DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 296 598 FL 017 509

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TITLE The Role of Grammar in the Second Language Classroom.
PUB DATE 25 Jul 88
NOTE 44p.; Expanded version of a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (22nd, Chicago, IL, March 8-13, 1988).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Communication; *Course Content; Educational Trends; *Grammar; Higher Education; *Instructional Effectiveness; *Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; State of the Art Reviews; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

In recent years, a number of articles have been written concerning the value of instruction in second language acquisition and the type of instruction that is most valuable for second language learners. Consequently, the place of the teaching of grammar in the second language classroom is being questioned. Generally, much of the research seems to indicate that the teaching of grammar has little effect on the grammatical structures used by students except in controlled exercises. In many institutions of higher learning, the teaching of grammar has gone out of fashion. Class time is devoted almost entirely to providing comprehensible input, and if any grammar is given, it is given only for homework. A review of the pertinent literature suggests that further empirical research on what actually happens in the classroom and on how learning is affected by grammar instruction is needed. (Author/MSE)

The Role of Grammar in the Second Language Classroom

Patrick J. Aquilina
July 25, 1988

Grammar has traditionally played an important role in the teaching of second or foreign languages, in a wide variety of methods. It has been and is used, with varying degrees of importance, in methods as seemingly diverse as grammar-translation and counselling-learning. Although I have no statistics to confirm it, I think we could safely assume that most people think of the use of grammar, in some form or other, when they think of learning another language. Particularly for people outside the profession of teaching foreign languages, the idea of trying to learn a new language without formally studying the grammar of it would probably be unthinkable. Yet in recent years the value of studying grammar in the foreign language classroom has come into question. As a matter of fact, not only has the teaching of grammar been questioned, but so has the value of instruction itself. A look at the literature over the last twenty years will show a great number of articles, many based on empirical studies, whose purpose is to look at whether instruction makes a difference, and if so, what that difference is. The main question asked is how second language learning in the classroom compares with second language acquisition in naturalistic settings - the workplace, the academic world, friendships, etc. - and if so-called "formal language instruction" has any real value. This paper will look at what some of the current literature says about the value of instruction and, specifically, about the role of grammar in the foreign

language classroom. What value, if any, does grammatical instruction have, and what place should it have in the second language syllabus?

Krashen (1982) states that there are two ways of developing competence in a second language - learning and acquisition. Learning, according to Krashen, is a conscious process - "knowing the rules, being aware of them, being able to talk about them " (p. 10), in other words, what usually or traditionally happens in many foreign language classrooms. Acquisition is an unconscious process, similar to the way children acquire their first language, using it for communication but not actually aware that they are acquiring it, the way millions of people who have moved to a foreign country nave come to speak, write, understand the language of that country without ever having studied it. Krashen says this is done through what he calls "comprehensible input", that is, input that is understandable but slightly above the level of where the person is. Through context, our knowledge of the world, any extra-linguistic information available, we understand structures that are beyond our level. And by going for meaning, we acquire structure.

Many professionals in the field of teaching of second or foreign languages would probably agree with Krashen's general distinctions of learning and acquisition: in fact, most probably would. However, a major difference of opinion comes about with the question of whether learning

can lead to acquisition. Pica (1983) divides the camps into those who feel that it can (McLaughlin, Bialystok and Stevick) and those who feel that it cannot (Krashen, Selinker and Lamendella). McLaughlin (1978) suggests a distinction between two types of processing controlled and automatic. He states that through practice or use of con- trolled processes, automatic processes can develop, that "controlled processes lay down the stepping stones for automatic processing as the learner moves to more and more difficult levels." (p. 319) Similarly, Bialystok (1978) claims that what we learn in the classroom, "the Explicit knowledge", can be transferred to what we have acquired, "the Implicit knowledge" (p.72), that through practice information can move from explicit knowledge to implicit knowledge via automatization. Earl Stevick (1980) agrees that natural settings are the best way of acquiring a new language but adds that what is learned in the classroom becomes part of our experience, and that experience, any experience, can lead to acquisition. In "The Levertov Machine", he talks about "seepage" from what has been learned into what is then acquired, into the "acquisition" store" (p. 34), the movement from long-term memory (learning) into tertiary memory (acquisition).

On the other hand, Krashen (1982) states that what happens in the classroom aids in the acquisition of the second language only insofar as it is comprehensible input, and that emphasis on form, in itself, will not lead

to acquisition. Selinker and Lamendella say that learning and acquisition involve different brain ("neurofunctional") operations and that having information about a language does not mean that we will be able to use it communicatively. Learning about a language involves a cognitive function while acquiring a language involves a communication function. Thus, information that is stored in the cognitive function will not be available for efficient use in communication. (Pica, 1983) Speaking specifically about the failure of mechanical pattern drills to provide students of second languages with automatic access to the second language in communicative situations, Lamendella (1979) distinguishes between Foreign Language Learning, which involves the cognition hierarchy of neurofunctional systems, and Second Language Acquisition, which involves the communication hierarchy.

