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ER is Essential: A Theoretical and Empirical Rationale

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Common Claims for ER

- ❖ "completely indispensable"
- ❖ "most important improvement"
- ❖ "best-supported technique"
- ❖ Waring (2009), Nation (2013), Krashen (2003)

Claims

- ❖ Claims alone don't justify.
- ❖ ER is still not universally practiced.
 - ❖ Skeptics of ER are... skeptical.

How Can We Know?

- ❖ How can we know claims are true?
 - ❖ Start with theory.
 - ❖ Support with evidence.
 - ❖ Why italicize evidence?
 - ❖ Linguistics is not physics.

Define ER

- ❖ We use the acronym BEE.
 - ❖ Big
 - ❖ Easy
 - ❖ Enjoyable

No Theory?

- ❖ Angela Duckworth studies grit.
 - ❖ Supervisor: "You don't have a theory."
 - ❖ She made a theory of grit; now grit is a thing.
 - ❖ In her book *Grit* (2016), she says:
 - ❖ "A theory is an explanation. A theory takes a blizzard of facts and observations and explains, in the most basic terms, what the heck is going on."

Unified Theory

- ❖ Fuse many theories into one.
 - ❖ We can call it our unified theory.

Theories Fused

- ❖ With ER, we acquire language by understanding, retrieving, spacing, interleaving, and interactively noticing grammar and lexis in the big linguistic data of flow-compelling messages.
 - ❖ Now let's unpack each part.

Communication Hypothesis

- ❖ We acquire language by receiving and sending meaningful messages.
 - ❖ This is communicative language teaching.

Communication Hypothesis

- ❖ This hypothesis is supported by evidence (i.e., study abroad).
- ❖ ER is a communicative activity.
 - ❖ ER simulates the immersive activity of living in a world of events, characters, and stories.

The Input Hypothesis

- ❖ We acquire language by understanding messages.
 - ❖ Basis for TPR (Asher, 1969), TPR Storytelling (Marsh, 1998), Natural Approach (Terrell, 1977), Kanzi (Savage-Rumbaugh, 1996).
 - ❖ It's the basis for ER.
 - ❖ We cannot convert noise into acquisition.

The Big Data Hypothesis

- ❖ We statistically acquire language by exposure to big linguistic data.
 - ❖ "Language acquisition is driven by exposure to a massive amount of data, utterances that exhibit statistical regularities at many levels."
 - ❖ Seidenberg 2017.

The Big Data Hypothesis

- ❖ "There is **NO** clear relationship between the amount of extensive reading done and TOEIC score growth."
- ❖ (Carney, 2016, p. 83), emphasis mine
- ❖ Only 3 of Carney's subjects read over 300,000. They improved significantly.
- ❖ Point: Almost all his subjects did not do ER.

The Big Data Hypothesis

- ❖ Claim: big data starts at 300,000.
 - ❖ (Nishizawa, Yoshioka, & Fukada., 2010).
 - ❖ Less than 300,000 is not ER.
 - ❖ One million words is big data.

Retrieval

- ❖ The Retrieval Hypothesis:
 - ❖ We acquire language when we receptively and productively retrieve grammar and lexis.
 - ❖ ER facilitates receptive retrieval.

Spacing

- ❖ The Spaced Repetition Hypothesis:
 - ❖ We acquire language by interacting with grammar and lexis in repeated, spaced intervals.
 - ❖ ER optimizes spaced repetition of language.

Interleaving

- ❖ The Interleaving Hypothesis:
 - ❖ We acquire language when we interleave the retrieval of grammar and lexis.
 - ❖ ER optimizes the interleaving of language.

Retrieval, Spacing, & Interleaving

- ❖ As we understand stories, we receptively retrieve lexical and grammatical bits that are naturally spaced and interleaved.

Retrieval, Spacing, and Interleaving

- ❖ Bits are statistically spaced in texts so that receptive retrieval in reading promotes spaced repetition and interleaving.

Spacing & Interleaving

- ❖ Spacing and interleaving work differently with lower frequency grammar and lexis.
 - ❖ High frequency language is spaced and interleaved more than low frequency language.
 - ❖ *But the rich get richer. Lion, Tiger, Lynx.*

Compelling Input and Flow

- ❖ The input-flow hypothesis:
 - ❖ We acquire language by understanding compelling messages that foster flow experience.
 - ❖ *Krashen (2014) (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991)*

Compelling Input and Flow

- ❖ We may have questions about flow.
 - ❖ But flow is a factor that motivates reading.
 - ❖ *And nobody wants to teach classes or read books that kill flow.*

Noticing and Interaction

- ❖ We acquire language that we notice.
 - ❖ Schmidt (2001)
- ❖ We acquire language by interacting, which causes feedback and makes input more comprehensible.
 - ❖ Long (1983)

Noticing and Interaction

- ❖ Natural and enhanced noticing.
 - ❖ Noticing supplements our theory.
- ❖ Individuals can interact with texts.
 - ❖ Interaction supplements our theory.

Output

- ❖ We acquire language when we try to produce comprehensible output.
 - ❖ Swain (1985)
 - ❖ *Do we need output in a theory of ER?*
 - ❖ *It's in the communication hypothesis.*

Theories Fused

- ❖ UFCM
 - ❖ Understand flow-compelling messages.
- ❖ BD
 - ❖ Get big data through ER.
- ❖ IN
 - ❖ Interactively notice grammar and lexis.
- ❖ RSI
 - ❖ With retrieval, spacing, and interleaving

Theories Fused

- ❖ With ER, we acquire language by understanding, retrieving, spacing, interleaving, and interactively noticing grammar and lexis in the big linguistic data of flow-compelling messages.
 - ❖ *UFCM x BD x IN x RSI = Language Acquisition*

Theories Fused (short)

- ❖ With ER, we acquire language by understanding, retrieving, spacing, and interleaving grammar and lexis in the big linguistic data of flow-compelling messages.
- ❖ $UFCM \times BD \times RSI = \text{Language Acquisition}$

Conclusions

- ❖ Some may say this theorizing is an impractical mental exercise.
- ❖ We say it's a succinct summary and convincing grounds for doing ER.

Conclusions

- ❖ The linguistic benefits of big reading are theoretically and empirically strong.
- ❖ We can help people thrive by inspiring them to read big.

Thank You

- ❖ We welcome your suggestions and questions.
- ❖ For a copy of this talk visit www.ilinguist.net.
- ❖ Thank you!