

Input – Output – Interaction

1: Summary

In the article “Input – Output – Interaktion” by Kirsten Haastrup and Michael Svendsen Pedersen, the activities within language learning are looked upon with three models:

Input models, output models and interaction theory.

With input models, the main focus is on the language being learned by reading or listening to texts. The more texts and varied input, the students will have, the better they will be in their language acquisition. Studies showed, that by listening and reading but not speaking, students became just as good or even better than peers, who were being taught in a more communicatively way.

The input models are inspired by Stephen Krashen, who claimed that a comprehensible input is all that a student needs to learn a new language. It needs to be +1, which is a level higher than the students current level.

The input models will probably work best with younger students learning a new language from the beginning. People, who have been exposed to the target language, will not gain enough from this method, because they are used to work with it.

With output models, the main focus is that it is necessary for the student to produce language, because his/her output has a significant meaning in the language acquisition.

The students also have to be forced into speaking and writing **correctly** – not just speaking and writing. The students will be forced to look for their own mistakes and correct them by getting a greater knowledge of grammar from the teacher.

The output models are to be seen as a supplement to the input models. In the lower classes it is important to build up the students confidence to make them talk (input), which is why the output models are to be used in the higher classes.

With the interaction theory, the most important thing is that the students get involved with each other in pairs or in smaller groups and work with the language.

When students are communicating through tasks, studies show that they are using different language functions such as asking, disagreeing, requesting etc. They would probably not use these functions, if they were talking with a teacher because of a fear to fail.

It is also important that the teacher is able to rephrase questions or sentences in order to make them easier to understand, if the students don't understand the teacher. This is only possible, if the student and the teacher is communicating with each other and are negotiating the meaning, as Michael Long puts it.

With a task based pedagogy / interaction theory the students get input and produce output and by doing so develop their language acquisition through the hypothesis they are making.

The disadvantage is that the students may be making some wrong hypothesis without a correction from a teacher, which will turn into bad habits or errors that will be difficult to get rid of. Because of this it is important that the teacher pays attention to the students work and correct their mistakes.

2: How to work with language acquisition

As it states in the article, most young learners in the Danish Folkeskole are used to the English language from a very early stage. Given their knowledge and a likely daily-based use of the language the input models will not be adaptable for an entire lesson in the 4.-6. grade, which will be my focus in this section.

However, it is important for the teacher not to make the mistake of thinking, that all students are used to the English language via Youtube, online gaming, movies, songs etc.

Having this in mind, it would be a good idea to combine the three models in every class.

A way of this could be for the teacher to begin the lesson by reading out loud a piece of text to the students, while they are looking at the same text (*input model*). The teacher can also take some breaks during the reading part to talk about strange words or phrases. By reading out loud, the students will hear the correct pronunciation of the words to be used later in the lesson, and by asking questions the teacher will target the students, who are comfortable with the language already and therefore more willing to speak.

After this, the teacher have planned some questions for the text, that the students are to answer in pairs or small groups (*interaction theory*). When they are working in pairs, they should be matched

with a partner that is at the same level or +/-1 to make sure that everyone is being met with a partner they can work with in a comfortable way. The pairs could be permanent for a short or long time of work, so that the students are as comfortable with this way of working as possible.

When the questions have been answered, it is time for a plenum talk where the teacher gets the chance to hear, what the students have talked about – and HOW they have used the language (Output model). In this activity the teacher gets to hear if the students have made and used some wrong hypothesis about the language, and the teacher can use this information to do a grammar task, either in this lesson or the next one to make up for the wrong hypothesis, the students have made.

If a lesson is based on all the three models, the students will get the chance to listen to the language, speak the language and be corrected in the eventual mistakes / wrong hypothesis they have made.

3: My reflections

I think that the article holds several good ideas and reflections on how to create a language lesson that will enhance the level of the students. It is interesting to combine the theory with the practical element of teaching, and if the teacher is aware of the different learning theories, he/she will be able to connect with most of the students in a more efficient way.

It is always a difficult task to make sure that even the weakest or the strongest students gets a chance to be heard and developed in every lesson, but this is why the thoughts of the interaction theory is important to have in mind.

I also think that with the newest pedagogical and didactical way of thinking it is important. These give the students as many chances to speak and use the language instead of doing what the input model states; that the students are being communicatively competent only by listening to and reading the language. This is way I would rather teach in a more interactive way than by how the input models state.

I don't think there is only one right way of teaching a foreign language. It is important that the teacher has in mind the many levels of the language that is in a classroom, but also that every student learns in their own way. Because of this, the teacher needs to use more than one learning strategy in every lesson to make sure, that as many students as possible get targeted.