One of the earliest studies of the effects of instruction on the acquisition of a foreign language was undertaken by John Upshur (1968). In this study he sought to provide an answer to the following question: "Is formal language instruction useful for students living and working in that language environment?" (p. 111) In this study, students enrolled in an Orientation Program in American Law either received no instruction in English as a Second Language or 1 or 2 hours per day. In addition, all students attended lectures as part of seminars on American law. The 2-hour group, however,

was presented with less information in each seminar hour and the reading load was reduced. The experiment lasted for 7 weeks, and pre- and post-tests showed that "no significant effects on language learning attributable to amount of language instruction were found." (p. 113) A similar conclusion was reached by Charles Mason (1970), who conducted a study at the University of Hawaii concerning "The Relevance of Intensive Training in English as a Foreign Language for University Students". He found that a control group of 15 students, who took intensive ESL classes, did no better on tests for English skills after a semester of study or in academic success after one year than the experimental group of nine students, who were allowed to take only regular academic courses.

Children were the focus of two research studies by Dulay and Burt (1978). In the first study, the researchers looked at the errors made in elicited natural spech by 145 Spanish-speaking children, ages 5 to 8. The errors were divided into three categories - developmental, interference and unique. The developmental errors are those which would be similar to the ones made by an L1 child; interference errors are those which reflect the structure of the native language; unique errors fit into neither category. 388 errors were collected and analyzed. Of these, Dulay and Burt say that 85% belonged to the developmental category, 11% to interference, and 12% to unique. This study led to a second one, which looked at the sequencing or

order of acquisition of 8 grammatical morphemes. The corpus consisted of speech samples from 151 Spanish- speaking children from three different areas (two areas of southern California and New York City), and with different levels of proficiency and amounts of exposure to English. The findings showed a common order of acquisition of certain morphemes among the three groups. A later study (Dulay and Burt, 1974), involving 115 Spanish- and Cantonese-speaking children, also showed that the order of acquisition of certain morphemes was very similar between the two different language groups. Dulay and Burt conclude from these studies that children have a natural ability to organize and acquire structure not only of the L1 but also of the L2. They assert that we should not teach children syntax and any attempts to do so may interfere with the natural learning processes. (Dulay and Burt,1973)

A more recent study was conducted by Lafayette and Buscaglia (1985), whose goal "was to compare the improvement in the second language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing among fourth semester French students enrolled in a content course taught in French and similar level students enrolled in a traditional fourth semester French course where the focus was primarily the teaching of the language itself." (p. 323) In this study, the experimental group studied contemporary French civilization and culture, entirely in French, no reference was made to the form of the

made to the form of the language, and mistakes of form were not corrected. The control group studied in what is referred to as a "traditional" or "normal" foreign language class, using a grammar-based text which was interspersed with readings on French culture. Comparisons of pre- and post-tests show that both groups improved in listening comprehension about equally, the experimental group showed significant improvement in speaking, neither group showed significant improvement in reading, although the control group performed slightly better, and the control group performed better in writing. However, it should be added that the so-called writing test was a discrete-point grammar test and did not include any discourse writing. An interesting aside to this study showed that the area of interest or motivation was one that was greatly affected. When asked whether their interest in studying French had increased, decreased or remained the same as a result of taking the course, in the experimental group 53% said it had increased and 47% that it had stayed the same. No one answered that interest had decreased. In contrast, only 28% of the control group said the course had increased their interest, 23% that it had decreased and 49% that it had remained the same. In addition, 94% of the experimental group found the course more interesting than other French courses they had taken while only 26% of the control group did. (p. 333) Lafayette and Buscaglia conclude that this experiment shows the positive

effects of instruction without explicit grammar teaching on language acquisition as well as on motivation and interest.

In his article in the *TESOL Quarterly*, "Does Second Language Instruction Make a Difference? A Review of Research", Michael Long (1983) looks at 12 studies involving the relationship between instruction exposure and second language acquisition. Six of the studies he looks at showed that instruction helps in the acquisition of a second language, two had ambiguous results, three showed that instruction does not help and one that exposure helped. However, according to Long, one of the ambiguous studies, that of Hale and Budar (1970). did not take into account the fact that the children in the exposure-plus-instruction group (which did not show more improvement than the exposure-only group) were from working-class families while those from the exposure-only group were from middle/ upper-middle class families. Generally speaking, according to Long, in all areas of academic work, children from middle or upper- middle class families do better than children from working class families. In addition, the children from the exposure-plus-instruction group had less overall exposure to English than the exposure-only group. This was due to the fact that there was a lower ratio of non-native to native speakers in both the class and the neighborhood of the exposure-plus-instruction group. A look at the ratio of non-native speakers to native speakers shows a range in the

different schools of from 1 out of 20 to 1 out of 44 for the control group and from 1 out of 51 to 1 out of 275 for the experimental or exposure-only group. (Hale and Budar, 1970, p. 489)

