

Observing Learning and Teaching in the SL Classroom. In Patsy Lightbown, et al. How Languages Are Learned - Chapter 5

- Some people believe that learning a 2nd language 'on the street' is more effective than learning in the classroom

Natural and Instructional Settings

- Natural acquisition is when learner is exposed to the language at work or in a social interaction
- Structural-based instructional environments is when the language is taught to a group of second or foreign language learners
 - ↳ focus on the language itself

- goal of teacher is for students to learn vocab and grammatical rules
- student goals differ: some to pass a test, others to use beyond the classroom
- Communicative, content-based, and task-based are for learners whose goal is to learn the language itself

- task-based and communicative: for general interest of the learner
- content-based: focus is on subject matter like history or math
 - ↳ emphasis on using the language rather than talking about the language.
 - ↳ success measured by ability to get things done

In natural acquisition settings:

- Language is not presented step by step
- Learners' errors are rarely corrected
- surrounded by language
- observes/participates in many different types of language events
- respond to questions or get info in target language

In structure-based instructional settings:

- Learning limited to a few hours a week
- feel pressured to speak or write perfectly in 2nd language
- Teacher's use native language to give instructions

- Classrooms differ in age, physical environment, time, principles, etc.

In communicative and content-based instruction, the emphasis is on the communication

- ↳ grammar only to clarify meaning

- limited amount of error correction from teacher
- Input is simplified and made comprehensible through context clues
- limited time for learning ← more group work
- different discourse like stories, pair- and group work, newspapers, help w/ meaning
- little pressure to perform at high accuracy → more emphasis on comprehension than on production

Observation Schemes

- teacher anticipates particular events and behaviors and makes note of them within preplanned framework
- differ in # of categories, focus on qualitative or quantitative descriptions, and if used throughout lesson

Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT)

- Part A: teaching practices in terms of content, focus, and organization of activity types

↳ observer can record if focus is on language form or meaning, if teacher or learner-centered, and student discussion choice

- Part B: specific aspects of the language produced by teachers and students

↳ ex: how much language students produce, questions they ask, how teachers respond to errors

Classroom Comparisons: Teacher-Student Interactions

Classroom A: A structure-based approach

I notice that the teacher gets easily frustrated and the focus is on what they learned in previous units

Classroom B: A communicative approach

- Teacher asks many questions to be engaged with students → talks to a variety of students

- make sure to focus on genuine questions, negotiation of meaning

Classroom Comparisons: Student-Student Interactions

Communication task A: Picture description

- Have limited vocabulary and struggle with communication but use gestures to fill in gaps

Communication task B: Jigsaw

- there is more negotiation, many grammatical errors, ask many genuine questions

} both focused on meaning

Corrective Feedback in the Classroom

- Study 1: Recasts in content-based classrooms

- Ray Lytle and Leila Ranta developed an observational scheme that describes different types of feedback teachers give on errors and how students respond (uptake)

- observed different types of corrective feedback

~ Explicit correction: explicit provision of the correct form

↳ ex: "Oh, you mean..."

~ Recasts: involve teachers reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance minus the error

↳ ex: 'You mean', 'You should say:'

~ Clarification request: student's utterance has been misunderstood by the teacher or that it's incorrect in some way that needs repetition or reformulation

↳ ex: 'What do you mean by...?'

~ Metalinguistic feedback - comments, info, or questions related to correctness of students' utterance w/o actually correcting error

↳ ex: 'Is it feminine?'

~ Elicitation: first teacher elicit completion of their own utterance (ex: 'It's a...'), second, teachers use questions to elicit correct forms (ex: how do we say x in English?), third, teachers occasionally ask students to reformulate their utterance

~ Repetition: teacher's repetition of student's erroneous utterance

↳ usually change tone to let student know error

- recasts used often, repetition used the least

↳ uptake least likely to occur, most likely after clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition

- students in content-based second language classrooms (emphasis on meaning) are less likely to notice recasts

· not all content teaching is necessarily good language teaching

Study 2: Recasts and Private Speech

· learners noticed recasts when they were provided by instructor, even if they don't lead to uptake

Study 3: Recasts and uptake

· most teachers' responses to learner errors came in recasts

Study 4: Constructive feedback in context

· learners produced significantly more errors in the communicative exchanges

· feedback most frequent in explicit language-focused exchanges

· learners modified their output most often within explicit language-focused exchanges

· learning goals and age affect reaction to feedback

Questions in the Classroom

· important in understanding how much students understand

Study 5: Teachers' questions in ESL classrooms

· Michael Long and Charlotte Seto studied differences b/w quantity of 'display' and 'information' questions

· teacher-learner interaction is greatly distorted version of its equivalent in the real world

· teachers encouraged to ask more genuine questions

Study 6: Scaffolding and display and referential questions

· scaffolding is a process in which a more knowledgeable speaker helps a less knowledgeable learner by providing assistance

Study 7: Open and Closed questions

· closed questions lead to one word answers

· students produce a greater quantity and quality of output after open questions

Study 8: Wait time

· amount of time the teacher pauses after asking question

↳ teachers typically don't give more than 2 seconds

· need to find balance b/w placing too much pressure on students to respond quickly and creating awkward silence

Ethnography

· describe classroom behaviors w/o a set of predetermined categories

↳ take notes b/w interactions

· involve qualitative studies → focus on social, cultural, and political realities and their impacts on learners' cognitive, linguistic, and social development

Study 9: Language in home and school

· difference in language values at home vs. at school

Study 10: Separation of second language learners in Primary Schools

· ESL students sat closer to teacher bc believed they needed more help

· reward from class 2x week

· repeating helped them communicate

Study 11: Sociopolitical change and foreign language Classroom discourse

Socio-political transformation impacts on classroom practice ultimately leads on 2nd language learning