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ABSTRACT

Essays on second-language (L2) listening comprehension include: "On Second Language Comprehension and Acquisition: Interactional and Psycholinguistic Perspectives" (Teresa Cadierno), a general theoretical overview of these processes; "Listening to Lectures" (Anne Jensen), a discussion of some characteristics of lectures and description of a study of linguistic modifications in L2 French lectures addressed to both native speakers of French and first- and second-year university students of French; "A Conversation Analytic View on Listening Comprehension: Implications for the Classroom" (Catherine E. Brouwer), which examines the ways conversation analysis, a methodology for studying talk-interaction, can contribute both to understanding of the interactional aspects of listening in collaborative situations and to listening pedagogy; and "Developing Listening Tasks for Language Learning" (Michael Rost), presenting a pedagogical framework for listening instruction that includes both a set of principles for listening task design and strategy training and outlines five types of listening tasks focusing on specific listening strategies. (MSE)

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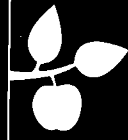

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN DENMARK

L2 Listening comprehension

Teresa Cadierno (ed.)

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Introduction

Teresa Cadierno

The present volume, which addresses the issue of L2 Listening Comprehension, is the result of a conference[1] held at Odense University on May 9, 1997, and constitutes a natural follow up of previous issues (OWPLC 1, 3, 5, 6, 12, 14) whose aim was to examine the nature of the so called four basic language skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing. As expressed in Cadierno (this volume), a traditional division has been made in certain language teaching circles between listening and reading as passive or receptive skills, and speaking and writing as the active or productive skills. In clear opposition to this division, however, all the articles in the present volume emphasize the active role of the listener during comprehension; more specifically, from a cognitive point of view, L2 listeners are not mere passive recipients of the L2 input they hear but, as Rost (this volume) notes, they are active choosers of the input samples they attend to, understand and use as intake for their further language development; furthermore, from an interactional point of view, L2 listeners are seen as active participants in the process of communication when interacting with either native speakers or other L2 speakers (Brouwer, this volume).

In listening comprehension research, another division has been made between non-collaborative (also called transactional) listening situations on the one hand, and collaborative listening situations on the other. While the former refer to situations where the listener does not interact with the speaker and therefore does not directly participate in the construction of discourse, the latter involve situations where the listener does interact with the speaker in conversations. Both perspectives on listening situations are represented in the present volume; thus Jensen's article, which addresses the issue of listening to lectures, adopts the former perspective, while the latter perspective is present in Brouwer's article, which examines the negotiation of meaning that takes place between listener and speaker during interaction.

The subarea of second language acquisition research (SLA) which examines listening comprehension constitutes an interesting research area in its own right, since it aims at understanding both the cognitive and the interactional processes involved in it. However, this area has a clear pedagogical dimension as it is demonstrated in both Brouwer's and Rost's articles which examine different ways in

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which listening instruction can help L2 learners improve their listening comprehension skills and thus, become better listeners.

In the following, a brief description of the four articles that comprise this volume is offered[2]. The first paper, "On second language comprehension and acquisition: Interactional and psycholinguistic perspectives" by Teresa Cadierno, provides a general theoretical overview of the processes of second language comprehension and acquisition, and reviews SLA research which has examined both processes both from psycholinguistic and interactional perspectives. The second paper, "Listening to lectures" by Anne Jensen, discusses some of the characteristics of lectures, and describes an experimental study which examines the linguistic modifications present in L2 French lectures addressed to both NSs of French and to first and second year university students of French. The third article, "A conversation analytic view on listening conversation: Implications for the classroom" by Catherine E. Brouwer, discusses the ways in which Conversation Analysis, a methodology which examines talk-in-interaction, can contribute both to our understanding of the interactional aspects of listening in collaborative situations, and to listening pedagogy; Finally, the fourth article, "Developing listening tasks for language learning" by Michael Rost, adopts a pedagogical perspective, and provides a general framework for listening instruction which includes both a set of principles for listening task design and strategy training; furthermore, five types of listening tasks are outlined whose aim is to focus learners on particular listening strategies that successful listeners are known to use: predicting, monitoring, inferencing, clarifying and responding.

