learners could recognize gaps in their interlanguage which led them to modify their

output during interactions. These modifications involved not only lexical items and grammar but also in cases where the negotiations of meaning were needed. Moreover, the results of this study showed that the number of grammatical modifications generated by the task was conspicuously less frequent.

Keywords: Output hypothesis; Modified output; Noticing; Hypothesis testing; Metalinguistic function

1. Introduction

Krashen's (1977, 1978, 1982) monitor model which evolved in the late 1970s was essentially a framework put forward for acquiring a nonprimary language. The model basically distinguished two processes for the development of any nonprimary language. One called 'acquisition' is contended to be a strongly subconscious process having little to do with explicit accumulation of language-related knowledge, especially grammatical rules. 'Learning' is the other process in Krashen's terminology. It basically refers to the conscious development of grammatical rules. In authentic and fluent interaction, the model claims, L2 learners fall subconsciously back to their acquired system. Learning and learned rules are basically used to monitor or edit the language being used. This model also strongly claims that learning may not result in acquisition (Krashen, 1978; McLaughlin, 1987), a stance known as the *non-interface position* (Ellis, 2003, 2008). Krashen (1985) contended that language rules are largely acquired in a linearly predictable order through comprehensible input, that is, by understanding language tokens addressed to them, or by receiving comprehensible input. He further claimed that through comprehensible input the L2 learner can notice the gap in their IL and this noticing the gap helps them to acquire the appropriate L2 form(s).

Krashen's hypothesis inspired a flurry of empirical research about the role of input in second language learning leading to a universal acknowledgement in Second Language Acquisition that

language input of some kind (yet controversial) is essential for normal language learning. However, more recent researchers have viewed Krashen's theory with empirical skepticism. Krashen's hypothesis came to be seen as inadequate for not considering a significant role for language production. A strongly contrasting but complementary view to that of Krashen is the comprehensible output hypothesis, originally formulated by Swain. (Swain, 1985; Swain and Lapkin, 1995).

2. The Comprehensible Output Hypothesis

The comprehensible output hypothesis, in principle, postulate that contrary to Krashen's (1977, 1982, 1985) comprehensible input model, for learners to acquire a nonprimary language, opportunities to produce authentic, comprehensible output is necessary, as such opportunities themselves constitute a solid source of acquisition. Genuine conversational exchanges allow learners to be real language users. They also make it possible for them to extend what they now procedurally know and push them to produce tokens that are more precise, coherent, and appropriate. According to Swain, "producing the target language may be the trigger that forces the learner to pay closer attention to the means of expression needed in order to successfully convey his or her own intended meaning" (1985, p. 249). She argued that one important reason why immersion learners in Canada had displayed numerous grammatical errors in their L2 conversational exchanges was that they had comparatively fewer opportunities to engage in authentic face-to-face exchanges, a situation that might have prevented them+ from transcending their current level of L2 oral proficiency. Observational studies of interaction in French immersion classrooms have described typical examples of teacher-student interactions in which teachers did most of the talking and few of the utterances made by students were longer than a single clause (Allen *et al*, 1990; Swain, 1985). Such observations have led Swain to conclude that "comprehensible input," although invaluable to the acquisition process, is not sufficient though necessary for learners to fully develop their L2 proficiency. Specifically, she argues that

Yaqubi- Rayati damavandi

what students need is not only comprehensible input but also "comprehensible output" if they are to be both fluent and accurate in the target language

