

Revisiting the Role of Input and Technique in Improving the Communicative Competency in Learners

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Abstract

Practice in communication engenders learning unconscious. The process of human interaction either with the learning material or with another human or both leads to the unconscious development of the target language and hence, the classroom learning atmosphere which gives the opportunity for learners to work together for a common goal will improve the communicative competency of learners. Many research findings show the ability of learners to acquire language if focus of learning is on meaning. This ability to improve the knowledge of lexicon, syntax and morphology while focusing on the meaning in interaction is the basis of immersion, content based and cooperative method of learning adopted in the second language learning.

Introduction

The basic concept underlying the group activities is the 'shared expertise' among the members of a group (Resnick 402) which is given emphasis in the cooperative learning and as a result of the structured grouping method or techniques followed, the benefit is made assured to the members to a greater extent. Nelson (qtd. in Aukrust) opines that social discourse provides many opportunities for the acquisition of meaning of words. Not only does the technique which is followed in the class play a role in aiding the learners' acquisition of vocabulary but also the input used for the learners.

Learners are never the recipients of input without any negotiations with the content in it. The 'control' which learners have with the aural and written input ensures their comprehension and the interactional modifications provide complexity and novelty' required to further their language acquisition without affecting the comprehension of meaning. Thus, input processing

demands the negotiated interaction from learners for comprehension and acquisition of meaning (qtd. in Sun).

Negotiation of meaning in the written or aural input plays a vital role in the acquisition of language in L1 and L2. Many studies have confirmed the stifling nature of simplified input in unconscious learning and the need for incomprehensible elements in the input for the acquisition. Ellis (qtd. in Freda) asserts that comprehensible input cannot 'guarantee' the improvement in the language of learners without any conscious effort.

The studies of Larsen and Freeman and Long (qtd. in Freda) highlight the learner's attempt at varying the pace in reading or re-reading for the written input questioning for clarification as in the case of aural input to understand. White (qtd. in Cross) argues that incomprehensible input is also 'vital' to second language learning for the acquisition of language. Pica et al (qtd. in Cross) confirms the fact with their study that 'Complex input' results in interaction without fail.

The pre modified input in its lexis, morphology and syntax to aid the comprehension of learners either in the simplified form or elaborated form can be utilised for the study to find out the effect of modifications on their communicative competency. Consequent upon the input modifications i.e., modifications made in the processing of input while interacting with other learners, they gain the knowledge of vocabulary and syntax unconsciously.

The review of literature for the chosen cooperative method of learning, Jigsaw technique and the nature of input on the communicative competency encourages the researcher to follow the Simple Factorial Design to revisit the effect of the method and the nature of input and to find out if any interaction effect is between the different nature of input and different methods of teaching on the acquisition of vocabulary of the learners.

Hypotheses

There is no significant difference in the average scores of the learners when exposed to the Lecture and Jigsaw method of instruction using simplified input. There is no significant difference in the average scores of the learners between their exposure to the Lecture method of instruction and the Jigsaw method of instruction using elaborated input.

Delimitation

The study was confined to the UG (Third year-English) learners of Bharathiar University Arts and Science, Valparai.

Sample

The Sample was selected from Bharathiar University Arts and Science College, Valparai where the researcher has been collecting the data.

Tool used for the study

Questions and opinionative on the new technique adopted were constructed and validated with the feedback from the students. Pre-test was conducted for assessing the entry level performance of learners. That assessment was utilized for forming blocks among the learners under three categories of Above Average, Average and below Average and these blocks, in turn, enabled the researcher to select sampling from them. Randomized block design was followed to examine the effectiveness of the input, simple or elaborate on improving the communicative competency of the learners.

Eighteen students were selected from the class of forty based on the performance of the learners in the pre-test. The design chosen was experimental (2 x 2 Simple Factorial Design) to know the effectiveness of both the versions used. The same group of learners and the same learning materials also were utilized for finding out the impact of the jigsaw technique employed.