Finally, I would like to thank all the people who have, in some way or other, made both the 1997 Conference and the present publication possible. First of all, thanks to the Conference invited speakers and the authors of this volume for their valuable contributions; also special thanks to the institutions which supported this project, namely, the Institute of Language and Communication and the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Southern Denmark, Odense University, and the Institute of Business Languages and Communication at the Southern Denmark Business School, especially to Karl-Heinz Pogner who was co-organizer of the Conference. Finally, thanks to those who provided technical or linguistic help during the elaboration of this publication: Dorthe Bleses, Martin Lund, Steffen Nordahl Lund and Sharon Millar.

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Notes

1. This conference, which is organized every year, is aimed at discussing and presenting different research areas within the area of language and communication to an audience which mainly consists of second / foreign language teachers, but also researchers wihtin the area of interest.

2. Unfortunately, due to practical reasons, it has not been possible to include in this volume a fifth paper presented at the 1997 Conference on L2 Listening Comprehension: "Foreign language learning: A strategic activity" by John Field. This paper examined L2 listening as a strategic activity involving the use of both contextual (i.e., "top-down") and input-based (i.e., "bottom-up") cues, and discussed the implications of such a view for language teaching.

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On second language comprehension and acquisition: Interactional and psycholinguistic perspectives

Teresa Cadierno

Summary
The aim of this paper is to examine the processes of second language comprehension and acquisition from an interactional and psycholinguistic perspective. Within the interactional perspective two main research areas are reviewed: (1) research on the linguistic modifications of the speech addressed to L2 learners, and the conversational modifications present in the discourse created by native speakers and L2 learners during conversations; and (2) research examining the effects of linguistic and conversational modifications on L2 comprehension and acquisition. The psycholinguistic perspective, on the other hand, has examined the cognitive processes involved in L2 comprehension and acquisition. Here several second language acquisition models and research are reviewed which attempt to explain how learners construct their mental representations of the L2. Issues such as the role of (comprehensible) input in SLA, the differentiation between comprehension and acquisition processes and the role of attention in acquisition are discussed.

1. Introduction

In foreign language teaching circles, a clear cut distinction has been usually made between listening and reading skills on the one side and speaking and writing skills, on the other. That is, both listening and reading comprehension have traditionally been referred to as the *passive* or *receptive* skills, in opposition to speaking and writing which have been defined as the *active* or *productive* skills. However, as we will see, the term *passive* is unfortunate since it seems to indicate that listeners or readers are just mere submissive individuals whose only task is to receive in a passive or non-acting manner the oral or written input directed at them.

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), on the other hand, a heavier emphasis on the active role of the listener and the reader during the process of language comprehension has been made. Thus, research carried out up to the mid 80's (but also nowadays) has tended to examine comprehension from an interactional perspective[1] and thus, investigated both the quality and the quantity of the input that L2 learners receive as well as the patterns of negotiation present in conversations between native speakers and L2 learners or between learners themselves. From the mid 80's, on the other hand, researchers have also started

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looking at comprehension from a psycholinguistic or a cognitive perspective. In this line of investigation, discussion has been focused on how L2 listeners / learners interact with or process the L2 input during the comprehension process, what part of that input becomes intake and is further acquired, the role of attention in processing, and other related issues.

The purpose of the present talk is, then, to review relevant literature concerning second language comprehension as related to the acquisition process from both interactional and psycholinguistic perspectives.

2. Interactional perspectives on second language comprehension and acquisition.

Research conducted on the role of input and interaction in SLA from the mid 70´s was partly motivated by existent research on the nature of motherese or caretaker talk, that is, from studies examining how parents talked to their children. The aim of such research was to determine whether and how the speech addressed to non natives speakers (NNS) differed from the language used in adult native speakers (NS) conversations, and whether such differences aided the comprehension and/or the acquisition of the second language. Studies have been conducted on both naturalistic and classroom settings.

Some of the research concentrated on describing the linguistic characteristics or, as it was called, modifications, of the speech addressed to second language learners. These studies examined how NS linguistically modified their speech in order to make it more comprehensible to the NNS. Larsen-Freeman (1985: 436) summarizes some of the linguistic modifications found in foreigner and teacher talk:

> input to NNS is shorter, and less complicated and is produced at a slower rate than speech between adult NSs. This input tends to be more regular, canonical word order is adhered to, and there is a high proportion of unmarked patterns. There are fewer false starts and there is less repair. High frequency vocabulary is used... There is a limited use of pronouns, presumably in the belief that references should be as unambiguous as possible. There are more questions. Question tags and alternative questions occur more frequently. There is less pre-verb modification, presumably so new information can be highlighted at the end of the utterance, where there is more salient. The input is higher-pitched, it shows more intonation variation in pitch, and it is louder in volume. It contains fewer reduced vowel and fewer contractions.