Since the output hypothesis was first proposed, Swain (1993, 1995) has extended the scope of the hypothesis and identified three of its intrinsically important functions. First, output is claimed to have a 'hypothesis-testing' function, meaning producing output during negotiation of meaning is potentially a way of testing one's hypothesis about the target language structure. Learners can test comprehensibility and linguistic well-formedness of their interlanguage (IL) against feedback obtained from their interlocutors in authentic conversational exchanges. Second, output may have a 'metalinguistic function'. It is claimed that "as learners reflect upon their own target language use, their output serves a metalinguistic function, enabling them to control and internalize linguistic knowledge" (Swain, 1995, p. 126). Put differently, output may cause learners to engage in more syntactic processing than is necessary for the comprehension of input (Swain and Lapkin, 2002). This syntactic processing may lead to modified or reprocessed output, a possible step toward language acquisition. Finally, output may serve a "noticing/triggering" (or consciousness-raising) role, i.e., in producing the target language (vocally or subvocally) learners ate intrinsically motivated to notice a gap between what they want to say and what they can say, leading them to recognize what they do not know, or know only partially, about the target language. This last function of output is consistent with the claim made by Schmidt and Frota (1986) that "a second language learner will begin to acquire the target like form if and only if it is present in comprehended input and 'noticed' in the normal sense of the word, that is consciously" (p. 311). The role of output here is proposed to facilitate the process of noticing of both problems in one's IL and the relevant features in the input. This noticing will then stimulate the processes of language acquisition.

It is important to note that Swain does not claim that output is the only source of L2 acquisition. Her claim, rather, is that output can under favorable conditions promote language acquisition by

allowing learners to recognize problems in their IL capabilities. Recognition of problems may occur because of either internal feedback (the process of producing output may prompt syntactic processing of language, not just semantic or pragmatic processing, which is often invoked in processing language for the purpose of comprehension) or external feedback (feedback obtained from interlocutors, teachers, etc., which informs the learners as to the well-formedness of their IL production). This recognition of problems is believed to prompt learners to generate alternatives by re-examining their knowledge, assessing alternatives, applying existing knowledge to known contexts or new contexts, and then using the resulting knowledge. Alternatively, recognition of problems through output may prompt learners to seek out relevant input with more focused attention (Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

There have been many empirical research studies investigating Swain's arguments for the comprehensible output hypothesis. Arguing that Swain seminal theoretical position was largely grounded in quantitative data and 'lacked empirical grounding', Pica (1988) investigated how non-native speakers (NNSs) adjusted their interlanguage output to a native speaker's (NS) triggers. The data consisted of 10, 1 hour long, transcribed audiotapes of 10 English NNSs of low-level proficiency interacting with an experienced ESL teacher. The different topics discussed included issues related both to the researcher's project and her participants' previous education, future plans, friends, and so forth. The results from the study revealed that despite the fact that NNSs were able to readjust their interlanguage utterances and make them more target-like, such modifications were infrequent. For example, from among the 65 one-signal interactions, only 49 original interlanguage utterances were readjusted by the NNSs, of which thirty-four (69%) were self-initiated, 15 were mere repetition of the NS's contribution, and 16 (25%) were left intact. Pica reports that of the 34 responses made by the NNSs, 31 (91%) of the readjusted forms showed a progress towards L1 norms. In a similar study Pica et al. (1989) also provided empirical support for Swain's (1985) comprehensible output hypothesis.

Yaqubi- Rayati damavandi

In a small-scale study using communication tasks, Nobuyoshi and Ellis (1993) investigated how pushing learners to produce more accurate output could contribute to their language acquisition. Participants were six adult Japanese learners who performed two focused communication tasks a week apart. The tasks methodologically pushed the learners to produce past tense forms. Nobuyoshi and Ellis found that when the teacher through clarification requests pushed the learners to modify their ill-formed interlanguage utterances toward more target-like production, the learners could successfully make self-correct both immediately and overtime.

Van den Branden (1997) investigated whether negotiation generated from performing a two-way exchange task pushed learners to modify their interlanguage production, and whether the interactionally modified output had any delayed effect on their output in later conversational exchanges. The participants in his quasi-experimental design were three groups of 16 school pupils. The participants had to describe orally drawings to their interlocutors so as to solve a murder case. The researcher found that output modifications made during negotiations had delayed effects on learners subsequent output production. The result of the study also showed that dyads in peer interaction condition push each other to produce high-quality output.

Shehadeh (1999) explored the ability of NNSs to produce modified comprehensible output in response to self-initiated and other-initiated triggers in both NS-NNS and NNS-NNS interactions on two tasks. In the picture-dictation task, an NNS had to describe a picture to a partner (NNS or NS) who in turn had to reproduce the picture as closely as possible. In the opinion- exchange task, participants had to exchange opinions on about a newspaper article. Data were collected from 8 NSs and 24 NNSs of English. The researcher found that most repairs were self-initiated, however, in NSS-NSS exchanges there was a noticeable predilection toward other-initiations.

