THE REALIZATION OF MORPHOSYNTAX, PRAGMATICS, PHONOLOGY, AND LEXICON IN VIVIAN'S CONTEXT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract. This research has found that he language and language learning theories in Vivian's classroom follow the communicative and cognitive/ interactionism approach. Vocabulary, pronunciation, morpho-syntax and pragmatics were learnt interactively in the classroom. Cognitive theory crucially considers learning language as a process, and interactionism views language as acquired when learners are involved in interaction. These approaches are finely exemplified in the classroom activities. Interactionist centralizes the role of input, interaction and output. Input and interaction are modified to make it comprehensible for the students. Noticing is central to input to be uptake. In Vivian's classroom, opportunity for output is provided for the students to exercise their emergent language. Furthermore, feedback is given to indicate learners' incorrect forms of the language, leading them to notice the form of language they need to work on. Knowing a word involves the identification of form, meaning, and use. In lexicon learning, it is important for teachers to the build semantic fields of the words. Attaining this, as Vivian showed, it is helpful to provide input with visual aids to enhance learners' conceptualization of a particular word.

Keywords: English language features, ELT, Teaching Aspects, Vivian's Teaching Model

Introduction

A language teacher can select various kind of language input to be taught in a classroom. In Vivian context, there are several observed features of language involving morphosyntax, pragmatics and phonology, with the emphasis on lexicon. The students are exposed to *healthy and unhealthy food*-related vocabulary. Furthermore, pragmatics is realized in *persuading* in the context of debate. Vivian taught the students how to make their points become convincing in a debate. Morphosyntax and pronunciation are realized in *comparative form* focus. The students are taught *adjective comparison* and their correct pronunciation. Besides, it is shown that the language was learnt in a meaningful situation. It took place in a comfortable environment that helps teaching learning to be effective. This situation supported her to provide input and output for the students. Meaningful learning takes place when "students have prior stored information so when new information is received it can then be subsumed by the stored information" (Brown, 2000, as cited in www.angelfire.com). In the classroom, the topic of *food* was meaningful for the students as they are capable of conceptualizing the topic since they expectedly have prior information about the topic. Also, the language was not taught isolation which removes the language from its context.

Cognitive theory focuses on the processing of language data-how language data is processed in sequential development. This approach recognizes that learning something new, including language includes a universal mechanism. Anderson (1980, as cited in Cook, 1993) points out that there are two stages involved in acquiring language:

declarative/controlled to procedural/automatic. In the Vivian context, the students began with declarative knowledge of a rule that she supplied. The students used this rule when they wanted to produce the language. To allow students to reach the automatic stage, Vivian encouraged the frequency of exercising with the rule in the form of repetition. It is expected that this processing allows learners to develop the ability to use TL without thinking.

Interactionism believes that learning language happen as language data interacts with the learners' internal language mechanisms. This approach necessitates the role of input, interaction and output. In Vivian's classroom, students were exposed to language data in which the teacher modified the input so that it was comprehensible. Then, the interaction occurred between the teacher and the students. This stage enabled Vivian to modify interactional structure to make unfamiliar input comprehensible. Later, output came from the students by which they produced the target language. At this point, the students were pushed to exercise with syntactic rules and thus produce their utterances accurately.

Literature Review

In general there are two extreme ways of conceptualizing the nature of language. The first is structuralist linguistics, which emphasizes language form and describes language as sets of sentences pattern composed of words and sounds (Block, 2003). The theory suggests that language is taught through memorization and practice of vocabulary and sentence patterns. Meanwhile, communicative approach was proposed to necessitate the communicative nature of language. Language is viewed as a social construct through which people achieve communicative purpose

Meanwhile, for input to be understandable, the factor that play role is the type of input appearing when an exchange between a learner and an interlocutor takes place. Krashen (1977, as cited in Boulima, 1999, p. 21) in his Comprehensible Input Hypothesis argues that in language acquisition, learners need to be exposed to comprehensible input. For him, learners can acquire the language when they are provided with language structure a "little beyond" the present state of the learners's language knowledge. It is useful to provide learners with challenging, but not overwhelming input.