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With time, however, as researchers realized that the input that the learner received was not only determined by the NS alone, but also by the learner himself/herself during interaction, studies switched their attention from linguistic to conversational characteristics or modifications. In other words, while the research described above seemed to reflect a more passive view of the learner (i.e., a passive recipient of the language directed at him / her), this other type of research conceived the learner as **actively involved** in the process of communication, and thus, examined the discourse that both the native speaker and the learner constructed together during conversations. This line of inquiry showed some differences between NS-NS and NS-NNS conversations, but as Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) indicate, it is not the use of particular devices which distinguishes both types of conversations, but their statistically significant higher frequency of use in the latter type of interactions. Some of the conversational modifications that have been identified are the following: conversational topics are often treated more simply and briefly, there is a high frequency of here-and-now topics, stress or pauses are used before the introduction of new topics to make them more salient, there are more abrupt topic-shifts, topics are introduced by questions rather than by statements; furthermore, native speakers use several tactics or strategies such as the use of "or-choice" questions (ex. are you coming or are you leaving with us?), and repetitions, the use of comprehension checks, clarification requests and confirmation checks.

In a recent paper Wagner (1996) has pointed out a number of methodological problems in the existent SLA research on conversational modifications. One of the issues mentioned by this author is the model of communication assumed in this research: an information transfer model of communication, which presupposes that

> ... communication is an exchange process where information is coded by the sender and transferred to the receiver where it is decoded. The goal of communication is complete exchange of information. If the receiver is in a position to decode all the meanings encoded by the sender, the exchange is complete, and communication has succeeded. (Wagner 1996: 220).

According to Wagner, this model of communication has resulted in the problematic belief that 'normal' interaction (i.e., interaction which involves unproblematic exchange of information) is the one supposedly held between native speakers, and that this type of interaction should constitute the baseline with which SLA modification studies are to be compared. Wagner considers these presuppositions erroneous in the sense that "neither the concept of pure *information transfer*, of a *baseline* or of *modification* is useful for the analysis of naturally occurring data"

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(Wagner 1996: 223). And this is so because a) the concept of meaning in a communication exchange is not a fixed concept, but is determined locally by all the participants in the conversation; b) there is no 'optimal' native speakers' baseline since different acts of communication are accomplished in different ways since they may entail a variety of available resources; and c) the negotiation process which takes place at every speakers' turns, and which underlies all acts of communication, should be the focus of the analysis, in contrast to the approach adopted by modification studies which analyze the use of specific elements or modifications, and, thus, "the interaction process is projected onto the use of linguistic elements" (p. 223). Another issue that Wagner discusses in his article is the extent to which the results obtained in modifications studies utilizing elicited data can be applied to naturally occurring foreign language interactions. After comparing exemplars from both elicited data and naturally occurring data in the work place, this author concludes that it is not possible to generalize about how NS and NNS converse since the business data that he analyzes contain less amount of input modifications than the ones reported in modification studies. Some possible explanations for this includes the social roles of the speakers during the conversation, and the professional expectations towards the interlocutor's competence, which, according to Wagner, have to do with the recipient design of a conversationalist's turn, which means that "... [the] speakers orient their turns towards the conditions valid for the listener at the point of the conversation. Recipient design, therefore, is always a local matter" (Wagner 1996: 230). An obvious implication from Wagner's claims is the need to conduct further research involving naturally occurring data using his proposed method of analysis in order to reach a better understanding of the mechanisms involved in non-native interactions.

In addition to research examining both linguistic and conversational modifications, some studies have attempted to explore the **effects** of both linguistic (i.e., simpler syntax and vocabulary) and conversational (i.e.., repetition of constituents, paraphrase, use of synonyms, extrapositions) modifications on second language comprehension and acquisition. With respect to **comprehension**, Ellis (1994: 276-277) indicates that

> ... there is mixed evidence regarding the value of linguistically simplified input for promoting comprehension. Whereas speech rate does have a clear effect, grammatical modifications do not always result in improved comprehension. Firmer support exists for the beneficial effects of interactionally modified input on comprehension. We should note, however, that the presence of interactional modification is no guarantee that

> comprehension has taken place.... Learners may choose to feign comprehension after negotiation rather than continue to demonstrate to their interlocutors that they have not understood.