The studies reviewed in this section investigated the role of modified output and its functions in language learning. Despite the

studies mentioned above, there are few research studies conducted in the area of comprehensible output and modified output in EFL (English as a foreign language) learning setting, a point acknowledged by Shehadeh (1999). Besides, this is particularly of significance in EFL settings where language learning is almost entirely a function of the interactions between EFL learners. Therefore, further research in such contexts might lead to a better understanding and stronger claims about the comprehensible output hypothesis.

This study extends previous research by investigating how interaction between EFL learners of different proficiency levels might lead the learners to test out hypothesis about the target language. Further, it aimed to investigate whether in such interactions the feedback and the external sources provided by a more proficient participant leads the less proficient learner to recognize a gap in the IL and as a result produce more comprehensible output. Based on the previous discussion, the following research questions have been put forward:

1. Does interaction between EFL learners with different language proficiency levels result in the recognition of a gap in the interlanguage of the learner with lower proficiency level?
2. Does the recognition of a gap lead the lower proficiency learner to produce modified output?

3. Methodology
The participants in this study consisted of 16 undergraduate EFL learners reading literature at Mazandaran University. They were assigned to two groups, with eight learners in each. The first group representing the high-proficiency (HP) learners consisted of eight senior students. The eight low-proficiency (LP) level participants were selected from among freshmen students. Out of the 16 participants 14 were female and 2 male students. All participants were between 18 to 23 years of age. They were all native speakers of Persian reading literature. In order to select the low-proficiency

level participants, a standard version of the TOEFL test was administered to a group of freshmen students. Based on the descriptive statistical analyses students who scored between the mean and two standard deviations below the mean (i.e., 55-30) were considered as the low group. However, the criterion for choosing high proficiency students was different. The researchers consulted with their colleagues to choose proficient undergraduate students. The proficiency of the candidates was further validated by obtaining their grand-point averages from the faculty's registrar office. The information, indeed, indicated that the participants were among the top students.

4. Materials

To address the research questions, a picture was chosen to be described by the low proficiency participant. The picture was chosen from a language teaching book series, named "Let's Go", the starter book (Nakata, 2000). The picture displayed a scene in which a girl is on a picnic in a park with two cats and some food near her. The picture was carefully selected so as to contain clear, easily recognizable features for description and also to be in accordance with the EFL learners' level of proficiency in English.

5. Procedure

To obtain data, participants were randomly assigned into eight dyads, each included one participant from the low-proficiency and one from the high-proficiency group. The procedure consisted of separate sessions in which the low proficiency learner described the picture to be reproduced as accurately as possible by higher proficiency participant. All interactions were tape recorded. To ensure that the participants in this study are well aware of what they should do, the researcher explained to them the task in detail prior to the session. Also one of the researchers was present during the enactment of the activity for two reasons. The first reason was to ensure that the interactants did not use their mother-tongue for conveying the intended message. The second was based on an earlier pilot study which clearly indicated that low-proficiency

students tended to skip describing the parts over which they did not have sufficient linguistic knowledge. Therefore, the researcher had to remind them of those neglected parts. Also the low-proficiency participant had to be reminded to pause at intervals so that the reproducer had enough time to draw the described episodes. Data collection lasted for about one full week.

5.1 Data analysis

After gathering the data, all the data were first closely studied and transcribed. The final transcription was to demonstrate all the linguistic features of the interactions. These linguistic features included all hesitation fillers, pauses, low voice quality, unintelligible language, contiguous utterances, interruptions, overlaps, clarification requests, repairs, simultaneous speech and overlaps. The transcript notations were based on Jefferson's (1979) model.

