

RESUMEN

One of the most debated topics in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has been how language input should be presented to the second language learner in the classroom. For example, some SLA researchers claim an approach that includes a focus on the grammatical form of the second language (L2) is best. In contrast, others contest that there is no place for a focus on grammar in the SLA classroom and it is meaningful communication that should be emphasized. This debate has recently been discussed in terms of focus on form vs. focus on meaning. If it is determined which type or combination of focus most profoundly contributes to learning, teachers could select a method that helps their students. Without a clear idea of what type or combination of focus is best, language teachers cannot be confident that they are using the most beneficial approach.

A recent trend in SLA has been the promotion of autonomous learning in self access centers (SACs). Autonomous learning puts more emphasis on the student to be responsible for his/her progress. SACs are language centers that provide learning resources and materials where students can be autonomous language learners. The SAC is a resource the learner can use independently to support classroom learning.

In the SAC context it is possible students' preferences may help to identify which type of material in a SAC is most useful. A SAC may be equipped with a lot of language learning material, but if none of it appeals to a student's preferences it may be less effective. The student may become frustrated and less motivated to learn.

As a result, the focus of the present Master's level thesis was to investigate students' preferences for form vs. meaning in a SAC (Self Access Center). The study was exploratory in nature and sought to examine what type of material was preferred by university students of English as a foreign language in a SAC. It was hoped that gaining data on their preferences would help to determine which type of material may be most appropriate in the SAC environment. The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data. Students' choices of form or meaning-focused exercises in a SAC were recorded. Qualitative data, in the form of subjects' SAC journal entries, and responses to a post interview on the type of activities preferred, were gathered and analyzed to help explain trends in the quantitative data.