In the second ambiguous study, by Fathman (1976), oral production tests were administered at the beginning and the end of the school year to 500 elementary and high school students in Washington, D.C. public schools. The variables looked at were the amount of time spent in the ESL class, the size of the class, the method of teaching, and the number of foreign students in the school. Students who were in ESL classes for two hours per day showed a gain of 54% and 40% on the Oral Interview and the Slope tests, respectively. Those in class for one hour made gains of 62% and 54%, respectively. (p. 437) Fathman concludes that this seems to show that instruction does not help. However, Fathman also notes that the students who were in class two hours per day had lower scores on both the pre- and the post-tests. Since the only students who were given more than one hour of instruction were those who could not function in regular classes, Fathman admits that "the possibility exists that the lower scores are not related to the length of classes, but to the types of students who were in ESL classes for longer periods." (p. 437) In addition, Long (1983) feels there is a problem of interpretation of gain scores. "Use of either absolute or percent gain scores (calculated by dividing actual gain scores by pre-

test scores) would produce the opposite result on her data of that reported by Fathman." (p. 367)

Two of the three studies which showed that instruction does not help were those of Upshur and Mason, mentioned earlier. Upshur admits, however, that "strict interpretation of negative results is not possible" because of the following facts: the students in the experiment "are so highly motivated and have such high verbal skills" (p. 120) that their ability to teach themselves was, in all probabilty, very high, and that a more average group might produce very different results. He also says that the number of subjects (10 in each group) was so small that real differences between the populations would be hard to find. One could also add the following two caveats: seven weeks is not a very long time on which to base the outcome of a study. In addition, it is difficult to imagine pattern drills and pattern practice, so much in disrepute today, being of any value to high-level students taking courses in American law. Krashen (1976, see also Krashen and Seliger,1975) suggests that highly motivated students may "be able to provide themselves with the essential ingredients of formal instruction without going to class" (p. 159; Krashen and Seliger, p.183) He states that perhaps this is the reason for the results in both the Upshur and the Mason studies.

All of this does not mean to imply that only the studies which show that

instruction does not help are open to different interpretations. One could easily question the conclusions of the studies that support the idea that instruction helps acquisition when the instruction is given in EFL contexts. Such was the case in two of the studies cited by Long, one by Briere and another by Chihara and Oller, both of which claimed to show that instruction helps in the acquisition of a second language. One might easily say that it is the attention that the students pay to the content of the language, the fact that the class is probably the only source of comprehensible input, and not the focus on form, that is important. In other words, can you say that it was the instruction that aided in acquisition when the instruction was the only source of contact with the target language?

As a result of his review of the research on the effect of instruction on language acquisition, Long concluded that there is "considerable, though not overwhelming, evidence that instruction is beneficial 1) for children as well as adults, 2) for beginning, intermediate and advanced students, 3) on integrative as well as discrete point tests, and 4) in acquisition-rich as well as acquisition-poor environments." (p. 374) Long does add that the results of these studies, as with most studies, were obtained through tests. Even though both discrete point and integrative tests were used in the studies cited, the results could be the effect that instruction has on the ability of students to take tests. In a later review of the literature,

Long (1988) adds that he feels that formal instruction in a second language also "has positive effects on SLA processes, on the rate at which learners acquire the language, and on their ultimate level of attainment." He even goes so far as to say that without instruction, "it may be impossible to reach full native speaker competence." (p. 135)

A number of other researchers and theorists seem to agree that instruction is beneficial. Teresa Pica (1983) conducted a study of native Spanish speakers in three different contexts: instruction only, naturalistic and mixed. By determining the percentage of suppliance in obligatory contexts and the percentage of target-like use of nine morphemes among the three different groups, Pica looked at the effects of instruction (or lack of) on (1) the "natural order" of acqusition of morphemes in English, (2) the over-suppliance of morphemes by instructed subjects, and (3) the use by naturalistic subjects of "ungrammatical but communicative constructions" (p. 483) to express plurality. Her findings showed that (1) there was no significant difference in the order of acquisition of eight morphemes among the three different groups, (2) all groups made mistakes of overgeneralization and overuse but the Instruction Only group made more of them, and (3) the Instruction Only group tended to oversupply the -s inflection while the the Naturalistic group tended to omit it and use quantifiers to express plurality. (p. 494) The Mixed Group did both but

tended to be more similar to the Instruction Only group. Pica concluded that "claims that instruction has an effect on second language acquisition have found empirical support in this study." (p. 495) In addition, since deletion of the -s inflection and formation of plurality through quantifiers is the case in some pidgins, she felt that her findings "suggested that classroom instruction inhibited pidginization processes in second language acquisition for instructed subjects, even for those who were exposed to a naturalistic environment". (p. 495) However, as Pica herself notes, because of the size of her sample, one must be careful about drawing conclusions from her study. The study was composed of only 18 subjects, six in each group.