Wesche (1994) identifies two types of registers that can enhance input comprehensibility. The first is a typical utterance expressed by a native speaker (NS) to non-native speaker (NNS), in which is known as "Foreigner Talk" (FT). He defines FT as a "simplified" speech used by a native speaker with a non-native speaker who lacks full understanding of the target language. FT helps learners to understand the utterances. FT is distinguished by systematic speech modification resulting in sentence structure and vocabulary simplification, clearer articulation, and modified discourse (Hatch, 1983, as cited in Boulima, 1999). Hatch further says that FT leads input to be comprehensible in several ways. For instance, longer pauses in providing clearer articulation aids learners to have more processing time and make it easy to indicate major constituent boundaries. Fewer contractions enable learners to recognize the full word form. In modified vocabulary, high-frequency use of vocabulary helps learners to indicate the topic easily. Fewer pronouns give learners clearer reference points. Gestures and pictures enhance learners understanding of lexical form class, features and vocabulary sets. Furthermore, using simple proportional syntax in syntactic modification makes utterances easily understood and analyzed by learners. Repetition and statement benefits learners as they

have more processing time to make syntactic form clearer for themselves. Native speakers' filling in the gap for learners' incomplete sentences provides learners with a model of syntax. From modified discourse, learners are aided by NS's correction offer which allows them to find out trouble the learners need to work on. Learners can sustain the conversation as NSs provide replies within their questions. Similarly, NS's tag questions help learners to identify the end of utterances and give them a response model.

Another register useful for input comprehensibility is called Language Teacher Talk (LTT). LTT is made by teachers to make their speech serve a short-term purpose such as maintaining communication by clarifying information and eliciting learners' responses (Chaudron, 1988, as cited in Boulima, 1999). It includes a language that accompanies exercises, explanation and classroom management (Krashen, 1981, as cited in Wesch, 1994). In general, LTT is marked with simplifications and information restructurings. Chaudron further mentions several features of LTT involving slower rate of speech, frequent and longer pauses which indicate extra planning, exaggerated and simplified pronunciation, more basic vocabulary, lower degree of subordination more frequent use of declarative statement than questions, and greater frequency of teacher-self repetition.

Research Methodology

In this research, the writer would like to employ qualitative research. It is conducted by observing and analyzing some language features, namely morphosyntax, pragmatics, phonology, and lexicon existent in Vivian'n context of language teaching. Furthermore, the writer will review Vivian's classroom activities on the basis of cognitive and interactive approaches to second language acquisition. The key theories from these approaches on language and language learning will be demonstrated. Yet, the research will give more attention to the theories around the input and interaction as well as output (IIO) taking place in the classroom. Later, the classroom activities that exemplify the relevant theories will be presented. Lastly, the writer will draw central points of discussion and link theory to practice as well as indicate the future directions on how the theory is linked to practice. Also, it will discuss problematic issues in relating theory to practice in teaching practice.

Research Findings and Discussion

1. Negotiation for Comprehensible input hypothesis

Capturing an inadequacy of input in language acquisition, Long (1983, as cited in Boulima, 1999) introduces the significance of a particular type of interaction contributing to L2 acquisition. He points out that modified interactional leads input to be comprehensible. While both modification of speech input and interaction have shared goal, Boulima (1999) says that as speech modification is not on its own sufficient to facilitate comprehension, NSs make interactional modification to scaffold L2 learners in conversation. In Negotiation of Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, Long reveals that modified speech in FT is not sufficient for acquiring the language by considering another element which is called *interactional modification*. This brings him to conclude that foreign discourse (FD) involves not only linguistic/ speech modification, but also interactional modification. FD itself is defined as the interactional characteristics of NS-NNS conversations and extended texts (Wesch 1994, p. 223). It mediates learners not only to understand the utterance, but also to engage in the conversation. Hatch (1975, as

cited in Wesch, 1994, p. 223) points out that speech modification often involves the incorporation of NS speech elements by learners. Wesche (1994) notes that interactional modification is characterized by self-other repetition, clarification request, confirmation check, expansion, and willingness to change the topic. On the basis of several research findings, Long concludes that interactional modification has been consistently observed and probably more important for comprehensible input.

2. Comprehensible Output Hypothesis

In addition to comprehensible input and interaction, output is seen to play an important role for learners to acquire L2. Swain (1985, as cited in Boulima, 1999) reveals that when output is not taken into account, input is not sufficient in language acquisition. Output can be defined as what learners say in the target language. Following the Input Interaction Output model, output allows learners to exercise rules of syntax that they have stored in short- term memory. Output pushes learners to talk and therefore they are forced to provide the correct form of language to make it understandable for the interlocutor. In Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, Swain indicates that while comprehensible input is needed to acquire semantic competence, comprehensible output is central for learners to attain grammatical competence. Moreover, according to Gass and Selinker (1994, as cited in the Study Guide, 2010, p. 4 topic 5), output gives learners the opportunity to test the language function including testing hypotheses about the structure and meaning of the TL, receiving important feedback, and developing automaticity in production. This leads to an understanding that input and output are of the same importance for learners in acquiring a new language.

