

# HOW EFFECTIVE IS SECOND LANGUAGE INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY LEARNING? A META-ANALYSIS



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## KEY TERMS

### Incidental vocabulary learning

It refers to vocabulary learning as a by-product of a meaning-focused task or learning without knowledge of a forthcoming test.

## WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM THIS SECONDARY RESEARCH?

The overall effectiveness of different modes of meaning-focused L2 input on incidental vocabulary learning and the extent to which the variables moderate the incidental vocabulary gains.

## WHAT EVIDENCE IS SUMMARISED?

24 studies

## HOW CAN I USE THE FINDINGS IN MY TEACHING?

- Teachers should see the value of L2 meaning-focused input on vocabulary learning.
- Teachers can optimise learners' vocabulary learning by identifying variables and making strategic material and pedagogical choices when providing meaning-focused input.
- Helping students to expand their vocabulary and improve their L2 proficiency can facilitate their incidental vocabulary learning.

## WHAT DOES IT FIND?

- The study reveals that though not as effective as intentional vocabulary learning, exposure to L2 meaning-focused input has large effects on vocabulary learning in both immediate and delayed post-tests.
- In terms of the modes of input, meaning-focused reading, listening, and reading while listening have medium to large effects whereas the effect of viewing appears to be much smaller.
- Learner characteristics, materials and activities, and methodological variables all affect learning gains.
- The more proficient the learners are, the more likely they can learn vocabulary incidentally.
- Narratives can provide more affordances than expository texts.
- Materials for L2 learners are more conducive for acquiring vocabulary than materials developed for L1 users.
- Learning over multiple sessions with intervals is more effective than learning in one session.

