A STUDY OF THE COMPONENTS OF THE INVOLVEMENT LOAD HYPOTHESIS: HOW INVOLVEMENT LOAD SHOULD BE ALLOCATED TO “SEARCH” AND “EVALUATION”

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A Study of the Components of the Involvement Load Hypothesis: How Involvement Load should be Allocated to “Search” and “Evaluation”

關於投入量假設的研究：如何分配“搜尋”和“評估”的投入量負荷

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Abstract

To examine the effectiveness of word-focused tasks in promoting incidental word learning, Laufer and Hulstijn proposed the Involvement Load Hypothesis (ILH) in 2001. It is a motivational-cognitive construct of involvement, consisting of three components: need, search and evaluation. The combination of degrees of prominence of these three factors constitutes the involvement load of a task and determines its effectiveness in promoting word learning. The greater the involvement load, the more effective the task is (Laufer and Hulstijn, 2001).

After identifying that the ILH needs re-examination on its allocation of involvement loads to search and evaluation, an experiment with five word-focused tasks was carried out with 274 advanced intermediate ESL learners. The subjects were divided into different groups with each group assigned different tasks. In addition to performing the task, some subjects reported their thinking processes either during or after the completion of the tasks. The groups which did not report their thinking processes were tested both immediately and one week later for their acquisition of the target words.

The results of the study give partial support to the ILH, as writing tasks are found to be significantly more effective than reading plus inferencing and reading
plus cloze exercises. However, results that are inconsistent with the ILH are also found. Reading plus dictionary consultation proves to be significantly more effective than reading plus inferencing and reading plus cloze exercises, even though they induce the same overall involvement load. Writing a composition is significantly more effective than writing sentences even though the same involvement load is induced. Such results are explained in terms of theories of the degree of elaboration, connectionist models and information organization. In terms of these results and explanations, an Optimal Involvement Load Hypothesis is proposed. It allocates two degrees of prominence of involvement load to “search” (moderate and strong) and three to “evaluation” (moderate, strong, and very strong). Compared to Laufer and Hulstijn’s (2001) ILH, the proposed hypothesis integrates a more comprehensive theoretical foundation, sets more explicit criteria for involvement load assignment and has more precise predictions about task effectiveness.
## Contents

List of Tables  \hspace{1cm}  x

List of Figures  \hspace{1cm}  xiv

Chapter 1  Introduction  \hspace{1cm}  1

Chapter 2  Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition  \hspace{1cm}  6

2.1  Introduction  \hspace{1cm}  6

2.2  Word Knowledge  \hspace{1cm}  7

\hspace{1cm}  2.2.1  Importance of Word Knowledge  \hspace{1cm}  7

\hspace{1cm}  2.2.2  Different Aspects of Word Knowledge  \hspace{1cm}  10

\hspace{1cm}  2.2.3  Measurement of Word Knowledge  \hspace{1cm}  13

2.3  Word Learning  \hspace{1cm}  16

\hspace{1cm}  2.3.1  Incremental Nature of Word Learning  \hspace{1cm}  16

\hspace{1cm}  2.3.2  Different Types of Word Learning  \hspace{1cm}  18

\hspace{1cm}  2.3.3  Word-Focused Tasks  \hspace{1cm}  24

2.4  Psycholinguistic Factors Influencing Word Learning  \hspace{1cm}  30

\hspace{1cm}  2.4.1  Motivation  \hspace{1cm}  30
Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction .................................................. 82
4.2 Research Questions ......................................... 83
4.3 Subjects ......................................................... 86
4.4 Experimental Design ......................................... 87
4.5 The Five Tasks ................................................ 90
  4.5.1 Design of the Five Tasks ................................. 91
  4.5.2 Involvement Loads of the Five Tasks .................. 104
  4.5.3 Materials for the Five Tasks ......................... 107
4.6 Task Effectiveness Measurement ............................ 118
  4.6.1 Format of the Modified Vocabulary Knowledge Scale 119
  4.6.2 Scoring Criteria for Word Meaning ................... 123
  4.6.3 Scoring Criteria for Original Sentences ............... 132
  4.6.4 Inter-Rating and Grouping of the Scores .............. 141
4.7 Self-Reporting Protocols ..................................... 142
  4.7.1 Think-aloud Protocols ................................ 143
  4.7.2 Retrospective Interview Protocols .................... 145
  4.7.3 Introspective Questionnaire Protocols ............... 147
  4.7.4 Data Handling Procedures .............................. 153
4.8 Conclusion .................................................... 155
Chapter 5  Results

5.1 Introduction ................................................................. 157
5.2 Overview of Results ..................................................... 158
5.3 Test of Normality ........................................................... 162
5.4 Test of Homogeneity of Variance ...................................... 164
5.5 Effectiveness in Promoting Word Learning ........................... 165
  5.5.1 Effectiveness of T1 (Dictionary Consultation) .............. 165
  5.5.2 Effectiveness of T2 (Inferencing) ................................. 167
  5.5.3 Effectiveness of T3 (Cloze) ........................................ 168
  5.5.4 Effectiveness of T4 (Sentences) ................................. 170
  5.5.5 Effectiveness of T5 (Composition) ............................. 172
5.6 Comparing Search via Dictionary and Inferencing ................. 174
  5.6.1 Effectiveness in Promoting Initial Learning (T1 vs. T2) ... 175
  5.6.2 Effectiveness in Promoting Retention (T1 vs. T2) .......... 176
5.7 Comparing Moderate and Strong Evaluation ........................ 178
  5.7.1 Effectiveness in Promoting Initial Learning (T3 vs. T4 vs. T5) 179
  5.7.2 Effectiveness in Promoting Retention (T3 vs. T4 vs. T5) ... 182
5.8 Comparing All the Five Tasks ........................................... 185
  5.8.1 Effectiveness in Promoting Initial Learning ................. 187
  5.8.2 Effectiveness in Promoting Retention .......................... 190
5.9 Comparison with the Previous Results ............................... 194
5.10 Conclusion ................................................................. 196