To prepare the simplified version of the learning material, morphological and syntactical adjustments were made. Use of frequently used vocabulary, retention of fewer clauses, salient points of the topic, elimination of illustrative paragraphs with complicated syntaxes and hard words were the adjustments carried out to ensure the comprehension of the passage chosen.

To elaborate the learning material, some features were added to the text. Repetition, paraphrases, contextual clues and greater topic saliency were the features added to improve the comprehensibility. Both the simplified version of the learning material as well as the elaborated version of the same was divided into three segments and each segment was given to a member of each group when the effect of the chosen technique on the learners was studied.

All the students in the group were distributed the simplified version of the learning material first and lecture method, the conventional method of instruction was employed to make the learners understand the passage. Then, the elaborated version of the learning material was served for them. Questionnaires prepared to test the knowledge of words that they picked up from the particular passage were administered following the lecture in each session and assessment of the responses was carried out.

“The following days, the cooperative learning technique, Jigsaw method was employed for making the learners understand both the versions of learning material. Subsequently, tests were administered to assess the level of improvement in their acquisition of words”.

The data obtained is given in the table with row and column means.

-----	Simplified Learning material	Elaborated Learning Material	Row mean
Lecture method	5.6	5.5	5.5
Jigsaw Technique	3.8	4.7	4.30
Column Mean	4.7	5.14	-----

The means of different cells obtained represent the mean scores of the dependent variable, the acquisition of vocabulary and the column means are due to the main effect of the nature of input with no regard to the method of instruction. The row means are due to the effect of method of instruction without considering the nature of input used for the study.

Data Analysis

The collected Data were analysed by using Mean, Standard Deviation and ‘t’ test. Significance of difference between the mean scores of Lecture Method and Jigsaw Method using the simplified input with reference to the acquisition of vocabulary

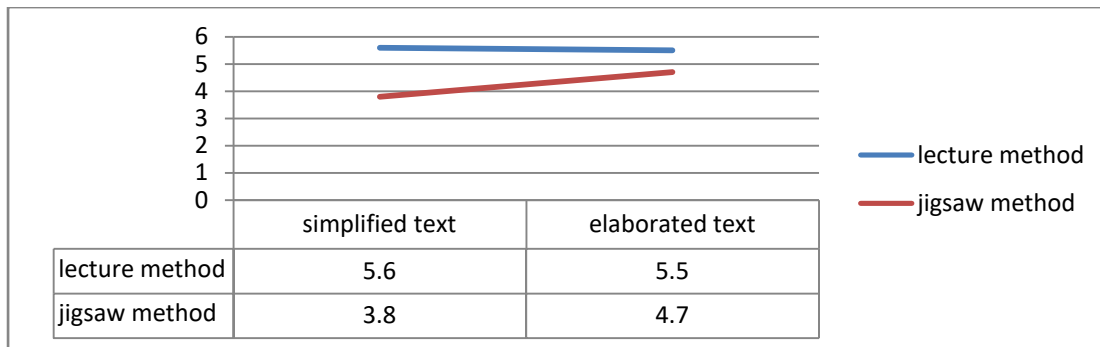
Test	Mean	SD	‘t’ Value
Lecturer method with simplified input	5.61	5.55	.0057
Jigsaw using simplified input	3.83	4.20	

The t test value is less than 0.05% level significance and therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is inferred from the above table that there is no significant relationship between the different types of instruction while using the simplified input. Significance of difference between the mean scores of Lecture Method and Jigsaw Method using the elaborated input with reference to the acquisition of vocabulary

Test	Mean	SD	‘t’ Value
Lecturer method with elaborated input	5.5	4.60	.1428
Jigsaw using elaborated input	4.77	4.14	

The t test value is more than 0.05% level of significance and therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. It is inferred from the above table that there is significant difference between the different methods of instruction while using the elaborated input.

The following graph shows how different methods of instructions and different nature of input are independent of each other.



Opinionative was constructed to know the agreed and disagreed status of the learners over the adoption of new cooperative method of instruction, jigsaw technique on the five point rating scale. The findings of the study confirm the advantage of adopting Jigsaw method of instruction and elaborated instructional materials for the improvement of vocabulary in learners.

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