The classification of the data was based on the topics in the picture. The transcribed data revealed shared topics that the dyads tended to negotiate. Having identified the topics, episodes containing interactions between the dyads were extracted. Each episode included negotiations in which the lower-proficiency participant appealed to the higher-proficiency learner for feedback, either directly or indirectly. Altogether, 282 minutes of data was obtained, for which 139 episodes were identified having the characteristics mentioned. The episodes were divided into three types based on lexical correction, grammatical correction and negotiation of meaning. These types were identified based on the close inspection of the data and in the light of the research questions being investigated. Figure 1 shows the classification of the interactions.

Figure 1: Classification of topics of interactions.
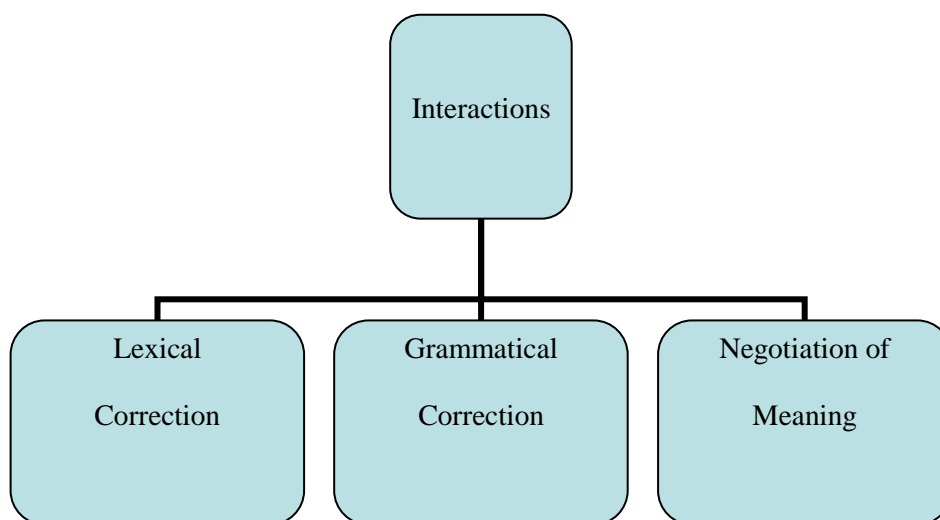
6. Results

Having identified the episodes, the frequency of lexical, grammatical corrections as well as negotiation of meaning was obtained. The frequency indicated that 49(35.2%) belonged to the first type, that is, the lexical interaction group. Out of a total 49 interactions on lexical items, 40(81.6%) were resolved and 9(18.3%) were unresolved. For grammatical correction, there were totally 42(30.2%) interactions out of which 34(80.9%) cases were unnoticed by the HP and 8(19%) were resolved. Finally, the number of interactions which lead to the negotiation of meaning were 48(34.5) in total. 41(85.4%) out of 47 were resolved and 7(14.5%) cases were ignored.

Table1: Frequency of interaction types

Interactive Outcomes	Lexical Items	Grammatical Items	Negotiation of Meaning
resolved	40(81.6%)	8(19%)	41(85.4%)
Unresolved	9(18.3%)	34(80.9%)	7(14.5%)
Total	49(100%)	42(100%)	48(100%)

As to the first research question: whether interactions between EFL learners with different language proficiency levels, result in the recognition of a gap in the interlanguage (IL) of the learner with lower proficiency level, the data from the eight dyads indicates that interaction between two learners with different proficiency levels does result in the recognition of a gap in the low proficiency learner's interlanguage. As shown in table 1 the items that are resolved are indications of cases in which a gap was recognized in the LP's interlanguage. By resolved is meant the LP tries to express a certain lexical item in their descriptions, but might not know a certain word or might use an alternative word that does not provide the meaning that is intended. The mismatch between the LP learner's production and interlanguage, leads the learner to recognize a gap. In other word, the LP tests the hypothesis that they had in mind about a certain item. If the hypothesis is not confirmed, it might lead to the recognition of a gap in the interlanguage. Therefore directly or indirectly asks help from the HP. The feedback that the HP learner provides facilitates the recognition of a gap. In some cases where the LP is not aware of the incorrect use of the word, the HP provides the correct word, hence helps the LP in recognizing the gap. Numerical evidence shows that in the interactions between the two participants on lexical items, 81.6% of the cases were noticed. (40 cases out of 49)

