

Chapter 3

Teaching : Input and Instruction

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We learned in chapter 2 how intake factors and intake processes interweave and interact with each other in as yet undetermined ways to convert parts of language input into learner intake.

Here we have seen a relationship between teaching strategies and learning outcome. Several studies have been conducted to investigate the role and relevance of instruction in the language classroom.

One the limitations of these studies is that they have focused on grammatical instruction rather than on any wider aspect of language teaching.

Morpheme studies:

These studies attempted to assess whether learning a language in classroom setting is different from learning a language in naturalist environments. They revealed that the acquisition / accuracy order for various grammatical morphemes like singular copula (,s /is) , plural auxiliary (are) , possessive (,s) etc. is more or less the same regardless of the learner's L1 background , age , and learning environment.

Does L2 instruction make any difference at all ?

Six studies showed a positive effect of instruction , three showed minor or no effect , and two were unclear.

Long concluded that formal instruction has positive effects on :

- A) L2 development processes
- B) The rate at which learners acquire the language
- C) Their ultimate level of attainment

3.1. Input modifications

It is agreed that language input has to be modified in order to make it available and accessible to the learner.

Name input modifications :

- a) Form-based input modifications
- b) Meaning -based input modifications
- c) Form - and - meaning -based input modifications

3.1.1. Form-based Input Modifications

Input modifications have been based on the formal or structural properties of the language related to grammatical forms or communicative functions.

Linguistic forms have been the driving force behind learning objectives, curriculum design, materials production, classroom procedures , and testing techniques.

The essence of formed -based input modifications , has not remained constant. The changing norms can best be captured by positing a **product-oriented version** and a **process-oriented version of form-based**

input modifications.

A product-oriented version : it treats grammar as a product that can be analyzed , codified , and presented. It related to the characteristics of grammar teaching as practiced during audiolingualism.

In this case , the learner was expected to observe the grammatical input , examine it , analyze it , imitate it , practice it , internalize it , use it ., but became increasingly clear that confining the learner to product-oriented , form based language input not only distorted the nature of the target language but also decreased the learner's potential to develop language knowledge/ability.

The process-oriented version of form based input modifications : it treats grammar as a network of systems to be interacted with rather than an objectified body of structures to be mastered. Instead of emphasizing memory, specific rules, and rule articulation, it focuses on understanding general principles, and operational experience. The input modifications advocated here are still form-based but not based on teaching grammatical structures...

Input enhancement:

It refers to consciousness-raising activities. From a pedagogic point of view , input enhancement serves the purpose of drawing the learner's explicit attention to grammatical features by such activities...

3.1.2. Meaning based Input modifications

Newmark (1970) argued that systematic attention to the grammatical form of utterances is neither a necessary condition nor a sufficient one for successful language learning. And that teaching particular utterances in context which provide meaning and usability to learners is both sufficient,, and necessary.

New mark asked language teachers to resist the great temptations to write new language-teaching textbooks reflecting the neat and precise grammatical analysis offered by transformational grammar.

He said that we should liberate language teaching from grammatical theory, and should teach the natural ue of language.

In another paper he confirmed that the important point is that the study of grammar as such is neither necessary nor sufficient for learning to use a language.

Newmark's argument formed one of the bases for an exclusively meaning-oriented input modification as exemplified in Krashen,s input hypothesis,

Several studied showed that even though learners exposed to meaning-based input modifications speak fluently , their speech is marked by numerous grammatical errors. In fact , there is little evidence to show that successful grammar construction can take place through meaning based input modifications.

3.1.3. Form and meaning based input modifications

In a study on the development of oral communicative skills Spada (1987) investigated the relationship between instructional differences and learning outcomes in three intermediate level classes of a communicatively based ESL programs.

Class A received primarily form-based instruction, and class B received both form-and meaning based instruction and class C received primarily meaning-based instruction.

Her finding revealed that Class B registered a significant improvement , and Classes A and C did not improve as much as Class B.

She concluded that neither form-based nor meaning-based instruction in itself is sufficient , but rather , both are required.

3.2. Interactional activities

The term interaction or negotiation or negotiated interaction generally refers to conversational exchanges that arise when participants try to accommodate potential or actual problems of

understanding , using strategies such as comprehension checks or clarification checks.

3.2.1. Interaction as a textual activity

Most L2 international studies treat interaction as a textual activity in which learners and their interlocutors modify their speech phonologically , lexically and syntactically in order to maximize chances of mutual understanding and minimize instances of communication breakdown.

3.2.2. Interaction as an Interpersonal activity

Unlike interaction as a textual activity that deals with conversational adjustments , interaction as an interpersonal activity deals with interpersonal communication. Classroom community is a minisociety nested within a larger society.

It has its own rules , regulations , and role relationships. Interaction in such a minisociety is essentially a social process involving , as Breen pointed out , all its participants in verbal and nonverbal interaction.

Interaction as an interpersonal activity has the potential to create a conducive atmosphere in which the other two interactional activities-textual and ideational- can flourish.

3.2.3. Interaction as an ideational activity

Both interaction as textual and interaction as interpersonal activities can provide only a limited perspective because they do not take into account the social , cultural , political , and historical processes and practices that shape language learning and teaching.

In other words , they both fail to recognize language as ideology. Language as Weeden (1997) stated , is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their social and political results defined and contested.

3.3. Content specifications

One of the essential components of any language teaching program is syllabus or curriculum, which specifies the what or the content of language learning and teaching.

The two terms are often used interchangeably although they may indicate a hierarchical relationship where curriculum refers broadly to all aspects of language policy , language planning , teaching methods and evaluation measures.

3.1.1. Syllabus characteristics

A well designed language teaching syllabus seeks mainly :

- a) To clarify the aims and objectives of learning and teaching
- b) To indicate the classroom procedures the teacher may wish to follow

According to Breen (2001) , any syllabus should provide the following :

- A clear framework of knowledge and capabilities
- Continuity and a sense of direction in classroom work for teacher and students
- A record for other teachers of what has been covered in the course
- A bases for evaluating students' progress
- A basis for evaluating the appropriateness of the course
- Content appropriateness

3.3.2. syllabus classifications

Wilkin (1976) proposed two broad classifications of syllabus:

- synthetic syllabus
- Analytic syllabus

In synthetic syllabus a language system

- a) can be analyzed into its smaller units of grammatical structures, lexical items , or functional categories.
- b) Classified in some manageable and useful way

c) Presented to the learner one by one for their understanding and assimilation

In the analytic syllabus , the language input is presented to the learner, not piece by piece , but in fairly large chunks. These chunks will not have any specific linguistic focus, instead , they will bring the learners,s attention to the communicative features of the language.