The results from this type of research, however, needs to be taken with caution due to the type of methodology used in the studies, which consisted of comparing unmodified versions of both oral and written input (lecturettes and reading passages) with artificially modified versions of the same input, i.e., versions which the researchers had previously modified themselves. A different type of methodology which might prove more fruitful for the investigation of the effects of input modifications on comprehension has been used in a study conducted by Jensen (this volume) concerning listening to L2 lectures.

With respect to the effects of input and interaction on second language **acquisition**, some researchers such as Hatch (1978), who have been inspired by research on first language acquisition, have suggested that it is through interaction, that is, through participating in conversations in a L2 that its syntax is learned. As she herself expresses it: "one learns to do conversations, one learns how to interact verbally, and out of this interaction syntactic structures develop" (Hatch, 1978: 404). This is accomplished by means of the process of *scaffolding* according to which syntactic structures are built over several turns by the participants in the conversation. In other words, interaction can aid the acquisition process by providing the L2 learners with opportunities to form vertical constructions, that is, constructions that are built up gradually over several turns in such a way that the learner utterances are constructed by borrowing chunks of speech from the preceding discourse of the native speaker. Similar claims have also been made by other researchers such as Sato (1988), Klein (1981), and Meisel (1987), among others, who have examined learners' expression of temporal reference in discourse.

However, as Sato (1986) indicates, the process of scaffolding may actually work against the learner when acquisition is concerned by allowing him/her to rely on the past time reference previously established by the native speaker and, thus, avoid the need for using overt inflectional past time markings. Furthermore, Sato's study on the development of English past time reference by two Vietnamese boys suggests that although conversational interaction facilitated the subjects' communicative performance, it fostered the acquisition of some linguistic features of the L2 (e.g., adverbial expressions and lexical past verbs) but not others (e.g., verbal inflections). In Sato's own words, "... conversational interaction makes some markers of PTR [past time reference] more salient than others and thus

probably contributes to variability in their patterns of acquisition" (Sato 1986: 44). Likewise, Færch and Kasper (1986: 263) indicate that

> ... the use of scaffolded structures seems to provide learners with an easy way out of participating in classroom discourse: the initiative is largely the teacher's, who elicits the structure bit by bit, and often there is no repetition of the resulting syntagm, so that the impression left is one of a piecemeal type of interaction.

Furthermore, as Færch and Kasper argue, the psycholinguistic presuppositions underlying the role of vertical constructions in language acquisition seem also to be problematic in the sense that learners are assumed to "preserve a formal representation of the gradually emerging structure, whereas according to evidence from memory studies ... , it is more likely that a semantic representation is kept in store at points of turn-taking" (Færch and Kasper 1986: 263). In other words, there is a risk that the learner forgets the actual formal structure and only remembers a semantic representation of it. Both Sato's and Færch and Kasper's criticisms must be born in mind when considering the role of the process of scaffolding in the acquisition of L2 syntax.

Another way in which interaction can aid the acquisition process has been suggested by researchers such as Young & Doughty (1987) who indicate that there are some rules for successful participation in conversations which can only be acquired by participating in interaction: rules for turn-taking in different social situations, rules for the organization of topics and the ways in which topics can be switched during conversations, rules for taking, holding and ceding the floor, among others.

One of the researchers who has mostly emphasized the important role of interaction in SLA is Long (1985) who claims that the modified input that learners are exposed to and the ways in which native speakers interact in conversations with learners is a crucial element for second language acquisition. In other words, according to Long, the interactional modifications that occur in the negotiation of meaning when communication problems arise are a necessary element for SLA to take place. Long has formulated the following indirect causal relationship between linguistic and interactional adjustments, and language acquisition: (1) interactional modifications make input comprehensible; (2) comprehensible input promotes acquisition; therefore (3) interactional modification promotes acquisition. However, as Ellis (1994) indicates, most of the studies have more or less demonstrated step (1), while the evidence in support of step (2), which seems to be,

in fact, the crucial step, is primarily indirect. More specifically, according to Ellis, the existent evidence is correlational in nature (e.g., caretaker and foreigner talk co-occur with successful acquisition, older learners learn faster, etc.) and, thus, it cannot be claimed that comprehensible input causes acquisition. Step (2) needs, therefore, further empirical support[2].

3. Psycholinguistic perspectives on second language comprehension and acquisition.

As said in the introduction to this paper, this line of investigation has attempted to examine the cognitive processes involved in the acquisition of a second language. More specifically, in this line of inquiry researchers have been concerned with issues such as how learners process and attend to the L2 input during the process of comprehension, what part of that input becomes intake, what strategies are used to decode and store linguistic information in memory and other related issues.