                      Yaqubi- Rayati damavandi

The second type focuses on interaction on form. Interactions on form are side-sequences to the main flow of conversation aimed at drawing the describer's attention to formal aspects of the description, and encouraging self-repair or, providing the correct form in a reformulated sentence by the HP. In this group also, there are cases which are indications of gap recognition. That is, there are instances in which the LP recognizes a problem in their production or the HP learner's feedback or correction help the LP to recognize a gap. However, a comparison between the first and the second group shows that the number of resolved lexical items is much higher than the number of resolved grammatical items. In the first type, that is the lexical group, 81.6% of the cases were resolved, while in the second type that is the grammar group only 19% of the cases was resolved. Although the number of cases resolved in the second t might seem not to be so large, it is an indication of recognizing a gap in the LP learner's IL.

The third type has to do with the negotiation of meaning. Negotiations of meaning are side-sequences to the main flow of conversation aimed at signaling and solving problems of message comprehensibility; that is, aimed at restoring mutual understanding. Like the first two types, in the third type which is related to interactions for negotiation of meaning, there are instances which were resolved. That is, out of the total 48 cases of interactions on negotiation of meaning, 41 cases were resolved. In other words, 85.4% of the interactions were resolved which can be an indication of the recognition of a gap through interaction between the participants. To restate the findings, in the interactions on lexical items 81.6%, grammatical items 19% and on interactions on negotiation of meaning 85.4% of cases lead to the LP learner to recognize a gap. This numerical evidence indicates that interactions between high proficiency and low proficiency learners, help the LP learner to recognize a gap in their interlanguage.

In addressing the first research question, it was argued that when an L2 learner produces an incomprehensible output, it might generate external feedback usually in the form of clarification request or explicit correction by the interlocutor. On some

occasions, explicit corrections or clarification requests may lead the learner to replace the incorrect form of the L2 with the correct one, by triggering his/her mental processes. In other cases, clarification requests and external feedback forces the learner to modify his/her production and make it more comprehensible or more target-like. The clarification request, on occasions, forces the L2 learners to modify their IL performance. The result is more modified comprehensible output produced by the L2 learners (Swain, 1998; Swain and Lapkin, 1995). The second research question in this study focuses on the production of modified output. It considers whether the recognition of a gap in the LP learner's IL, leads the LP learner to produce output that is modified? As discussed in the response to the first question, considerable number of interactions between the two participants led to the recognition of a gap in the IL. But this did not necessarily encourage the production of modified output in all cases. It merely facilitated the recognition of a gap. This took place especially in interactions about grammatical items. That is, when the learners are interacting on form, though the HP learner's feedback or even the LP learner's own production lead to the recognition of a gap, this did not guarantee the production of modified output. However in interactions on lexical items more cases of modified output production is observed. The reason behind this might be that the learners need the vocabulary items for further descriptions and conveying their message, but some grammatical problems might not cause a damage to expressing the meaning successfully and since the HP is higher than the LP in terms of language ability can understand the LP's message despite the grammatical deficiencies.

7. Discussion
Based on Interaction Hypothesis, Long (1983) Long proposed that conversational interactions, which occur in a variety of forms as interlocutors respond to their conversational partner's requests for clarification or confirmation, promote L2 learning even though the immediate purpose of such modifications in conversation is to make speech comprehensible. In an update of the Interaction Hypothesis,

Long (1996, pp. 451–452) stressed the facilitative role of implicit negative feedback in conversational interaction because such feedback draws learners' attention to mismatches between input and output. Some researchers have argued that learners benefit from such input only if they attend to the language forms they hear (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996). In conversation with native speakers, struggles for mutual comprehension typically result in modifications to both the language and the structure of the discourse itself (Hatch, 1978, 1983; Long, 1983, 1985; Long & Sato, 1983; Swain, 1985). These interactional modifications provide learners with implicit feedback on their own IL production (Long, 1996; Pica, 1994; Swain, 1995). This feedback comes at a time crucial to learning—when there is a mismatch between the input and the learner's IL grammar (Gass & Varonis, 1994; Long & Robinson, 1998). However, it should be mentioned that the above explanations are concerned about the negotiation between native speakers and non-native speakers, but results of the present study show that these explanations can be applicable to contexts in which the interactants are both non-native speakers with different proficiency levels. Hence, the result of the first question confirms the findings of research done in the field and is in line with Swain's and Long's claim concerning the output and interaction hypothesis. In the present study there were many instances which confirm Long's ideas. The following Extracts are instances of this case:

