

〈論 說〉

Language Teaching and Learning : Research Methodology 2

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Question :

Issues in the Theory and Practice of Language Teaching

[3] Behaviorism, Cognitivism and Acquisition

Many researchers in Japan have not been able to agree with Keith Johnson's / Keith Morrow's ideas about the sufficiency of comprehension to successful language acquisition. And several other powerful techniques have been tried in second language teaching and have prepared the way for the types of alternative language programme design or syllabus design, of which communicative teaching is an example in this article. However trying one of the curricular theories mentioned above with viewpoints about how language is learned from Behaviorism, Cognitivism and more recently, Second Language Acquisition, must have had an influence on some aspect of strong beliefs on language instruction.

In 1980, Keith Johnson and Morrow described a theory of conditioning behavior in humans, and that verbal behavior and language learning were brought about by conditioning.

Behaviorism influenced the language teaching of the day, and most notably the audio-lingual method. The audio-lingual method is still in use, but its influence has diminished - (Snyder, 1994).

In 1959, Noam Chomsky published his "Review of Verbal Behavior," a now legendary attack which many consider to be the defeat of behaviorism.-(Lyons 1970)

Chomsky argued that, "Language is not a form of behavior.....on the contrary, it is an intricate rule - based system and a large part of language acquisition is the learning of that system." ((Snyder, 1994))

By the way, I strongly feel that : additional issues raised in this research are whether a communicative approach based upon Keith Johnson and Morrow's theory is more effective than traditional methods and whether Keith Johnson and Morrow's approach results in more authentic language production for Japanese in Japan, because students use Japanese when they are outside of classroom.

Arguments surrounding Comprehensive Input

Japanese teachers' arguments about comprehensive input are a direct contradiction of the communicative approach which stresses on cognitive strategy as a basis for language study.

An important issue in theories of Second Language Acquisition is whether the learner's errors result from differences of gramatical structures between Japanese and English or are sometimes Developmental errors.

An often overlooked but important part of comprehensible input is that input hypothesis that can be defined as comprehensible input may depend on the level of development that students have in the second language. However, developmental stages may vary depending on students' motivation caused by the social psychology of language.

Johnson Keith questions whether the distinction between learned language and acquired language is a lasting one in the mind of the student. (Johnson.K. 'Communicative Approaches and Communicative processes', 1979)

And also he points out, that Learned language which is practiced does seem to become part of the acquired store even though it may be the case that only certain grammatical features are susceptible to such treatment. It has been suggested (by R.Ellis) that freer practice activities (communicative activities especially) may act as a switch which allows consciously learned language to transfer to the acquired one. (John K. 'Communicative Approaches and Communicative Processes', 1979)

Of course, we need to continue Communicative Approaches for no less

than one year, so that we may find out the connection between the efficiency of using larger parts or 'chunks' of language - we say "acquired language" and learned language.

By being repeatedly presented with good examples of language, students may see a difference of patterns clearly for themselves, and, with time and a learning environment, by the use of communicative activities we move a learner into a higher developmental level ; what is to be learned and how it is to be learned.

Swain's some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output is attractive :

Studies of the French Immersion program in Canada have led to the conclusion that comprehensible input may affect receptive language skills more than productive skills, and have concluded that communicative output is needed. (Swain, 1985)

Before leaving the discussion on communicative competence in second language learning and theoretical influences, it is worth observing that statistical hypothesis that :

"Communicative Teaching Method is better than traditional teaching methods in Japan".

The following groupings of learners show their language level of comprehension :

Every group is divided by 8 students and classroom procedures are below.

Group 1 (Predominantly concentrate on English grammar by functional approach)

Group 2 (English composition by functional approach)

Group 3 (English literatures ; Semantic syllabus by traditional approach)

Group 4 (reading & hearing by communicative approach)

Group 5 (Listening and speaking by language laboratory exercise)

M : Placement Test in May

S : The developmental Test in September

- (a) : reading comprehension
 (b) : grammatical comprehension
 (c) : composition competence
 (d) : communicative competence
 (e) : vocabulary

	(a)		(b)		(c)		(d)		(e)		Total	
	May	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	S
G 1	12.6	13.6	9.4	15.4	10.5	14.0	9.0	9.8	10.0	15.0	51.0	67.3
G 2	13.5	13.0	9.6	14.6	9.5	15.5	10.5	10.7	10.5	15.9	57.9	68.9
G 3	13.2	16.7	9.1	11.0	12.8	13.0	10.6	11.0	11.6	15.8	53.9	66.7
G 4	12.4	17.9	9.6	11.2	10.6	13.5	10.7	12.6	11.1	16.8	55.7	72.9
G 5	13.2	15.8	9.8	11.2	10.6	13.5	10.6	13.1	11.7	15.9	56.3	69.0

(4)Evaluation

The evaluation of this study does not have enough data for the purpose of the experimental research, but it is possible to discuss the value of this research and effects of an innovative approach to language education in Japan over more traditional approaches.

Audience; Who for?

J.Charles Anderson points out that "Who the evaluation is for is a key consideration at the planning stage. (J.Charles Anderson, "Evaluating Second Language Education", 1992)

The Evaluator: Who

Anderson and Scott address this issue, and make it clear that they believe:

"both insiders (to be conducted by someone from within the programme) and outsiders should be involved collaboratively in conducting evaluations, and this should be done at all stages in the process". (J.C. Anderson and A.Beretta, 1992)

However this is not totally acceptable because there are some sensitivities which cannot be revealed to outsiders.

This may perhaps given an impartial view, which is necessary, because this class is the particular experience for the communicative approach of this author who is a sort of sociologist to research small races in the world at a university.

Timing : When to evaluate

“If evaluation is left until the end of development, it loses any opportunities to inform and influence the nature of that development.”
(J.C.Anderson and A.Beretta, 1992)

We quite agree to this view: “A good project will build a good evaluation and questions from the beginning.”

And in this research, the author tried to begin the evaluation with the start of project. However it was quite difficult when to begin an evaluation once the project had begun, and the data was gathered after the project had finished.

As far as the settings of this evaluation are normal as to discuss the problem of classroom procedure in second language acquisition as soon as possible, discussion should be held in the circumstances including outsiders who may be willing to keep confidential of this experimental research, and disagreements should be resolved in discussion about what will be done, when and how, by whom and how the results will be dealt with.

In this case, the outsider, the sponsor, was not interested in discussing the details of an evaluation and so the data may not have the expected results :

Indeed, of course, what happened in this study was that communicative approaches in the second language class were introduced in order to have students improve developmental stages in second language acquisition under different conditions of programmed learning.

Some may choose to accept the evaluator's results, others to reject it. Some might choose to repeat those methods, while others might not be interested in such methods in Japan. Because, of course, it would be easier for educators to have students study abroad so that they may expect to develop their communicative competence.

Clearly there are many questions that need to be asked about the usefulness, and effectiveness of this evaluation.

The evaluation might only benefit the experiences of the evaluator, who is seeking to contribute to the teaching community by usefulness and innovation in the second language teaching community.

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