An important distinction which has been made in the relevant literature is the input / intake distinction. Input can be defined as the target language data that the learner is exposed to, while intake is the subset of input which is noticed or attended to by the learner when processing the input. As Chaudron (1985: 2) indicates, "the fundamental characteristic of the conception of the term *intake*, which distinguishes from *input*, is that it identifies the learner as an active agent in acquiring the target language." According to this researcher, this rejection of the learner as a passive entity was present in the first definition of intake provided by Corder (1967: 165): "... input is "what goes in" not what is *available* for going in, and we may reasonably suppose that it is the learner who controls this input, or more properly his intake... ". In other words, as Leow (1993: 334) states, "intake...is usually defined as an intermediate process between the exposure to L2 input and actual language acquisition". That is, not all input that the learner is exposed to becomes automatically acquired.

One of the researchers who have mostly emphasized the role of input in the acquisition of a second language is Krashen (1982, 1985) who believes that input, or more specifically, meaningful, comprehensible input, is the only causative variable in second language acquisition. In his Input Hypothesis, Krashen states that humans acquire languages by understanding messages, that is, by receiving comprehensible input. Furthermore, according to this researcher, learners progress along the natural order of acquisition by understanding input that contains structures at the next "stage", that is, structures that are a bit beyond the learners' level of competence. In Krashen's own words (1985: 2), "we move from *i*, our

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current level, to $i + 1$, the next level along the natural order, by understanding input containing $i + 1$". Understanding language containing unacquired elements is possible with the help of context, which includes extralinguistic information, the learner´s knowledge of the world and previously acquired competence. In other words, Krashen believes that comprehension is necessary in order for the input to become intake. However, he points out that comprehensible input containing i + 1 is a necessary but not sufficient condition for language acquisition. The two conditions that he posits (Krashen 1982) is that the learner is focused on meaning, i.e., wants to communicate, and that the comprehensible i + 1 forms occur with a sufficient frequency in the input.

Krashen's claims have been supported by studies conducted on both first and second language acquisition involving children whose only exposure to the language comes from television (see Long 1981, 1983 for review of such studies). These studies have shown that children who are exposed to large doses of input in the form of NS-NS models, but who are not provided with comprehensible input, do not fully either acquire the language. The results of these studies seem to suggest that unmodified and incomprehensible input is not presumably sufficient for acquisition to take place. An additional piece of evidence for Krashen´s viewpoint is be the fact that all cases of successful language acquisition seem to involve the availability of comprehensible input.

Even though most researchers have agreed with Krashen that comprehensible input is a necessary ingredient for successful language acquisition, several of them have emphasized that comprehensible input is not the only sufficient mechanism for SLA to occur. Thus, Swain (1985) has proposed the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, and has claimed that in addition to comprehensible input, comprehensible output is also a necessary mechanism for SLA. According to Swain, output has three important functions in the acquisition process: (1) it provides the opportunity for contextualized meaningful use of the learner's linguistic resources; (2) it provides a means to test out the learner's hypothesis about the L2; and (3) it may force the learner to move from semantic (top-down) processing to syntactic (bottom-up) processing since, according to her, while comprehension of the input can take place with little syntactic analysis of that input, production forces learners to pay more attention to the means of expression. However, Swain points out that plentiful opportunities to produce the language will not in itself guarantee acquisition; in other words, in order to achieve a native-speaker competence of the language, the learner must go beyond the simple *getting the message across* since this can be achieved by means of using grammatically

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deviant forms and sociolinguistically inappropriate language. As Swain (1985: 248-249) points out, "negotiating meaning needs to incorporate the notion of being pushed towards the delivery of a message that is not only conveyed, but that is conveyed precisely, coherently, and appropriately."