Extract 1
L: Yes, the bird on the tree.
H: there's a bird on the tree.
L: and home bird on the tree.
H: what is the home bird?
L: I live in (pause). We live in home. The bird live in -
H: =nest
L: yes, nest.

    In this extract the High proficiency learner could not figure out what the low proficiency learner means by home bird. Therefore,

asks the LP to clarify the point for her. Since the LP does not know the word for "nest", s/he tries to explain the word in the form of an example. Since the LP's lexical information is limited, s/he gets help from the word "home" which she knows the usage pretty well and tries to expand this to the bird. Therefore she says:" we live in a home, bird live in-". She pauses after the sentence" bird live in". The reason for this pause seems to be that she is waiting for the HP to provide the correct word. On the other hand, since the HP is in a higher status in terms of language ability, s/he understands the LP's intention from the explanations required and provides the intended word, that is, "nest".

So it can be seen that in a conversational interaction, conversations with more competent speakers can be a rich source of exposure to the target language (Philips 2003).
Recent reviews of conversational interaction studies (Pica, 1993, 1994) have suggested that learners attend to both message and form during negotiation and three functions of negotiation can be established: comprehension, opportunity for output, and feedback. In extract 2, attention to both message and form can be seen:

Extract 2
H: one tree?
L: yes, there is one. No, there is a amount of? no, there is a lot of tree?
H: Ah, there are a lot of trees?
L: yes and -the girl is sitting the near the one tree.

In this extract, the LP is not sure whether it is correct to use "a lot of ", for a large number of trees or not. Therefore she is in doubt to choose between "an amount of" or "a lot of" for trees. The question form that the LP uses can be considered as an indication of a situation that the LP is not sure about which word to use and indirectly requires the HP's assistance, or in other words, feedback. When the HP repeats the sentence in a correct form, this ensures the LP about the hypothesis that s/he had formed in her mind and as a result this will probably help to "consolidate the existing

knowledge". Considering the noticing principle, in the above extract, the doubt that the LP encounters might be an indication of a gap that the LP has noticed in her IL. Hence output can be considered as one of the triggers for noticing. In other words, the activity of producing the target language may prompt second language learners to consciously recognize some of their linguistic problems. This noticing may bring something to the attention of the L2 learners that they need to discover about the L2.

Empirical research within this framework has demonstrated that interaction that pushes learners to stretch their linguistic resources through negative feedback and opportunities to modify their output in response to feedback may facilitate L2 development of some linguistic forms.

The results of the present study diverge from previous studies mentioned above. The difference is that in the previous studies, the data revealed that the feedbacks, clarification requests and consequently the modified output that the learners produced were in most of the cases about syntactic rules and grammatical well-formedness of the production. Though, the lexical aspect was considered too but the main focus was on problems about grammar. Statistics from the present study show that out of the whole number of 139 episodes identified, 49 belonged to the lexical interaction group. Out of the total 49 interactions on lexical items, 40 were resolved and 9 were unresolved. In the case of the second group which the interactions were grammatical, there were totally 42 interactions out of which 34 cases were unnoticed by the HP and 8 were resolved.

Finally, the number of interactions which lead to the negotiation of meaning were 47 in total. 41 out of 47 were resolved and 7 cases were ignored.