Chapter 6  Discussion .......................................................... 199
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Reallocating Involvement Loads</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1</td>
<td>Load Allocation of Search</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2</td>
<td>Load Allocation of Evaluation</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Evaluation-dominated Tasks</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.1</td>
<td>Chunking</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.2</td>
<td>Hierarchical Organization</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.3</td>
<td>The Optimal Evaluation Framework</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Search-dominated Tasks</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.1</td>
<td>Degree of Elaboration</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.2</td>
<td>Complexity of Connections</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.3</td>
<td>The Optimal Search Framework</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>The Optimal Involvement Load Hypothesis</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter 7 Implications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Theoretical Implications for Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Methodological Implications for Research on Vocabulary Acquisition</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Pedagogical Implications for Vocabulary Acquisition</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.1</td>
<td>Provision of Various Aspects of Word Knowledge</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.2</td>
<td>Benefits of Doing Writing Exercises</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 8  Conclusion and Limitations

Appendix

A. Materials Used in T1 (dictionary consultation) 274
B. Materials Used in T2 (Inferencing) 279
C. Materials Used in T3 (Cloze Exercise) 284
D. Materials Used in T4 (Sentence Writing) 288
E. Materials Used in T5 (Composition Writing) 290
F. Modified Vocabulary Levels Test for the Pilot study 292
G. Modified Vocabulary Knowledge Scale for the Posttests 294
H. Introspective Questionnaire for T1 (dictionary consultation) 295
I-i. Introspective Questionnaire for T2 (Inferencing) 296
I-ii. Introspective Questionnaire for T2 (Inferencing) (Revised Decision) 297
J-i. Introspective Questionnaire for T3 (Cloze Exercise) 298
J-ii. Introspective Questionnaire for T3 (Cloze Exercise) (Revised Decision) 299
K. Introspective Questionnaire for T4 (Sentence Writing) 300
L. Partial Results of the Questionnaire for T1 (dictionary consultation) 301

Bibliography 303
# List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Table Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Task-induced involvement load according to the ILH</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Allocation of subjects to tasks</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Sample reading comprehension question for T1 (dictionary consultation)</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Sample reading comprehension question for T2 (Inferencing)</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Summary of involvement loads for the five tasks</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Modified Vocabulary Levels Test</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Scoring criteria for word meanings given by subjects</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Core meanings of target words</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Types of answers and corresponding samples</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Scoring criteria for learner-generated sentences</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Types of grammatical mistakes relevant to target words</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>General structure of the comparisons</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics of the subjects’ scores</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Test of normality of the subjects’ scores in immediate posttest</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Test of normality of the subject scores in delayed posttest</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Test of homogeneity of variances of scores in immediate posttest</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.6 Test of homogeneity of variances of scores in delayed posttest . 165
5.7 Paired samples correlations (T1: dictionary consultation) . 166
5.8 Paired samples tests (T1: dictionary consultation) . 167
5.9 Paired samples correlations (T2: inferencing) . 168
5.10 Paired samples tests (T2: inferencing) . 169
5.11 Paired samples correlations (T3: cloze) . 170
5.12 Paired samples tests (T3: cloze) . 170
5.13 Paired samples correlations (T4: sentences) . 171
5.14 Paired samples tests (T4: sentences) . 172
5.15 Paired samples correlations (T5: composition) . 173
5.16 Paired samples tests (T5: composition) . 174
5.17 Independent samples test of the scores in immediate posttest (T1 vs. T2) . 175
5.18 Independent samples test of the scores in delayed posttest (T1 vs. T2) 177
5.19 Test of homogeneity of variances for scores in immediate posttest (T3 vs. T4 vs. T5) . 179
5.20 The one-way ANOVA of the subjects’ scores in immediate posttest (T3 vs. T4 vs. T5) . 180
5.21 The post hoc: multiple comparisons of scores in immediate posttest (T3 vs. T4 vs. T5) . 180
5.22 The homogeneous subsets in immediate posttest (T3 vs. T4 vs. T5) . 181
5.23 Test of homogeneity of variances for scores in delayed posttest (T3 vs. T4 vs. T5) . 183
6.7 Comparing the OSF and the search framework of the ILH (b) . . . . 248
6.8 Comparison between the OILH and the ILH . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 250
6.9 Task-induced involvement load according to the OILH . . . . . . . . 251
List of Figures

4.1 Schematic diagram of limitations of the ILH and research questions . 85
4.2 Sample format of the reading text for T1 (dictionary consultation) . 92
4.3 Sample format of the dictionary entry . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 94
4.4 Sample format of the reading text for T2 (Inferencing) . . . . . . 96
4.5 Sample format of the reading text for T3 (cloze exercise) . . . . . 99
4.6 Sample format of T4 (sentence writing) . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 101
4.7 Sample format of T5 (composition writing) . . . . . . . . . . . . . 103
4.8 Sample format of the familiarity scale . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 117
4.9 Folse’s (2006) Modified Vocabulary Knowledge Scale . . . . . . . 120
4.10 Format of the Modified Vocabulary Knowledge Scale . . . . . . . 121
5.1 Subject scores in the posttests . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 161
6.1 Chunks used by Subject 4.9 (sentence writing) . . . . . . . . . . . 217
6.2 Hierarchical organization used by Subject 5.5 (composition writing) . 221
6.3 Sample format of the dictionary entry . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 231