Another researcher who has criticized Krashen's Input Hypothesis is White (1987) who claims that, in some cases, comprehensible input is not enough; thus, according to this author, certain types of incorrect generalizations that the learner makes about the L2 cannot be unlearnt by simply understanding the input. These are cases where the learners assume that something is possible in the L2 which is in fact not possible, and there is no explicit L2 input which will tell them that they are making an incorrect generalization. White provides the example of the English dative alternations where some verbs like 'give' allow two possible complements (*John gave some money to the hospital / John gave the hospital some money*) whereas other verbs such as 'donate' allow only one of the complements (*John donated some money to the hospital / *John donated the hospital some money*). In the case of the verb 'donate', the input will reveal to the learner the presence of the first construction, but not the absence of the incorrect construction; in other words, if a learner's grammar contains the incorrect construction, no amount of comparing this form with the L2 input will show him /her that such a construction is wrong. In cases like this, negative evidence in the form of, for example, corrective feedback seems to be necessary. Furthermore, White argues that in addition to comprehensible input, incomprehensible input is also vital for language acquisition. Her viewpoint is that, in some instances, failure to understand a sentence may force the learner to pay closer attention to its syntactical properties in order to obtain clues about its meaning, which will foster the acquisition process.

In addition, Krashen' s view that comprehensible input causes acquisition, i.e., that acquisition automatically results from comprehension, has been challenged by a number of researchers who have argued that, in fact, comprehension does not necessarily lead to acquisition. In other words, language acquisition does not necessarily follow from comprehension. In fact, there are several researchers who have stressed the fact that the processes of comprehension and acquisition are actually quite different in nature. Thus, according to Sharwood Smith (1986), the L2 input should be conceived in the light of the different notions of comprehension (which involves the decoding of particular messages which have been encoded in linguistic form) and acquisition (which involves the creation of new mental structures). Thus, the linguistic input will have a dual relevance in the sense that

> the interpretation of input will, then, take two distinct forms: that which specifically involves extracting meaning from all relevant information perceived by the language user, and that which involves the mechanisms responsible for creating (or restructuring) grammatical competence (Sharwood Smith 1986: 139).

He further claims that both comprehension and acquisition can happen at the same time; that is, at a specific moment the learner's main aim may be to extract meaning from the L2 input, i.e., he / she will interpret the input for meaning, but at the same time, there will be some linguistic input that which will be relevant to the current state of the learner's competence so that the acquisition device will interpret the input for acquisition.

Gass' (1988) model of language acquisition also makes a explicit differentiation between the processes of comprehension and acquisition. Her five-stage model proceeds from ambient speech to output with each intervening stage characterized by a reduction in the amount of language available for processing: (1) the first stage is *apperceived input*, which is defined by Gass as "... that bit of language which is noticed in some way by the learner because of some particular features" (p. 202); (2) the second stage is *comprehended input* since not all input that is apperceived is comprehended by the learner; (3) the third stage is *intake*, that is, this stage involves the separation of comprehended input from intake since not all input which is comprehended becomes intake; thus, input may be comprehended only for the immediate purpose of conversational interaction, or it may be used purposes of learning; (4) the fourth stage is *integration* which results from the process of intake and has two possible outcomes: the development "per se" of the learner's second language grammar and the storage of the grammatical information; and (5) the *output* stage which allows for the possibility of having acquired L2 knowledge and not being able to access it for productive use.

Finally, the distinction between comprehension and acquisition is also present in Chaudron's (1985) characterization of intake, which is considered a complex phenomenon involving several stages which constitute a continuum from preliminary intake to final intake: (1) the initial stages of perception of input; (2) the subsequent stages of recoding and encoding of semantic (communicated) information into long-term memory; and (3) the series of stages by which learners fully integrate and incorporate the linguistic information into their developing grammars. In short, preliminary intake involves the perception and comprehension of forms, while final intake involves the integration of linguistic forms into the learners' grammars, i.e., acquisition.

What is important to highlight here is that Sharwood Smith's, Gass' and Chaudron's proposals or models emphasize the fact that the processes of comprehension and acquisition are different, and that comprehension does not necessarily result in acquisition. Comprehension as a process is related to communication and does not necessarily equal the process of acquiring a language; in other words, one thing is to understand a message and another, to make use of input contained in that message for developing the L2 language system.

Comprehension can be reached, for instance, by using the L1 linguistic system. A clear example of this would be a native speaker of Spanish who would be capable of comprehending Italian with his / her L1 system during interactions with Italian speakers and without necessarily developing an Italian linguistic system. In other words, it is possible for a learner to be able to 'function' in a communicative interaction but not receive the right kind of input for acquisition.