Lightbown, Spada and Wallace (1980), in a study of 175 French-speaking children who received formal instruction in ESL (specifically with regards to use of the -s inflection, the copula be as it is used with references to age, and locative prepositions with verbs of motion), found that although test scores showed initial improvement in the use of the morphemes, later tests showed a decline in correct usage. It was also found that while correct forms were sometimes used in discrete-point tests, the same items were often not used in informal interviews. The implication, of course, is that the items in question were learned but not acquired. In addition, the students often used the morphemes in utterances

where they did not belong. The learning of rules caused incorrect utterances as well as correct ones, suggesting that the "learners did not know the functions of the form or the restrictions on its uses." (p.171)

Lightbown (1983) suggests that rote learning of grammatical structures may not only be useless in the acquisition of those structures, but it may also delay their acquisition. She cites the previously mentioned study (Lightbown, Spada and Wallace, 1980), which showed that although the focus of the classes was always grammatical accuracy, the students showed little improvement in the correct use of the grammatical morphemes in obligatory contexts. In addition, the interlanguage system that is built up during the process of acquiring a second language "naturally" or communicatively, according to Lightbown (1983), is probably based on factors such as need, usefulness, salience, and uniqueness of form, as well as frequency. When frequency and over-learning are the only bases for learning a structure, and when there is either no communicative use or no meaning with which to contrast the new form with other forms, we may be providing the learners with blocks which will have to be removed before a natural interlanguage system can be built up. Although much of her own research has shown that language instruction can be ineffective or counter-productive, Lightbown (1985) is still convinced that instruction can aid in acquisition. She does admit, however, that this belief is based

more on intuition that on any empirical research. She feels that "formal instruction may provide 'hooks', points of access for the learner. That is, a certain amount of information about the language together with contextual clues may make it possible for the language learner to understand the L2 sample he is exposed to, making the input comprehensible and thus available for language acquisition processing." (p. 108) Long (1988) follows a similar train of thought and says that focus on form in the second language classroom is important because it makes the new forms more salient, both in and outside of the class.

Sharwood-Smith (1981) follows the models of McLaughlin and Bialystok, which allow for a transfer of competence from the learned system into the acquired system. As an example of this, he mentions the possiblity of preparing sentences in one's head before taking part in a conversation, the content of which can be predicted, such as a short telelphone conversation. If one were to make enough of these calls, repeated calls in search of an apartment, for example, Sharwood-Smith feels that it is not unreasonable to assume that the language could become automatic, i.e. acquired. Again, this belief is not based on empirical evidence. "While the empirical evidence for the impermeability and primacy of the acquisition device in the second foreign language learner is hotly contested, there is every reason to accept the older, intuitively attractive version, which says that

explicit knowledge may aid acquisition via practice." (p. 167) However, this does not mean that explicit knowledge must include the ability to give or be tested on the rules of grammar. Such a notion, according to Sharwood Smith, is a simplistic view of grammatical "consciousness-raising" (C-R) (p. 161), relegating it to the practices of grammar-translation. Rather, he says, C-R is the discovery of regularities in the language, a process which comes about through self-discovery but which may be aided by the teacher.

Instruction can take many forms, from Silent Way classes to CLL to grammar-translation to ALM to Notional-Functional and on and on. And the teaching of grammar can play a part in any of these methodologies. As William Rutherford (1987), in "Second Language Grammar: Learning and Teaching", states, "Since there are so many possible instructional variables having different potential effects upon the learning experience, one cannot simply assume that such loosely defined events as 'formal instruction', 'attention to language form', 'grammatical consciousness-raising', 'grammar teaching', or whatever, will have any empirical value without seriously looking at what is happening in such situations." (p. 26) However, in most of the literature that I looked at, there was either no explanation for type of instruction when instruction was compared to exposure or instruction-plus-exposure or there was no explanation as to how grammar was taught.

Upshur (1968) makes no specific mention of what was done in the ESL classes that were given to the students taking courses in American Law. We can only surmise that pattern drills and practices were used because that was what was also used in the other experiments he conducted and which were reported in the same article. He also states that the value of a second language classroom is not in providing drill. However, in his explanation of the experiment, he does not say what was done in the classes. Although an area of Fathman's report (1976) deals with "Type of Instruction", she only mentions if the emphasis of the class was oral or written and if instruction was individualized or not. Charles Mason (1970), whose study concluded that intensive EFL work at the university level might be a waste of time for many intermediate to advanced foreign students, says only that students were placed in sections of advanced writing or in intermediate or advanced sections of listening comprehension, structure and reading. The study by Lafayette and Buscaglia (1985) mentions that in the control group 60% of the class time was devoted to focus on form. The other 40% dealt with readings in French, but this time was not limited to discussion of content. It also contained references to and time spent on form. Although the way this focus on form is accomplished is not mentioned, a look at the text used in the class, "Aujourd'hui", (Fanelli, 1976) shows an approach that is strictly grammatical and non-

communcative.

Similarly, in studies which claim to show that instruction has a positive effect on acquisition, little, if anything is said about the type of instruction. In the 1978 study, "How Important is Instruction?" by Krashen, Jones, Zelinski and Usprich, the authors state that, with qualifications, it may be inferred that adults learn more efficiently through formal instruction. But "formal instruction" is not explained anywhere. In Teresa Pica's study (1982,1983), she states that the lessons for the instruction-only and the instruction-plus-exposure groups included both explicit grammar explanations and communicative practice activities. This tells us somewhat more, but "explicit grammar explanations" can have a variety of meanings. In addition, Pica does not tell if anything other than the grammar explanations was done. For example, we do not know if there was any practice on the forms and, if so, in what way.

