

Noticing, Four Language Skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing)



Naoki SATAKE

Lecturer, MA, Ed.

Email : satake@gifu-nct.ac.jp

Research Fields English Language Teaching, Second Language Acquisition

Keywords Noticing, Listening, Writing, Autonomy

● Research Outline

Noticing and Writing

Producing output helps L2 learners consciously recognize areas where they lack knowledge and problems they face in speaking or writing their L2. In order to convert input into intake, they must first notice the gap between their interlanguage and the target language. In writing, compared with speaking, they can take a greater amount of time for production, and therefore, writing tasks may be more appropriate to assist their awareness of L2 problems. Writers can improve their sentences more carefully because they are able to consider, read, and re-read their words, usually without being pressed for time. In contrast, speakers must understand speech at the rate it is spoken and are typically expected to produce it quickly in response. Therefore, L2 writing classes can increase learner noticing by presenting opportunities for slower processing and production. The topic of ‘noticing and writing’ is gaining popularity, and some researchers have studied the relationship between relevant input and learners’ subsequent performance. For example, Qi and Lapkin (2001) investigated the noticing function through a reformulation task performed by two adult ESL learners who were native speakers of Mandarin. The study was divided into three stages. The participants each wrote an L2 text in response to a picture prompt (Stage 1). Afterwards, they were asked to think aloud while comparing their own draft with a reformulated version. This was followed by an immediate retrospective interview intended to clarify what they had noticed (Stage 2). Finally, they were given their original text and asked to revise it (Stage 3). The results showed that language-related noticing, that is, what the participants verbally reported in the think-aloud protocol, contributed to the improvement of their L2 writing. Producing output provided an opportunity for noticing. Moreover, it was also found that the quality of the participants’ noticing influenced their subsequent performance.

Hanaoka (2006), following Qi and Lapkin (2001), investigated the role of models in L2 writing. He employed independent native-speaker models of English and examined their effects on learner noticing and subsequent performance. The participants were 37 Japanese students at a women’s college. The investigation was carried out in four stages. First, participants were asked to write a narrative in response to a picture prompt, which gave them the opportunity to notice linguistic problems that arose in the process of producing output (Stage 1). They were then presented the opportunity to notice the gaps between their interlanguage forms and the target forms by comparing their original draft with independent speaker models (Stage 2). Next, they revised their original draft based on what they noticed (Stage 3) and revised the original text again after an interval of over two months (Stage 4). The participants’ noticing was measured by a means of note taking. The study found that the participants noticed a certain number of L2 problems but could not produce the desired L2 forms in their original output. However, they noticed solutions in the independent speaker models and incorporated these solutions into their revisions.

These studies clearly demonstrate that learners’ awareness of their language learning affects their subsequent performance. However, few studies to date have focused on high school students’ L2 writing. Furthermore, learners’ noticing should be examined more narrowly, phase by phase. For example, Iwanaka and Takatsuka (2010) attempted to clarify the role of noticing a hole, as explained later, which occurs when learners cannot encode what they intend to mean in the L2, with guided summarizing. They claimed that noticing a hole during an output activity helped learners incorporate the linguistic forms of the target language. However, the incorporation was analyzed based on the learners’ post-output. Post-output after experiments is strongly influenced by noticing the gap. Thus, the connection between learners’ noticing the gap and output with incorporation should be examined in greater detail.