3. The role of Feedback

Feedback is intended by a NS to inform a NNS that there is a gap between his interlanguage and the correct form of the target language. Feedback can be realized in two forms: positive and negative evidence. The former is seen as a model for learners to construct the language, and the latter is the deviant form of the learners' interlanguage that causes feedback to be given. Feedback also leads learners to notice the feature of language as interlocutors indicate their language deviance. Besides, native speakers' feedback can be in other forms such as explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition (Lightbown & Spada, as cited in the Study Guide, 2010, Topic 5, p. 7). Explicit correction occurs when NS clearly indicate an incorrect form of language and provide the correct one. NSs reformulate learners' utterance minus errors in recasting. Clarification requests indicate learners' incorrect forms by using, for example, *pardon*, *excuse me*, *say it again*. Feedback can be realized in metalinguistic feedback that indicates learners' grammatical deviance, while in repetition, NSs repeat what learners have said along with recasting and providing metalinguistic feedback. Furthermore, in elicitation NSs can give feedback in some ways such as completing their own utterances, asking NNSs to reformulate, and using direct questions.

4. Vocabulary as central input in learning language

Vocabulary is crucial for learners as it is a bridge through which the ideas are conveyed and realized in phonology and grammatical realization. Politzer (1978, as cited in the Study Guide, 2010) reports that errors in vocabulary are seen as the most serious. It is also revealed that lexical errors are the most common among learners and may interfere with communication. In vocabulary learning, understanding the semantic meaning is not

sufficient. Teachers are required to build semantic fields which dictionaries cannot provide. Learning semantic fields means students are informed about the relevant concept associated with a particular lexis. Nation (2001) shows that knowing a word includes recognizing its form, meaning and use. All these aspects are categorized into receptive and productive abilities. Research has shown that the former is more accessible for learner and the latter requires output from learners. Knowing word forms includes identification of sound and pronunciation, how the word looks like, spelling, recognizable parts and parts needed to express the meaning. Knowing meaning involves semantic meaning, the word that can be used to express this meaning, the concept included in the meaning, the word that can used to refer to this concept, and the word associations. Furthermore, knowing word use includes the identification of collocation (other lexis that comes with the word), constraint (where, when and how to use the word) and grammatical functions of the word (the pattern of words in which it occurs).

5. Classroom activities exemplifying SLA theories Supporting input noticing

In the classroom, there are some ways by which Vivian supported input noticing and uptake from the students. In the very early pat of the class, she provided the frame of the learning activities of what and how they were about to learn the language for the students. Also, she explained each components of the language learning to make them salient for the students. Furthermore, Vivian also aided the students to notice by writing the learning structure and learning components on the whiteboard. This especially helped the students who were more visually inclined to notice what they would learn. Such a learning structure which is provided in advance is useful since it allows the students to anticipate and activate their prior knowledge to a particular kind of language input, so they will readily comprehend the language data being exposed to them in the classroom.

In addition, Vivian generated the students' notice by giving the task demand, which involve requiring the students to find out typical words associated with food such as *fast food*, *heavy food*, *unhealthy food*, *fresh food*, etc. Later, Vivian provided descriptions of the items that gave new information or enhanced students' understanding of the items. This task was made to make those particular lexical items prominent and sure to be noticed by the students. Vivian also repeated certain features of the language, and increased her tone in pronouncing those features to make them salient. As well, she made interactional modification to support noticing by repairing students' incorrects form of the language which led them to pay more attention to that language form. Vivian also made a model of conversation in front of the class to highlight the use of comparative words such as *healthier*, *cheaper*, *less* and the way they were used in a sentence. By doing this, she could enhance the students' noticing the input since their attention was directed to the conversation model performed in front of the class.

6. Making input to be comprehensible for the students

In making comprehensible input, there are some efforts made by Vivian. This effort characterizes the register of Foreign Talk (FT) and Language teacher Talk (LTT) which is typically found in native and non-native speakers conversation (Foreign discourse). In her interaction with the students, Vivian modified her speech in several forms which made her speech more structure and targeted. Firstly, in terms of providing clearer articulation, she adjusted her speech to slower rate with longer pauses and gave utterances with minimum contraction and with exaggerated and simplified pronunciation. In vocabulary modification, Vivian used common vocabulary with less slang and idioms and fewer pronouns, which helped the students to understand the topic. She defined and

gave contextual information about less familiar vocabulary such as *cholesterol*, *soda* and *calorie*. Also, she used pictures depicting some fast food and home-cooked food to enhance their understanding of the features. In modifying the syntax, Vivian used short and simple sentences with frequent repetition and restatement. Sometimes, she modified the students' incorrect forms of the language and filled the gaps in the students' incomplete utterance. In her modified discourse, Vivian offered correction indicating the students' incorrect forms they had to work on.