As it can be seen in the case of lexical items, out of 49 cases 40 cases were resolved and 9 cases were unresolved by the HP participants. Similarly in the third group which is related to negotiation of meaning, out of the total number of interactions which were concerned with the negotiation of meaning, that is 47, 41 cases were resolved to and 7 cases were unresolved. This is

while in the first group that considers the grammatical aspect of the interactions, out of the total number of 42 cases, only 8 cases were resolved and 34 cases were unresolved. The following extracts are instances of this case:

Extract 3
L: I said there are the cloth. Now there is there are another thing on the cloth. There is a box
H: a box. Which side of the cloth? Do you see a box?
L: near the children. Left leg, near the left leg.
H: ok. It's a box. What kind of box is it? What do you put in these kinds of box?
L: There is a box and door of box is open. In the middle of box there is a - I think we get the-
H: [handle?
L:= handle may be. I think handle

   In this extract the HP learner is mainly concerned with the lexical items and is asking for certain information that clarifies the location and the kind of the box that the LP is explaining. The HP neglects the grammatical problems such as "there are the cloth" or "near the children" (instead of child). But in the last two lines the HP helps the LP with the word "handle" of a basket which the LP is not sure about. Hence the recognition of the IL of the LP learner does lead to the production of modified output, but the modification is more frequently about lexical item rather than grammatical points.

Extract 4:
L: Yeah. The girl has straight long hair that (pause) I think it's knit(0.3) With a beautiful ribbon on it.
H: well, aha.
L: long hair, knitted.
H: so her hair is woven, you mean? Ha
L: yes, woven, her hair is woven.

In this extract, the LP is trying to describe the way the girl's hair is fastened. She uses the word "knit" and then pauses to think about it or receive feedback from the HP. Since the HP understands the meaning of knit and is aware of what the LP's means by it, does not provide the word and just confirms the LP's utterance with saying "well, aha". But it seems that the LP is not sure whether she has put the meaning through or not, therefore, she repeats the word again. At this point the HP understands that the LP is trying to find out the suitable word for knit, she provides the word "woven" and the LP is satisfied and substitutes her choice with the word that the HP has provided.

Extract 5:
H: =long hair, let me draw long hair. Very long hair?
L: yes, but it's tight with a papion.
H: Aha, ok, tied with a ribbon, yes?
L: yes, with a ribbon.

In this extract the students are talking about the girl's hair in the picture. The LP does not know the word for "ribbon" and uses its Farsi equivalent. The HP notices that. Therefore, the HP indirectly uses the correct form of the lexical item, that is, "ribbon". Indeed the HP has reformulated the erroneous form of a lexical item that the LP has used incorrectly.

As the above statistics and the examples indicate there is a great difference between the first two groups and the third group in terms of the attention paid to them. In other words, results reveal that the interactants did not emphasize on grammatical accuracy. On the other hand they spent a lot of time and paid considerable attention to lexical items and negotiation of meaning. The reason for such difference might be due to different reasons. One reason may be that the participants are primarily concerned with message exchange; that is they were not concerned with the correctness of the formal aspects of the message and they merely attended to the main message and tried to convey it completely. In other words, probably from the learners' perspective the main purpose of

communication was providing the message fully to each other. Thus, neither the LP attempted to produce accurate production nor was the HP much sensitive to the grammatical problems in the LP's production.

Another possible reason for such a case might be that the grammatical problems that occurred in the LP's production were not that prominent to break down the communication and cause problem in message comprehension. This can be due to the fact that the low proficiency learner was not that low in terms of language proficiency to produce such bad-formed language that would break down the communication and cause misunderstanding. Since the primary focus was on the message, it seems that negotiation between the interlocutors takes place during the course of their interaction when either one signals with questions or comments that the other's message has not been successfully conveyed or fully comprehended.

8. Concluding Remarks

Findings of the present study suggest some positive effect of output in SLA. The results revealed the EFL learners recognize a gap in their IL and as a result, modify their output during interactions. These modifications were made for lexical and grammatical items and also in cases in which the negotiation of meaning took place. However, the number of grammatical items for which the interactions led to the modification and the correct use of language were far less than the other two cases, that is, lexicon and negotiation of meaning. In other words, learners pay more attention to conveying the intended message successfully rather than putting the message through accurately.