Steve Krashen (1982) says that when there is a grammatical focus there will be less interesting input and communication will suffer. The teacher will be more worried about using the structure in question, perhaps in stilted, forced ways, than in actually using the language to communciate meaning. In addition, Krashen states that a grammatical syllabus does not take into account the fact that everyone in a class is not at the same stage of development and may not be ready for the structure being taught. Nor

does a "finely tuned sequence", (p. 69) that is, one in which each structure is presented once, benefit a student who may have missed the structure the first time around. However, Krashen says that there definitely is a place for grammar in the ESL class - for adults. First of all, students can use conscious rules to raise their grammatical accuracy when there is time and when it does not interfere with communication. He adds that grammar teaching can be important for advanced students who have acquired a great deal of the foreign language but not enough to reach native-speaking standards, to make them seem as educated in the second language as they are in the first, to add polish to their language. Second, when students are interested in the study of language, when the discussion of grammar is relevant and interesting to them, it can become comprehensible input and, therefore, aid in language acquisition. But it is not the grammar itself that is aiding in acquisition; it is the fact that the students are receiving comprehensible input. None of these assertions, however, is supported by empirical evidence.

For Krashen, and Dulay and Burt, the role of grammar always seems to imply the use of conscious rules. (Krashen, 1982; Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982). In contrast, Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1985) maintain that there are a wide variety of ways through which a teacher can focus on or draw attention to form or structure, none of which needs to lead to meta-

linguistic discussion. The discussion of linguistic rules is the extreme end of a continuum of grammar consciousness-raising (C-R) (Rutherford, 1987) (p. 16) which has varying degrees of explicitness and elaboration. A study conducted by Terrell, Gomez and Mariscal (1980) shows that English-speakers were able to acquire patterns of question formation in Spanish simply through exposure to questions in meaningful contexts, and without any explicit grammar instruction. In Rutherford and Sharwood Smith's terms, this could be seen as an example of C-R with a low (zero) degree of explicitness and a high degree of elaboration simply because there was focus on form, because the students' attention was drawn to question formation through the high frequency of questions asked in the class, much higher, probably, than would occur in a "natural" context.

While admitting that research shows that the presence of any degree of explicitness and/or elaboration of consciousness-raising does not necessarily mean that any given structure will be acquired, Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1985) also feel there is not enough research evidence to rule it out. Both see C-R as a "potential facilitator for the acquisition of linguistic competence" (280) and do not intend that it be seen as a substitute for a communicative curriculum. Sharwood Smith (1981) adds that by giving the students what he calls a "multi-faceted approach" (p. 165), that is to say, formal instruction, or "consciousness-raising", and the possibi-

lity for implicit learning, we give them the opportunity to use their analytical or cognitive ability and their maturity and to employ a wider variety of methods and strategies than are available to the first language learner.

Rutherford (1987) agrees with Krashen in respect to the "fine-tuning" approach, or what he calls "accumulated entities" (p.4). According to this view, second language learners go through the learning process amassing an ever increasing number of language units - phonological, morphological, syntactical, lexical - until a certain level of proficiency is reached. The purpose of language teaching then is to expose the students to these different entities, probably in some logically sequenced way, increasing both the number and the complexity of the structures. According to Rutherford, however, languages are not composed of discrete units which can be accumulated by the learner and, regarding the teaching of these entities, he says, "if, for even as well analysed a language as English, the most brilliant linguists can as yet come nowhere near knowing fully what constitute the proper generalizations and the correct formulations of the rules of English syntax, then how can anything of this sort, in whatever "simplified" form, be properly "taught" by any teacher or "learned" by any learner?" (p. 17)

However, Rutherford (1987) does feel that grammar teaching, or "C-R",

(p. 16), has a definite role in the second language classroom. He states that one characteristic which every successful language learner, be it first or second language, shares is sufficient exposure to the target language. However, the circumstances under which one learns a second language may be far more restricted in variety of exposure than those of the first language and, consequently, may be too limited in data to allow for the testing of hypotheses. Rutherford says that the second language classroom may then fulfill this function. This might seem similar to Krashen's idea of offering the students a wide variety of natural input, i.e., comprehensible input. The difference lies in Rutherford's feeling that the data, in order to help the learner test hypotheses and form generalizations, may be presented in "somewhat controlled and principled fashion" (p. 18), as a means, not an end. He does not specify, however, how these generalizations could be controlled and how different this type of control would be from a fine-tuned approach. For Rutherford, another role of grammatical C-R is in the relationship between what he calls language-universal principles and language-specific information. For example, all languages have a basic word order, involving subject (or topic), verb, and object (language-universal) . However, certain languages can depart from this word order while others are more restricted. (language- specific). Through C-R, the learner can be helped to see how much deviation is allowed and

move from the "familiar" (word order in the first language) to the "unfamiliar" (word order in the second language), which may then become familiar. (p.20)

A third role for C-R is in the area of universal processes. Rutherford states that, from knowledge of the first language, everyone inherently knows the uses of language. The problem for the second language learner is how these uses are realized in the second language. An example Rutherford gives of a universal process is that of subject vs. topic and the problems that would ensue in the use of active or passive voice. A Mandarin Chinese speaker might see a topic as a "discourse anchor" for the sentence and use a verb in the active voice, thinking of it, due to the influence of Mandarin, as a "topic-comment construction". In English, however, this "anchor" must be realized as a subject, which would require a passive construction. In this instance, grammatical C-R would help the learner reanalyze the non-English topic-comment as English subject- predicate. Again, the role of grammar is as a facilitator, "where facilitation is to be understood as nothing less than the illumination of the learner's path from the known to the unknown." (p. 21)

