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Exploring the relationship between the production of modified output and the acquisition of negation of adjectives in Japanese as a second language

**Hamilton Girls' High School
Masa Ogino**

The *output hypothesis* (Swain, 1985, 1993, 1995, 2005) has been used as a theoretical framework to investigate the relationship between modified output (i.e., learners' reformulation of their own utterances) and second language (L2) acquisition. The empirical evidence from individual studies, however, does not yet appear to confirm unequivocally that the production of modified output facilitates L2 acquisition.

Among a number of factors that could be attributed to the mixed results in previous research is how the impact of modified output on learner language is measured. The output hypothesis originated from attempts to address the issue of weak grammatical accuracy among students of Canadian French immersion programme and thus the accuracy of a targeted linguistic feature has been one of the most common measures (e.g., Takashima & Ellis, 1999). Another measure has been the analysis of interlanguage development (e.g., McDonough, 1991, 1995), which involves examining learner language in its own right rather than in relation to target language norms (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Use of both accuracy and interlanguage development could cover some of the issues that relate to each measure, but only a handful of interaction research studies (e.g., Spada & Lightbown, 1993) have employed both measures. Furthermore, there has been no research using both measures targeting the learning of Japanese as a second language.

This paper reports the results of a quasi-experimental study which investigated the impact of modified output on the acquisition of negation of adjectives in the non-past tense in Japanese within the framework of the output hypothesis. A total of 1,011 negations of adjectives were elicited from computer-administered oral production tasks by 28 learners of Japanese in a New Zealand university. While the control group was not given opportunities to produce modified output, the experimental group was given clarification requests, which could prompt the production of modified output. The use of target feature was analysed in terms of both accuracy and interlanguage development.

There were no statistically significant differences in gains in grammatical accuracy between the two groups, but some noticeable differences in interlanguage development were observed between them. The results suggest that production of modified output produced in response to clarification requests facilitated the progress of interlanguage development towards targetlike use even when its immediate impact on grammatical accuracy may not be observed. The findings of the study lend partial support to the claim of the output hypothesis.