

Can You Learn Language in Class?

Main Points

We can promote SLA through interaction, negotiating for meaning and creating comprehensible input ($i + 1$). In this process, we may or may not be ready to acquire some grammar points. We possess this readiness or teachability because we acquire grammar in sequences. As we acquire through $i + 1$, we can deliberately focus on grammar at the end (inductively) after using it in real communication, and lastly we can acquire language as we focus primarily on meaningful messages through content-based instruction.

Key Points

- Learning in class (or on our own) through:
 - (1) Interaction
 - (2) Teachability
 - (3) Grammar by the End
 - (4) Content-Based Instruction

Key Words

- teachability
- immersion
- recasts
- persistent errors
- task-based
- content-based
- interaction
- noticing
- predictable sequence

(1) Interaction

- The interaction hypothesis
 - Interact in conversation.
 - Negotiate for meaning.
 - Create comprehensible input.

(1) Interaction: Example

- T: What bugs you?
- S: It bug me to have...
- T: It bugs me (bugzz)...
- S: It bugs me when my brother hit me.
- T: Your brother hits you?
- S: Yes, he hit me.

(1) Interaction

- Task-Based Instruction
 - Example: Plan a night out.
 - In pairs, decide time, transportation, and place.
 - Give a reason to satisfy a doubter...
 - Learners need to negotiate to do the task.
 - As they negotiate, they acquire words and forms.

(1) Interaction: Summary

- Interaction can help in the short term.
 - It's harder to know about long term.
 - Recasts in pair work is helpful.
 - Teachers be careful that recasts are not missed.
 - Expert-novice pairs may be best.

(2) Teachability

- Teach based on developmental sequences.
 - Manfred Pienemann University of Sydney.
 - "teachability of language is constrained by what the learner is ready to acquire."
 - Know your students' level, (and know your level).
 - Teach what Ss are ready to learn (what you are ready for).

(2) Teachability

- This is hard to apply.
- We only know a few developmental sequences.
- Practically speaking, teachers be aware that...
 - Sometimes students aren't ready for a particular grammar point.
 - If you can't "get it," then come back to it later.

(3) Grammar by the End

- In our learners and in ourselves,
 - we may see persistent errors
 - A majority of students with same L1 may show similar errors.

(3) Grammar by the End

- The following approaches are good.
 - Task-based, comprehension-based, content-based, meaning focused, communicative approaches are crucial for SLA.
 - They help us acquire languages naturally.
 - But learners can still benefit form-focused instruction.
 - This is what "Grammar by the End" means.

(3) Grammar by the End

- We need some form-focused instruction.
- Students make mistakes.
 - Correct mistakes through feedback and instruction.
 - Noticing

(3) Grammar by the End

- Do communication and meaningful tasks.
 - Provide correction and feedback.
 - Problem: It doesn't always last.
 - Adverbs versus Questions (from reading p. 166)
 - It may last better with continued input.

(4) Content-Based Instruction

- Two-for-one
 - (1) Learn subject matter.
 - (2) Learn language.

(4) Content-Based

- French immersion programs in Canada
 - Students develop fluency.
 - High levels of listening comprehension
 - Confidence

(4) Content-Based

- French immersion programs in Canada
 - Failed to achieve some aspects of
 - advanced grammar and production
 - Rarely pushed to be more accurate

(4) Content-Based: Summary

- We increase exposure to language, and this creates
 - a genuine need to communicate

(4) Content-Based: Summary

- Motivates students
- They want to acquire language to understand content.
 - Works best with appropriate focus on form
 - especially at higher levels

Summary

- GT and ALM can work, but not for most people.
 - "Research has shown that learners do benefit considerably from communicative interaction and instruction that is meaning-based."
 - Lightbown and Spada
- In content-based programs, learners may tend not to develop some aspects of grammar and performance, so they may need some focus on form.

Summary

- Provide "appropriate" focus on form.
- Give "appropriate" corrective feedback.
- Do so through communicative and content-based instruction.
- Use Messages (content) that AFFECT students.
 - Appropriate Focus on Form in English Communicative Teaching.

Summary

- M-AFFECT is better than focusing only on
 - Comprehension
 - We do both fluency and accuracy

Summary

- It's not form over content.
- Nor is it content over form.
 - It is form and CONTENT.
 - Emphasis on using meaningful, task-based, content-based, and communicative content.
 - We still acquire languages by understanding messages. Input remains central.

Quizzes

- Did you take them?!