

## REVIEW OF INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY ACQUISITION UNDER DIFFERENT INPUT MODES

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**ABSTRACT:** *Vocabulary knowledge is essential to language development and use in second language acquisition. As an important part of foreign language learning, incidental vocabulary acquisition has been paid much attention by experts and scholars. In the process of incidental vocabulary acquisition, the main input methods include reading, listening, reading-while-listening and audio-visual input. Based on the experimental demonstration of the three input methods of incidental vocabulary acquisition, this study summarizes the research results of incidental vocabulary acquisition at home and abroad, and puts forward some suggestions for future research on incidental vocabulary acquisition.*

**KEY WORDS:** incidental vocabulary acquisition, reading, listening, reading-while-listening, audio-visual input.

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### INTRODUCTION

As the cornerstone of a language, the learning and accumulation of vocabulary plays a vital role in foreign language learners' ability to master another language in addition to their mother tongue. At present, for most learners, the main sources of vocabulary learning involve listening, speaking, reading, writing and other ways. Based on the above approaches, vocabulary acquisition can be divided into intentional learning and incidental acquisition. Intentional learning refers to the conscious and deliberate memorization of words with a clear purpose, while incidental vocabulary acquisition refers to the acquisition of related words unconsciously (Deng, 2019). This paper reviews the studies on incidental vocabulary acquisition under different input methods by searching and sorting out relevant researches.

#### Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition

In 1985, Nagy, Herman and Anderson put forward the concept of “Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition” (IVA) on the basis of studying children's mother tongue vocabulary, they proposed Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition refers to the learners in the process of some language activities (listening, speaking, reading and writing), focus on the understanding of meaning and words convey the information, in the process of inadvertently learned vocabulary (Nagy, W.E., Herman, P.A. & Anderson, 1985).

However, with the deepening of the research on incidental vocabulary acquisition, the academic circle has not yet formed a unified definition of the concept of incidental vocabulary acquisition. Relatively speaking, Laufer (2001) proposed the definition of this topic and received more acceptance. According to Laufer, compared with intentional learning, incidental vocabulary acquisition means that students do not pay attention to memorizing words when completing other learning tasks, but incidental vocabulary acquisition is a kind of unconscious acquisition. At the same time, Laufer pointed out that this kind of acquisition only stays at the superficial processing of vocabulary, such as memorizing the spelling form of vocabulary or knowing the part of speech only. Only after continuous consolidation and accumulation can the real purpose of vocabulary acquisition be achieved. Combined with Laufer incidental vocabulary acquisition related definitions, Li Hong (2005), Chang Le (2017) and others have proposed can be adopted by the experiments on incidental vocabulary acquisition and intentional learning to distinguish, the participants before the test has not been informed for a vocabulary test after test, for incidental vocabulary acquisition; However, if the relevant test after the experiment is informed in advance, it is intentional vocabulary learning.

Since Nagy first put forward the concept of incidental vocabulary acquisition, foreign studies on incidental vocabulary acquisition in second language have been continuously developing, and various theories on incidental vocabulary acquisition have become increasingly mature in the 1990s. Compared with foreign scholars research, however, the domestic research on incidental vocabulary acquisition started relatively late, in 1995, Zhao (1995) when it comes to reading readers don't rely only on the size of the vocabulary, also depend on him to search for the memory word content of agility, fluent readers decoding of language is a kind of unconscious behavior automatically, the automatic growth in vocabulary is essential in reading comprehension. In addition, in the 1990s, other scholars in China only made preliminary studies on incidental vocabulary acquisition from the perspective of translation and introduction of relevant literature. Since the 21st century, domestic experts and scholars have made a lot of research results in this field, but most of the research focuses on learners and their own factors in the promotion of incidental vocabulary acquisition by reading (Deng, 2019).

#### 1. Several main ways of incidental vocabulary acquisition and their research

Previous studies on incidental vocabulary acquisition by scholars are reviewed. The main input methods of incidental vocabulary acquisition include reading, listening, reading-while-listening and audio-visual input. The following is a summary of these studies.

### **Reading Input**

In the 1920s, scholars found that the key to language learning lies in vocabulary learning, and continuous learning of vocabulary helps improve reading skills. At the same time, the “reading method”, which trains and improves reading level by learning vocabulary, comes into being. Nation (2001) pointed out that a good acquisition effect requires learners to know at least 80% of the vocabulary in the process of reading, and Laufer (2001) also believed that learners should know at least 90% of the vocabulary in the reading materials to promote incidental vocabulary acquisition. However, the study of Nagy and Anderson (1985) found that the vocabulary learned through school teaching only accounted for a small part of students' vocabulary, and for most students, most of their vocabulary was learned by chance through reading, writing and other contexts. Through experiment study of high school English learners can realize the incidental vocabulary acquisition through natural reading, four stages of the experiment was carried out, respectively for the subjects' vocabulary, reading skills, as well as points on the stage of testing, the results show that compared with the traditional reading form, focusing on the significance of understanding the natural reading is more beneficial to incidental vocabulary acquisition. At the same time, learners' existing reading ability and vocabulary are also in direct proportion to the effect of incidental vocabulary acquisition in natural reading (Luo, 2014).