The assumption that a grammatically-based syllabus, or even the use of grammar in a second language classroom, must involve either the discussion of rules and the ability of the students to recite these rules or

the repetition of meaningless sentences has led to a polarity in what educators feel should be done in the second language classroom. (Brumfit, 1981) It seems that there are either communciative activities, functional activities or opportunities for natural acquisition on one hand and grammar instruction, focus on form or learning activities on the other. Brumfit (1984) stresses the need for work on both fluency and accuracy, for exposure to both function and form. And if we are to have a systematized syllabus, he feels that a grammatical one is preferrable because it is the "only generative system so far described for language, and a generative system will be more economical as a way of organizing language work for student learning than a non-generative taxonomy of items (such as a list of functions is at the moment bound to be), or a random selection of items, unsystematically collected." (p. 50) He sees the syllabus ordered as a grammatical ladder with a spiral of functions around it. (Brumfit, 1981)

Swain and Canale (1981), in "The Role of Grammar in a Communicative Approach to Second Language Teaching and Testing", quote K. E. Morrow in "Techniques for Evaluation of a Notional Syllabus" as saying that "we must resist polarization between emphasis on form and concentration on meaning." (p. 45) For Swain and Canale, communicative competence is composed minimally of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and communication strategies, or what they call strategic compe-

tence. They state that "there is no no strong theoretical or empirical motivation for the view that grammatical competence is any more or any less crucial to successful communication than is sociolinguistic competence or strategic competence. " (Canale and Swain, 1980, p. 27) They add that grammatical competence is important in that it can help in understanding and expressing specific ideas and literal meanings. In contrast to Brumfit, Canale and Swain (1980) suggest introducing a grammatically-based sequence into a functionally-organized approach with a certain amount of time devoted to "discussion of and/or practice on new or especially difficult grammatical points..." . (p. 32) They add that there is no reason why a functional approach cannot reach the level of organization of a grammatical approach. The same sequencing criteria for the structures - generalizability, degree of complexity, etc. - could be used to decide which structures to introduce for each function, and the grammar could be seen as an element of the sequencing criteria used to organize the functions. They also suggest repetition of the focus on specific grammatical forms, thoughout the syllabus, by practicing them in different functions which would lend themselves to the forms.

Just as it may be impossible to teach all of the grammatical, phonological and lexical rules of a language in a classroom (Newmark, 1973), so would it probably be impossible to cover all of the language functions a

person might need in life. Hawkes (1983) feels that, in addition to giving our students communicative language functions to rehearse and practice, we must also continue to place focus on the form of the language through some explicit grammar teaching. This is necessary, he states, because all the communicative needs could not possibly be compiled in a syllabus c. practiced in a classroom. The diversity, complexity and sophistication of our communicative acts are such that any attempt to reduce them to parts of a syllabus design would have to be even more restricted and selective than the items of grammar in a syllabus based on grammar sequencing. By teaching grammar, Hawkes feels that we can build up "the communicative potential" (p. 91) of our students, which will allow them to function in situations which they may not encounter in the functionally-based classroom. It can make the learner "master of his own communicative environment". (Candlin, Preface to Rutherford,1987, p. viii.) Wilkins (1976) disagrees in regard to the adequacy and practicality of a grammatical syllabus; however, he does see knowledge of the grammar of a language as the means through which the SL learner can achieve creativity in the new language. He even states that "an inadequate knowledge of grammar would lead to a serious limitation in the capacity for communication." (p. 66) Consequently, he feels that a syllabus that is notionally-functionally based must see to it, as much as a grammatical syllabus, that

the grammatical system becomes part of the students' repetoire.

However, whether one uses a grammatical syllabus around which notions for each grammatical structure are taught or a notional syllabus around which grammatical structures are taught for each notion, the problem that remains is the importance that is to be given to the grammar in relation to the notions. There are two basic possibilities: one is to teach forms which are more appropriate stylistically and stiuationally but which may be more complex grammatically and, consequently, less accessible. The other is to teach forms which are grammatically easier, less complex, and with a lower level of contrastive difficulty, but which may not be totally appropriate on a situational basis. Wilkins gives the example of different forms of asking permission. Using the first possibilty of situationally more appropriate language, students might practice forms such as "Would you mind very much if I _____?" to ask permission. Such a sentence would be very polite, appropriate in certain circumstances, and perhaps quite necessary for someone to learn, but it might also be very complex for a beginning language learner. Following a more grammatically-oriented or -weighted syllabus, the easier form "Can I _____?" would be more appropriate according to the standard criteria of grammatical sequencing, but it might not fit the situation in which it must be used. Wilkins says there is no answer to these questions, at least no answer that will suit and fit

everyone's needs and beliefs, and he sees no need for a resolution to the question. He simply presents it as an issue that must be faced and one that will have to be settled by each individual syllabus designer when thinking of the role of grammar within the syllabus.