Furthermore, as several other researchers have pointed out, understanding the L2 input does not necessarily entail paying close attention to all linguistic form in that input. In other words, comprehension does not only involve the use of "bottom-up" cues. In fact, as first and second language reading research has shown, comprehension entails the complex interaction of "top-down" and "bottom-up" processing. "Bottom-up" processes work on the incoming message, decoding sounds, words, clauses and sentences while "top-down" processes use the reader's background knowledge to assist in comprehending the message. As Clarke and Silberstein (1977: 136-137) have stated:

> more information is contributed by the reader than by the print on the page. That is, readers understand what they read because they are able to take the stimulus beyond its graphic representation and assign it membership to an appropriate group of concepts already stored in their memories... The reader brings to the task a formidable amount of information and ideas, attitudes and beliefs. This knowledge, coupled with the ability to make linguistic predictions, determines the expectations the reader will develop as he reads.

In order words, according to interactive models of reading, comprehension entails the process of relating new material to knowledge already stored in memory. As Anderson and Pearson (1984: 255) has expressed:

> to say that one has comprehended a text is to say that she has found a mental 'home' for the information in the text, or else that she has modified an existing mental home in order to accommodate that new information.

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Research in listening comprehension has also stressed the importance of "top-down" processing during the act of listening. Thus, Rost (1990: 33) defines listening comprehension as "essentially an inferential process based on the perception of cues rather than straightforward matching of sound to meaning". Rost suggests that the L2 listener must perform the following inferential processes while listening: (a) estimating the sense of lexical references; (b) constructing propositional meaning through supplying case-relational links; (c) assigning a "base (conceptual) meaning" in the discourse; (d) assigning underlying links in the discourse; and (e) assuming a plausible intention for the speaker´s utterances.

Other models of listening comprehension such as the one proposed by Wolvin and Coakley (1985, as cited in Lee & VanPatten 1995) have also emphasized the active role of the listener during comprehension. Thus, these authors divide the act of listening process into three main set of processes: (1) perception of the aural stimuli, which refers to the physiological aspect of listening; (2) attention to the aural stimuli, which refers to the fact that the listener must, at a given moment, select the aural stimuli that he /she will attend to and the one(s) that he /she will disregard; that is, we are capable of perceiving many sounds around us at the same time, but we attend only to some of them; and (3) assignation of meaning to perceived and attended stimuli, which involves personal, cultural and linguistic aspects interacting in complex ways, and also involves the construction of meaning through inference, i.e., the listener projects beyond the referential meaning of the speaker's utterance by assigning, for example, an illocutionary meaning to that utterance.

The fact that understanding the L2 input does not necessarily entail paying close attention to all linguistic form in that input has also been noted by VanPatten (1985) who mentions several cases of learners' selective listening. In a longitudinal study involving conversations between a near-native speaker of Spanish and ten adult learners of this language, VanPatten (1983, 1984) isolated several instances where the learners were ignoring how something was being said to them, i.e., not paying attention to specific grammatical features in the input[3]. This led VanPatten to conclude that the learner's attention was focused on comprehending the message, i.e., on meaning during the communicative act and that grammatical form or structure was being ignored. In fact, cognitive psychologists have long discussed the fact that, due to being limited-capacity processors, humans selectively focus their attention when processing incoming stimuli. Thus, as Færch and Kasper (1986: 270) point out:

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> in verbal interactions with a focus on communication, the limited capacities of the human information-processing system make it unlikely for learners to attend to their interlocutor's message while at the same time consciously perceiving formal characteristics of the input and comparing them to current IL rules.

If it is both true that learners can extensively (over)rely on top-down processes during comprehension, and that they are cognitively limited as to the amount of information they are able to attend to while comprehending L2 input, and, as a result, they do not pay much close attention to form in the input, the question that, then, needs to be considered is when and how acquisition of new L2 material will take place. According to cognitive theory, second language learning is viewed as the acquisition of a complex cognitive skill involving the transfer of information to long-term memory, which is accomplished by the automatization of early controlled processes[4]. Taking this view as a starting point, VanPatten (1985) has suggested that due to the limited attentional capacities of human beings, attending to the informational content of a message may constitute a controlled process requiring large amounts of effort and processing capacity for learners at the early and intermediate stages of language acquisition. And as a consequence, there is no attentional resources left to pay attention to all grammatical forms in the input. In this case, it seems that the elements with high communicative value[5], i.e., carrying important communicative information (e.g., content words, lexical items and meaningful morphology) become focal. However, as the learners build up an acquired system of the foreign language, attention to content becomes a more automatic type of process requiring little processing energy, and as a result, the learner is more able to pay attention to, or notice, other aspects of the speech delivered, i.e., items of less communicative value (e.g., English third person -s). With enough time and exposure to the language, these forms will become candidates for intake so that the learner can acquire them.