7. Interactional modification for comprehensible input.

Vivian modified the interaction in order to make input comprehensible for the students. She used display question which showed her implicit intent. This is the question that the teacher has the answer which is intended to elicit response from the students (Hatch, 1983b, as cited in Wesche, 1994). She also used more questions for topic initiating-moves, more repetitions, clarification requests, question-and-answer strings and comprehension checks. She employed questions leading to further topics. Frequent repetition helped the learners to pay more attention to a particular feature. Through comprehension checks, she asked the students whether or not they had understood the material given. Furthermore, Vivian indicated the conversational frame such as "we have been talking about" and "now, I will talk about…", "well…", "now lets", "so". These utterances were aimed at emphasizing and giving the points to the learners of what they had learnt and what they would learn in the classroom. As well, they provided explicit cohesive clues allowing the students to follow the teacher's speech easily.

8. Providing opportunity for students' output

During the teaching, Vivian used the referential kind of language that allowed her and the students to exchange the information. This kind of language required output from the students. Equally, output was provided in the ways that the students were required to respond to the questions. She introduced a particular topic and encouraged the students to give their opinion. She also provided opportunity for the students to work in groups in which they were exposed to the input of their peer. Group discussion also enabled the students to produce output and receive potential feedback from their group members. Peer input and feedback are useful since as they make more talk and have similar repair strategies that automatically lead more feedback to be given in case of errors in the students' output.

In giving feedback, Vivian modeled a correct form of utterance such as in using correct adjective comparison form. To provide negative evidence, she most of the time used repetition, which was joined by clarification requests and direct questions. Repetition was used when the students' utterances could be organized into better-formed utterances. In her clarification requests, Vivian showed that the students' utterances were not fully understood because of their incomplete form and required them to complete them. In direct questions, she asked the students what they really meant by saying a particular expression. All of these feedback forms are a useful part of acquiring L2 as they allow the students to be made to realize the deviant form of the language they have used and to notice the correct form that the language teacher provides.

9. Supporting lexical items learning

As Vivian showed in her classroom, teachers can support learning the lexical items in some ways. Vivian aided lexical comprehensibility by providing the students with visually presented word forms. She presented the pictures of some kinds of food and

the students used the pictures to identify the meanings. Besides, she listed and showed vocabulary special to the topic. Teaching the vocabulary with visual aids would help learners with visual preference. Also, she helped the students to recognize the words' sound by pronouncing them correctly. These techniques to teach vocabulary will support learners to identify the meaning of words along with their relevant conceptual and associated meaning. For example, by looking at the picture, the students would identify meaning of unhealthy food as oily, least vegetables, too much sugar and fat.

Conclusion

The language and language learning theories in Vivian's classroom follow the communicative and cognitive/ interactionism approach. Vocabulary, pronunciation, morpho-syntax and pragmatics were learnt interactively in the classroom. Cognitive theory crucially considers learning language as a process, and interactionism views language as acquired when learners are involved in interaction. These approaches are finely exemplified in the classroom activities. Interactionist centralizes the role of input, interaction and output. Input and interaction are modified to make it comprehensible for the students. Noticing is central to input to be uptake. In Vivian's classroom, opportunity for output is provided for the students to exercise their emergent language. Furthermore, feedback is given to indicate learners' incorrect forms of the language, leading them to notice the form of language they need to work on. Knowing a word involves the identification of form, meaning, and use. In lexicon learning, it is important for teachers to the build semantic fields of the words. Attaining this, as Vivian showed, it is helpful to provide input with visual aids to enhance learners' conceptualization of a particular word.

The theory on feedback encourages teachers to provide feedback to students that make language errors. Nevertheless, sometimes it is difficult for teachers to do so as the given feedback, especially metalinguistics feedback, interrupts the students' ongoing communication whose focus is on the meaning. They also can perceive that giving feedback when a conversation is progressing can cause the language and the interaction become unnatural which are unlikely to be found social environment outside the classroom. In the future, teachers should be more informed about the advantages and disadvantages in providing metalinguistics feedback during an interaction and consider its effect on students' fluency in conversation.

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