The value of meaning in the acquisition of a second language is beyond question. Even pattern drills seem to be more effective when taught through meaningful communicative activities. (Oller and Obrecht, 1968). Studies, such as the one conducted by Lightbown, Spada and Wallace (1981), which seem to show that focus on grammatical accuracy does not aid in the acquisition of the strutures being studied, might have turned out differently if there had been opportunities for the use of communicative language or if meaningful activities had been available instead of the rote, meaningless activities that were used. (Lightbown, 1983) Lightbown (1983) says that if we give students the opportunity to use communicative language in class, we may encourage them to use the same language outside of class and, thereby expand their learning environment. She stresses "meaningful and motivating contexts" (p. 103) to get the students' interest and attention and to get them involved in the process of language acquisition rather than just "spoon-feeding" them meaningless structures. (Lightbown, 1985)

The question that remains, however, is if meaningful input alone is

enough in the second language classroom. Can students be exposed to all of the structures they need, in a relatively short period of time, to eventually attain even near-native proficiency? Newmark claimed that the teaching of grammar was neither necessary nor sufficient. (1973) As to to its sufficiency, probably even the most die-hard grammarian would agree that grammar instruction alone is not sufficient. However, concerning its necessity, at least in the classroom, there is some dispute. Harley and Swain (1984) found that grade 6 students in immersion programs in Canada achieved native-like proficiency in listening and reading comprehension skills and performed as well as native speakers in math and science tests given in the second language and in multiple-choice discourse tests. However, they also found that, even after six to seven years of immersion, there were differences in their productive language skills, particularly in the areas of grammar and lexis. Tests on the use of the conditionals showed that while few students (even the younger ones) had problems understanding the meaning of a conditional sentence, which was shown by the ability to translate the sentence to English, there were many more problems in producing the conditionals in oral interviews in obligatory or optional contexts, or in choosing the correct form in a multiple-choice grammar test. Hartley and Swain concluded from their study that although it was very important to provide students with meaningful input, this was

"not in itself sufficient to promote productive use of a marked formal aspect of the L2 in a classroom setting, even in the context of an immersion program where students are exposed to the L2 for several hours per day." (p. 308) They recommended that some time be spent on selective grammatical explanation, that input be more focused to provide greater exposure to different forms, and that students be given more opportunities to practice diffcult forms in meaningful ways. They added, however, that this did not mean that they were urging a return to "extensive" explicit grammar teaching.

Spada (1984) studied the effects that differences in informal contacts and instructional settings could have on the proficiency level of 48 adult ESL students in three intermediate ESL classes. The students were enrolled in an intensive ESL program. The type of instruction is described as communicative, with attention paid to both fluency and accuracy, and a focus on both meaning and form. Through student questionnaires, the researcher looked at both quantitative and qualitative differences in the types of contacts the students had outside of class. For example, even though the number of hours spent watching TV and engaging in a conversation might be the same, the researcher felt that there was a qualitative difference. If one watches TV for a period time, there is exposure to the language and a large amount of input. However, how much

was understood cannot be verified. On the other hand, engaging in a conversation is much more demanding and requires give and take between the two (or more) parties. These contacts were examined in relation to the students' performance on 7 proficiency measures, covering the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar (through both discrete-point and discourse tests), and socio- linguistic appropriateness.

Although all of the classes in this study were supposed to follow the communicative principles advocated by the school, they did so to varying degrees. Observations of the three classes involved showed that one class (Class A) consisted of considerably more focus on form than did the others. To take these differences in focus into account, comparisons were made between the more form-focused class and the other two classes (B and C) and then between B and C alone. The results suggest that when students have more contact with the second language outside of the classroom, they may benefit more from classes that are more form-focused. And when they have little contact outside the class (other than through books, or more formal work), they seem to benefit less from more form-focused activities. The implications of Spada's findings are that "learners require opportunities for both form-focused and function-focused practice in the development of particular skill areas, and if one or the other is lacking, they do not appear to benefit as much." (p. 197) Spada emphasizes,

however, that these findings should not be interpreted as showing a need for more grammar-based instruction. What they do imply, she says, is tnat students who live in and take advantage of acquisition-rich environments also require some focus on the form of the language. And those students who only have contact with the language through a form-focused class require either more natural contact outside the class or more opportunities within the class for natural acquisition.

When looking at research, there is always the problem of interpretation of data or of defects in the study itself. The study may overlook outside factors which are impossible to control but which may have a great influence on the results of the study. With theory, we may agree, disagree or take a middle ground. However, when deciding what should be done in the second language classroom, in addition to looking at the what the theorists and researchers have to say, it is important to look at the students - their different needs, expectations, and backgrounds (Eisenstein, 1980). For an immigrant who only wants to learn to survive in the new society or for someone who has little or no formal education, focus on structure and form will probably be unnecessary, if not a waste of time. Celce-Murcia (1985) states, "if the students are literate and well-educated, they may become frustrated and annoyed if you don't provide adequate opportunities for them to focus on the formal aspects" of the language. (p. 1) Their learning style

may be such that concentration on some formal aspects of the language will be beneficial in itself. A field-independent person, for example, may do better in a learning situation where one needs to analyze and will be tested (Schumann, 1978). But the expectations and frustrations of students are only part of the story. Raimes (1986), in a review of Krashen's "Writing: Reserch, Theory and Applications" (1984) asserts that not teaching grammar in a writing course fails to take into account the needs of the "adult academically-oriented language learner." (p. 236) Since one of the conditions of the use of the "Monitor " is time, and since one usually has time when writing, conscious knowledge of rules could be used by second-language students to bring the level of their writing to near-native accuracy. The explicit teaching of grammar can give the students information about certain aspects of the language which they would be unable to "pick up" naturally and which would add sophistication to their writing. (Krashen, 1982)