In addition, Horst (2005) found that through extensive reading of some simple and understandable materials, the subjects could learn half of the new words. However, with the increasing difficulty of reading materials, there are gaps between different learners in terms of their familiarity with the topics in the materials, their reserve vocabulary and foreign language reading comprehension ability, and the effects of incidental vocabulary acquisition will vary from person to person. On the whole, learners with large vocabulary have better lexical reasoning ability, and their reasoning ability and retention of target new words are better than those with small vocabulary (Chang, 2017).

### **Listening Input**

Wilkins (1973) proposed that "Without grammar, people cannot express more; Without words, people can't express anything." However, incidental vocabulary acquisition of the language, “collateral” (Laufer, B., & Hulstijn, j. H., 2001), is not the main goal of the listening tasks, has been less incidental vocabulary acquisition related research in the course of hearing, blend in listening teaching vocabulary learning in the classroom teaching is rare, and domestic research on vocabulary only account for 6% of the hearing research, compared to the other aspects of research, smaller proportion (Ke, 2014). In order to better explore whether listening input contributes to incidental vocabulary acquisition, Yao (2020) used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods to conduct experiments. Assuming that the increase of vocabulary is

beneficial to listening comprehension, this paper examines whether incorporating incidental vocabulary acquisition into listening class can improve the listening ability of subjects with weak foundation. Through interviews, observations and analysis of the subjects' performance data, it is finally concluded that incidental vocabulary acquisition can indeed be achieved in listening class, and classroom teaching integrating incidental vocabulary acquisition is also helpful to improve students' listening ability. In addition, Malone's (2018) study showed that if subjects could be supplemented with text during the listening process, they would have a better understanding effect on the incidental acquired vocabulary. To some extent, it also indirectly shows that the mixed input mode combining reading and listening will be more helpful to incidental vocabulary acquisition.

### **Reading-while-Listening Input**

Previous studies only explored the effects of reading input and listening input. However, with the development of science and technology, learners began to learn by listening while reading. They read the text while listening to the audio, and later studies also found that this learning model is really helpful to second language vocabulary acquisition. As early as 1992, Neuman and Koskinen found that reading while listening was more suitable for second language learning than reading. This is consistent with the dual coding theory put forward by psychologist Paivio: input through visual and auditory modes is more beneficial to incidental acquisition of second language vocabulary than single mode. A number of studies have explored RWL in various areas in L2 learning such as the development of listening skill (e.g., Chang, 2009; Chang & Millett, 2014), reading skill (e.g., Chang & Millett, 2015; Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2008), and learner perception (e.g., Mestres, Baró, & Garriga, 2019; Tragant & Vallbona, 2018). Studies conducted with adult learners have shown that RWL interventions led to improvements on a range of linguistics components, including listening fluency (Chang, 2009), vocabulary learning (Webb & Chang, 2015; Webb & Chang, 2017; Webb et al., 2013), listening comprehension (Chang, 2009), and reading rates and reading comprehension (Chang & Millett, 2015).

In general, the studies suggest that RWL is not only beneficial for a range of L2 tasks, but also that learners have positive attitudes towards this mode of instruction, for both adult (Brown et al., 2008; Chang, 2009; Chang & Millett, 2014) and young learners (Lightbown, Halter, White, & Horst, 2002; Tragant, Muñoz, & Spada, 2016; Tragant & Vallbona, 2018).

### **Audio-Visual Input**

As many scholars research on incidental vocabulary acquisition, video with subtitles also gradually is considered to be incidental learning new vocabulary. A valuable source

of input, by providing them the stimulation of verbal and nonverbal, help to improve the video viewer information processing ability, thus promote the incidental vocabulary acquisition (Paivio, A, 1991; Staehr, L.S. 2009).

At present, the effectiveness of watching subtitled videos on vocabulary acquisition has been widely studied by scholars. The experiments in this area are divided into two groups: the experimental group using short videos (up to 1 hour) and the experimental group widely exposed to real audio-visual materials. Studies from the first group presented conflicting results: although some subjects achieved new vocabulary (Yuksel, Dogan and Belgin Tanriverdi. 2009.; Peters, Elke and Stuart Webb. 2018), and some experiments have not found conclusive evidence of the effectiveness of watching real videos on vocabulary acquisition (Peters, Elke, Eva Heynen and Eva Puimege. 2016.; Sinyashina, Ekaterina. 2019). The second set of experiments focused on extensive exposure to real audiovisual material, all of which recorded the increase in vocabulary of participants after viewing the real video (Zarei, Abbas Ali. 2009.; Yeu-ting Liu and Andrew Graeme Tod, 2018). Although most empirical studies have shown that native language learners can acquire some incidental vocabulary under captioning video input, scholars still point out that incidental vocabulary learning is slow (Sokmen, Anita J. 2001.; Schmitt, Norbert. 2012). Based on this, they emphasize that incidental vocabulary acquisition under video input requires direct instructions, which can promote video viewers to pay attention to the new words deliberately, so as to better grasp the meaning and application of the vocabulary to be acquired (Schmitt, Norbert, 2007.; Jack, Ashlie. 2015.).