The final finding of the present study was that all the three functions of output that is, noticing, hypothesis testing, and metalinguistic function appear to be present in the data. Yet the metalinguistic function does not reveal itself so vividly and is not easily traceable as the other two functions due to its cognitive and impalpable nature. Based on such findings, it seems fairly wise, and conservative, to regard a strengthening role for output in L2

acquisition. In other words, it can not be claimed strongly that producing output in L2, directly, can lead to acquisition of new forms in L2. What we can say by now is that in the short-term, L2 production can lead to gaining mastery over some of the acquired L2 forms. Finally, it should be reemphasized that to be sure about the suggestions and findings about the output hypothesis we have to wait for the results of other studies in the field.

References

Allen, P., Swain, M., Harley, B., & Cummins, J. (1990). Aspects of classroom treatment: Toward a more comprehensive view of second language education. In B. Harley, P. Allen, J. Cummins, & M. Swain (Eds.), *The development of Second Language Proficiency* (pp. 57–81). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition (2nd Ed.)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gass, S. & Varonis, E. M. (1994). Input, interaction and second language production. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *16*, 283–302.

Gass, S. (1997). *Input, Interaction and Second Language Learner*. New Jersey:Lawrence Erlbum, Mahwah.

Hatch, E. (1978). Discourse analysis and second language acquisition. In E. Hatch (Ed.), *Second Language Acquisition: A Book of Readings*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Hatch, E.(1983). *Psycholinguistics: A Second Language Perspective*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Krashen, S. D. (1977). The monitor model for adult second language performance. In M. Burt, H. Dulay,& M. Finocchiaro (Eds.), *Viewpoints on English as a second language* (pp. 152–161). New York: Regents.

Krashen, S. (1978). Adult second language acquisition and learning: a review of theory and practice. In Gingras, R. (Ed.). *Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teachin*g. Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and Practices of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Krashen, S. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. London: Longman.

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

Long, M. H. (1985). Input and second language acquisition theory. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 377–393). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

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

Long, M., & Robinson, P. (1998). Focus on form: Theory, research, and practice. In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition* (pp. 15–41). New York: Cambridge University Press.

McLaughlin, B. (1987). *Theories of Second Language Learning. London*: Edward Arnold.

Nobuyoshi, J. & Ellis, R. (1993). Focused communication tasks and second language acquisition. *ELT Journal, 47,* 203-210.

Nakata, R. (2000). *Let's Go: Starter (student book).* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pica, T. (1988). Interlanguage adjustments as an outcome of NS-NNS negotiated interaction. *Language Learning 28 (1), 45-73.*

Yaqubi- Rayati damavandi

Pica, T., Holliday, L., Lewis, N., Morgenthaler, L., (1989). Comprehensible output as an outcome of linguistic demands on the learner. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition 11* (1), 63–90.

Pica, T. (1994). Research on negotiation: What does it reveal about second language learning conditions, processes and outcomes? *Language Learning, 44,* 493-527.

Schmidt, R. W. & Frota, S. N. (1986). Developing basic conversational ability in a second language: A case study of an adult learner of Portuguese. In Day, R. (Ed.), *Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Shehadeh, A., (1999). Non-native speakers' production of modified comprehensible output and second language learning. *Language Learning 49* (4), 627–675.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: some roles of comprehensible and comprehensible output in its development. In Gass &Madden (Eds.), *Input in Second Language Acquisition.* Rowley: Newbury house.

Swain, M. (1993). The output hypothesis: Just speaking and writing aren't enough. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 50,* 158-164.

Swain, M. (1995). Three functions of output in second language learning. In G. Cook & B. Seidhofer (Eds), *Principles and practice in applied linguistics* (pp.125-144). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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

Swain, M. & Lapkin, S. (1995). Problems in output and the cognitive processes they generate: A step towards second language learning. *Applied Linguistics, 16*(3), 371-391.

Swain, M. (2000). The output hypothesis and beyond: mediating acquisition through collaborative dialogue. In C. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning* (97–114). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (2002). Talking it through: two French immersion learners' response to reformulation. *International Journal of Educational Research, 37*, 285-304.

Van den Branden, K. (1997). Effects of negotiation on language learners' output. *Language Learning, 47*, 4, 589-636.