Krashen, more than anyone, has popularized the notion that in most cases instruction does not help in the acquisition of a second language. Instruction does help, he says, (1982) when it is the only or the major source of comprehensible input. As evidence that language teaching does not help, he cites the studies, mentioned earlier, by Fathman, Hale and Budar, and Upshur, all of which can either be interpreted in different ways

or do not take into account variables which could affect the results of the studies. There is probably little doubt that the methods of language teaching and learning were ripe for change. However, when the changes are extreme, exclusionary of an entire area of knowledge, and not really substantiated by a wide body of empirical evidence, we are faced with the possibility that they are not serving the best interests of those whom they purport to be about, i.e., students of second languages. "It is indeed fortunate that there is often a considerable time lag between the testing of a new theory and its application in practice." (Oller and Obrecht, 1968, p. 167) This sentence was written in reaction to the belief, common in the 50's and early 60's, that it was necessary to master the mechanical skill of a linguistic pattern before one could use it to express what one felt, that practicing linguistic patterns mechanically was as necesary for a second language learner as was practicing scales and arpeggios for a music student. This notion had authority because it came from the science of behavioral psychology. Lightbown (1985) warns that we must be careful "not to promise another scientific approach to language teaching. The danger lies in the possibility that practitioners will adopt again not a renewed openness to the learners' needs, but a new rigidity which would run counter to the expressed intention: teaching L2 learners what they are ready to learn." (p. 102)

The exact role of grammar instruction in the second or foreign language classrom is clearly still in question. Should it be taught and, if so, how much emphasis should be put on the form as opposed to the function of the language? And how should the grammar be taught? Although Krashen and Terrell, for example, (Krashen, 1982; Krashen and Terrell, 1983) maintain that, except in limited and prescribed circumstances, grammar should not be part of the second languge classroom, others (See Canale and Swain, 1980; Harley and Swain, 1984; Spada, 1984; Swain and Canale, 1981) suggest that their studies show that meaningful input alone is not enough, that SL learners also do need to focus on form. Still others (See Lightbown, 1985; Rutherford, 1987; Rutherford and Sharwood Smith, 1985) feel that focus on form aids in the acquisition of a second language, but they admit that their claims are based on intuition and experience, not on empirical evidence. However, no one recommends a return to a strong emphasis on explicit grammar teaching in place of more communicative activities. Nor does anyone deny the importance of meaningful, natural input. In fact, in all the studies that seem to show the value of focus on form (in some unspecified way), there are warnings against the interpre- tation of these data as meaning that more explicit grammar instruction is needed.

What is obviously needed before definite claims about the role of grammar in the second language classroom can be made is more research,

more empirical evidence. An immediate problem that comes to mind is the lack of proper definitions as to what "formal instruction", "focus on form", "explicit grammar instruction", etc., actually mean. These terms should be clearly defined, and the studies should tell specifically what was done in each class. It cannot be taken for granted that just because a certain method is supposedly being followed that we know what exactly is being done in the classroom. As Ellis (1985) says, "It is necessary to examine the actual interactions that take place." (p. 153) In Spada's study (1984), which took place in a school committed to a communicative approach to language learning, it was found that one of the classes involved in the study was doing considerably more explicit grammar study than the others. In other words, what was happening in the classroom perhaps was not congruent with the methodology espoused by either the program or the teacher. We cannot simple say that a study shows that instruction, focus on form, grammar teaching, etc., do not aid in acquisition if we do not know exactly what was done in the classes in the study. All instruction is not the same, nor are all ways of focusing on form. Similarly, even if a study proves definitively that students need to focus on form, we cannot just leave it at that. What we need is research on what exactly is happening in the classroom and what effects there are because of this.

> "Such research (i.e., directly on the classroom environment itself) will help to identify specific components of the classroom situation which are most influential in second language learning. Isolation of grammatical forms and structures and notional-functional categories, incorporation of teacher and textbook descriptions, practice of use and usage rules, and provision of teacher feedback are all characteristic features of the classroom setting which may possibly influence or even control the language learner. What needs to be explained is how, when, and if all of these factors are in operation in the selective impact of classroom instruction on second-language acquisition." (Pica, 1985, p. 221)

Only when we look at both aspects of the classroom situation, what is done and how it is done, will we be able to say with certainty that grammar teaching does or does not have a positive role in the L2 classroom, and, if it does, specifically what that role is and how we can best utilize it for the maximum benefit of our students.

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