In order to further study the effectiveness of incidental vocabulary acquisition when watching subtitled real video material, Ekaterina Sinyashina made a hypothesis before the experiment: watching 5 hours of subtitled real video material can incidental learning new words in different aspects; After watching 5 hours of real video footage, the effect of incidental vocabulary acquisition was not as significant as that of consciously doing 3 vocabulary tasks during the 1 hour class. In the concrete experiment, Ekaterina Sinyashina compared and analyzed the incidental learning group and interested in learning group learning group and the control performance of the three tests in vocabulary knowledge, form, meaning and the specific use in a sentence, the experimental results show that watch five hours and real video subtitles can lead to different aspects of the incidental learning, and in this case, the result of the differences could be due to the design of experiments, such as the choice of target words and video materials, and other variables, such as the participants of video theme of the motives of proficiency, watch video and individual acquisition ability (Malone, Jonathan. 2018.; Yi-ru Chen and Yeu-ting Liu and Andrew Graeme Tod, 2018). At the same time, the results of the experiment also showed that watching the real video with 5 hours of

subtitles and learning the three different aspects of new words was not as effective as learning them intentionally, and doing the three vocabulary tasks in class was a better choice.

### **Current Situation of Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition in Second Language**

At present, one of the fundamental reasons for the unsatisfactory vocabulary teaching effect is that the teaching method is still dominated by a single mode, and learners are not interested in vocabulary learning. When teachers explain vocabulary, they often refer to the example sentences in the teaching reference or dictionary, and rely entirely on the mode of words, which makes learners in a passive state of acceptance and makes it difficult to stimulate their motivation of vocabulary acquisition. However, when information is presented in multiple modes, learners will receive information from different channels, and the capacity of working memory will be effectively increased, thus improving learning effectiveness. Therefore, how to realize multi-modal language input in classroom teaching, combine with multimedia forms such as sound, pictures, words, animation, film and television, and mobilize learners' hearing, vision, touch and other senses is the main problem of incidental vocabulary acquisition research.

Incidental vocabulary acquisition, as a complementary way to direct vocabulary learning, can't acquire a large amount of vocabulary knowledge at one time like direct vocabulary learning. However, incidental vocabulary acquisition also plays an important role in improving learners' vocabulary by accumulating meanings and parts of speech of new words encountered by students in their daily learning process. Therefore, teachers should consciously cultivate students' awareness of incidental vocabulary acquisition in the teaching process. On the basis of clarifying what teaching methods and teaching contents are more beneficial to students' incidental vocabulary acquisition, teachers can choose more targeted teaching methods and contents that are beneficial to students' vocabulary acquisition, so that students can acquire more vocabulary in a relatively relaxed environment. In the process of English learning after class, learners can choose their own interesting learning content which is more helpful to vocabulary acquisition, which is conducive to improving learners' learning motivation, increasing their interest and confidence in learning English, and then promoting English learning. In the process of English learning after class, learners can choose their own interesting learning content which is more helpful to vocabulary acquisition, which is conducive to improving learners' learning motivation, increasing their interest and confidence in learning English, and then promoting English learning.



## CONCLUSION

This study traces the development of the studies on incidental vocabulary acquisition by domestic and foreign scholars in recent years, and at the same time sorts out and analyzes the studies under three different input modes. Although there are certain incidental vocabulary acquisition effects under different input methods, many scholars' research and demonstration still have certain limitations due to the limitation of subjects' own vocabulary reserve and the familiarity of input material topics. Future research on incidental vocabulary acquisition should be appropriate to consider the current experiment with the target vocabulary and sample size, the target word frequency of participants, and some personal characteristics of the participants (such as their proficiency, vocabulary capacity, etc.) related to the limitations, such as through a formal vocabulary reserve test to distinguish and identify (Schmitt, 2001).

Finally, incidental vocabulary acquisition is a hot topic in the field of second language acquisition research in recent years. Researchers are mainly devoted to exploring the realization of incidental vocabulary acquisition and the factors that influence and promote incidental vocabulary acquisition. The existing researches on incidental vocabulary acquisition mainly focus on text input, and mainly focus on the acquisition of lexical meaning. The results of researchers' incidental vocabulary acquisition under different input modes are still controversial, so this problem deserves further study.

With the increasing emphasis on education in recent years, a single input mode can no longer meet the requirements of classroom learning. Educators should explore the effect of mixing several modes. For example, some scholars began to compare several input modes to grasp the overall optimization effect. However, reading relevant studies at home and abroad found that there is no final conclusion on which input mode is more beneficial to improve learning effect. In future research, we should continue to explore the comparative effect of several modes, so as to provide some guidance for second language classroom teaching.

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