

LECTURE 7

Teachers' Contribution to CR Discourse

7.1. Teacher Talk (TT)

It is a potentially valuable source of comprehensible input to learners. It's essential for language acquisition (Krashen, 1981). The amount of it will depend on what one believes about the role of language input in acquisition.

It is the simplified language teachers use in order to talk to L2 learners; it is found to have or to contain the characteristics of 'foreigner talk'. The latter has been found to be very similar to 'caretaker-talk' (Ferguson, 1975). Specially, it is characterized by a slow rate of delivery, clear articulation, pauses, emphatic stress, exaggerated pronunciation, paraphrasing, substitution of lexical items by synonyms, omission, addition and replacement of syntactic features.

Teacher talk puts more emphasis on simplified input rather than on any extended verbal interaction between teachers and learners.

At least at the initial stages, such a talk was considered sufficient for classroom L2 development.

A well-known hypothesis: WHY? Krashen's input hypothesis. He emphasized the importance of simplified input which leads to the textual dimension of interaction.

Krashen (1985), '... humans acquire language in only one way – by understanding messages, or by receiving comprehensible input'.

Comprehensible input is the linguistic input containing structures that are a little bit beyond a learner's current level of competence.

Allwright and Bailey (1990; 1994), 'He called this type of input 'i+1', where the 'i' can represent the learner's current stage of interlanguage development and the '+1' designates that the input is challenging but not overwhelming the learners'.

Bowers (1980) identified six categories of teacher's verbal behaviour in the classroom:

1. Questioning and eliciting
2. Responding to students' contributions
3. Presenting and explaining

4. Organizing and giving instructions
5. Evaluating and correcting
6. 'sociating', establishing and maintaining CR rapport

Tsui (1995) claims that to increase comprehensibility of the input :

1. Use repetitions and paraphrases
2. Use simple conversation
3. Use situational role-play for the creation of what Krashen calls ' original dialogs' among students.

TT is:

1. Major way that teachers convey information to learners
2. One of the primary means of controlling learner's behaviour

For Allright and Bailey, in practice the ' i+1' concept is not operationalisable (i.e. we cannot define with confidence what 'i+1' consists of.

WHY ? Not all learners are at precisely the same stage in their development.

Cullen (1998) states that 'good' TT meant 'little' TT

WHY? Much TTT deprived students of opportunities to speak.

Allwright and Bailey observed content area subjects and language instruction CRs and found that teachers typically do between one half and three quarters of the talking.

Tsui (1995) observed English lessons in Hong Kong and found that 70% of CR talk consists of:

1. Teacher asking a question
2. Nominating a student to answer it
3. Teacher provides feedback to the learner's response

This is why Cullen (1998) claims that there should be ' a shift' in TT away from a concern with quantity towards a concern with quality.

'How much' TT is still important but there should be more emphasis on how effectively they are able to facilitate learning in CR through:

1. Questions they ask
2. Speech modifications when talking to students

3. The way they react to students' errors.

7.2. Teachers' Questions

For Chaudron (1988), questions constitute 20% to 40% of CR talk.

For Tsui, the type of question that the teacher asks effects the kind of response that students produce.

A. Open and closed question : Look at the question word used

For Barnes (1969, in Tsui):

- what ; when ; who ; where : factual questions
- how and why : reasoning questions

B. Display and referential questions

Tsui (1995), Long and Sato (1983) claim that display questions are ' Knowledge checking questions'; but referential queries even the teacher does not have an answer to (the emphasis on communication in language CR). Brock (1986 ; in Nunan), ' referential questions may increase the amount of speaking learners do in the classroom'.

Nunan and Cullen agree that CR interaction is characterised by:

1. Exclusive and excessive use of display questions
2. Most total exclusion of referential questions

Van Lier states that CR queries of whatever type are designed to get learners to produce language

Teacher Explanation

The role of the teacher is to make accessible to students.

1. Procedural explanation : regarding the organizational aspect of the lesson; eg, explanation of an activity or homework.
2. Content explanation: the explanation of the subject content of the lesson.

Eg; explanation of vocabulary, grammar rules, texts.

Martin (1970; in Tsui), 'If the teacher really has explained something to his class, they will understand it, and if they don't understand it, what purported to be an explanation was not an explanation at all'.

Allwright (1986) claims that many teachers' explanations simply do not make sense.

3. Aspects of effective explanation:

- A. It's not a one-way process where the teacher imparting knowledge to students, it requires the active involvement of the students in processing information and in relating new information to the old.
- B. Teachers have a good grasp of the nature of the problem to be explained.
- C. For Chaudron (1982), the teacher needs to gauge the existing knowledge the knowledge of the students so that the problem is not over/ under- explained.
- D. The teacher needs to be able to organize the explanation in a clear sequence and to signpost the sequence.

7.3. Corrective Feedback

Thornbury (2006), it is the information, either immediate or delayed that learners get on their performance. At least some of this feedback may have a long-term effect on their knowledge of the language. Traditionally, feedback takes the form of 'correction'. Correction of the sort 'no/ not right' is called 'negative feedback' (learner produced an error). Positive feedback (right, yes, good, etc). Lyster and Ranta (1997) distinguished six types of feedback:

- 1. explicit correction: the teacher supplies the correct form. He indicates that learner's saying was incorrect.
- 2. Recast : Teacher reformulates all or part of the student's utterance (response).
- 3. Clarification request : the teacher uses phrases as ' pardon !'
- 4. Metalinguistic feedback : the teacher provides comments/ questions related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance.
- 5. Elicitation : the teacher directly elicits a reformulation from the students.
- 6. Repetition : the teacher repeats the student's ill-formed utterance, adjusting intonation to highlight the error.

Treatment versus Cure

Allwright and Bailey (1990), as we know from medicine, they are not the same. Because the teacher treats an error in some way, and the learner manages immediately to get something right that was wrong, doesn't mean that a permanent cure has been affected.

No matter how hard the teacher tries to correct errors, in the long turn, only learners can do the learning necessary to improve performance, regardless of how much treatment is provided.

To help our learners move along the interlanguage continuum, we must provide them with the feedback they need to modify their hypotheses about language.

Error and Error Treatment

Errors are deviations in usage, result from gaps in learner's knowledge of the target language. The learner doesn't know what is correct and are unable to correct their own deviant utterances. Mistakes are deviations in usage, reflect the learner's inability to use what they actually know of L2 (called also 'occasional lapses'). The correction of an error by the teacher does not prevent the error occurring again.

Lightbown and Spada claim that errors are a natural part of language learning. They reveal the patterns of learners' developing interlanguage systems, where they generalise, use first language rule to the second language.

Excessive feedback can have a negative effect on motivation.

Krashen (1981 ; 1982) states that error correction is of little benefit for long-term acquisition

(acquisition is sub-conscious ; error correction is conscious).

To encourage communicative interaction, teachers should be aware of deciding 'when and which' errors to be corrected.

Chaudron (1988), 'The paradoxical circumstance that the teacher must either interrupt communication for the sake of formal target language correction, or let errors pass 'untreated' in order to further the communicative goals of classroom interaction'.

Constant negative feedback create a sense of 'failure' and 'frustration' among learners and inhibit their contribution.

Encouraging feedback motivate learners to learn (participate) and help them to create a warm social climate in the classroom.

Tsui speaks about 'developmental errors' that inform teachers about the student's stage of language development.

HOWEVER,

Schmidt and Frota (1986) refer to ' The Auto- input hypothesis' :

- A. Erroneous form may even serve as further input to the person who uttered it.
- B. If the teacher does not correct or treat it, the other learners may assume that the form or function used was correct as it stood.
- C. Some learners incorrectly internalize errors (modify the existing correct hypothesis) WHY ? to conform with their classmates' incorrect output.

When correcting ? (Immediate/ Delay Correction)

Lightbown and Spada claim that immediate reaction to errors in an oral communication setting embarrass some students.

Allwright and Bailey state that it can be disruptive, inhibit learner's willingness to speak at CR at all (discourage them from speaking).

BUT FOR OTHER LEARNERS, it's exactly what they needed to help them notice the error when it occurs.

Tsui claims that it's the teacher decision :

- A. Treatment until the learner finishes what he wants to say.
- B. Point out the error and treatment until later in the lesson.

Allwright and Bailey state that if errors are shared by a group of learners, it may be a starting point for a future lesson.

Long (1977) says that error treatment becomes less effective as the time lag between the performance and the treatment becomes bigger.

What to Treat?

Allwright (1975) claims that teachers may have an obligation to be inconsistent, in a certain sense, in their use of treatment behaviours, since within any one CR learners' needs and levels may differ widely.

How errors are treated (by whom) ?

- A. The teacher
- B. The student who produced it.
- C. Other students.

Allwright and Bailey claim that only learners are actually capable of making changes in their developing interlanguage systems.

Ellis writes that making errors may actually help learners to learn when self-correct the errors they make.

The presence of an error can be indicated implicitly by tone of voice, a gesture, facial expression, holding acceptance or acknowledgement to the learner's response. Or explicitly where the teacher repeats the learner's utterance (rising voice) ; repeating the error (repeating a certain phrase) ; the teacher directly corrects the error BUT maybe the correction is short-lived.

Tsui claims that it's the learner who determines whether the correct for mis acquired, not the teacher. The latter should give 'wait-time'.

Allwright and Bailey state that 'Wait-time' is the length of time a teacher will wait after having posed a question/ task to learners before prompting, rephrasing, redirecting the question/ task to other learners.