The obvious implication to be drawn from this is the need to provide the learners with as much comprehensible input as possible so that their comprehension skills become more and more automatized and their attentional resources can, then, be allocated on linguistic items that might not have been noticed before. And this process of noticing is extremely important since it is been claimed to be essential for language acquisition to take place. Thus, according to Schmidt (1990), subliminal learning is impossible and some degree of consciousness at the level of noticing is necessary for SLA[6]. In a study carried out by Schmidt and Frota (1986), the researchers compared the features that one learner had noticed in the

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L2 input (as registered in the learner's diary) to the same learner's output in order to determine to what extent the noticed forms appeared in communicative speech. The results of the study showed that in almost every case the new forms that kept turning up in the learner's output were the same that he had noticed in the L2 input addressed at him; and conversely, those forms that were present in the comprehensible input did not show up in the learner's output until they had been noticed. In other word, noticing a form in the input seems to be the first necessary step for that input to become intake.

Furthermore, authors like Schmidt and Frota (1986) and Færch and Kasper (1986) have suggested that for noticed input to become intake, L2 learners must be able to carry out a comparison of what they have noticed in the input and their own production. In other words, only when the learners are able to perceive or notice a gap between the material in the input and their current stage of interlanguage, i.e., a gap in their knowledge, can acquisition take place. This process has been referred to as *noticing the gap*. Færch and Kasper further specify that for input to become intake for learning, learners need to experience comprehension problems, perceive such problems as gaps or deficits in their interlanguage systems and consider these gaps as their own responsibility and not that of the interlocutor. However, according to these authors, whether or not acquisition takes place will depend on a number of factors, such as the ease or difficulty with which the new material can be integrated into the learner's long-term memory, the relative communicative value attributed to it by the learner and the occasions for rehearsal that the learner will get in order to improve memory strength. However, as indicated earlier, researchers such as White (1987) and Schmidt and Frota (1986) themselves have argued that there are some cases when it may impossible or very difficult for the learner to detect a gap in the L2 input, i.e., situations where there will be no obvious gap between the input data and the learner's current interlanguage system and where inconsistencies will not be apparent from mere exposure or examination of the input. In cases like this, negative evidence in the form of corrective feedback or overt explanations seems to be necessary for interlanguage development since it will increase the learner's ability to notice the gap.

4. Conclusions

As expressed by authors such as Dunkel (1991), interest in listening comprehension research has been greatly motivated by the growing realization in SLA circles of the critical role that input plays in the acquisition of a second language. That is,

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even though Krashen's Input Hypothesis has been criticized on a number of grounds, there seems to be a general consensus that comprehensible, meaning-bearing input (i.e., input containing information that the learner attempts to understand) is a necessary ingredient for successful SLA since, in the end, it constitutes the primary raw data that the L2 learner uses to construct his /her developing linguistic system. However, as it has been repeatedly claimed, comprehensible input seems not to be enough for language acquisition to happen: the role of interaction, of comprehensible output, of incomprehensible input, and of negative evidence need also to be taken into account.

The realization of the important role that comprehensible input has in SLA has also had a great impact on foreign language teaching. Thus, comprehension-based approaches to language teaching, such as the French immersion programs in Canada and the Total Physical Response Method developed by James Asher in the USA, emphasize the importance of providing the students with plentiful comprehensible input through listening and reading activities. According to Lightbown and Spada (1993), research on the outcomes of such methodology has shown that such comprehension-based programs seem to be beneficial in the development of basic comprehension and communicative performance in the early stages of second language acquisition, but that they may not be sufficient for the development of accurate linguistic production at more advanced acquisition levels. However, it is not only purely comprehension-based methodologies that incorporate comprehensible input in language teaching, but also the so-called communicative approaches to language teaching recognize the importance of providing the students with ample opportunities of listening to the L2 since the very start of language instruction. Increasingly, however, researchers (Rost, this volume) have also realized the importance of developing specific listening tasks whose aim is to focus learners' attention on successful listening strategies, and incorporate these tasks in foreign language teaching.

Notes

[1] As it will be discussed later, the term 'interactional' and 'interactive' has also been used in research conducted under the psycholinguistic perspective. Thus, in first and second language research interactive models of reading have been proposed (for example, Rumelhart, 1977) which view comprehension as a process being constructed from different knowledge sources interacting with each other on the written input.

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[2] This question will be treated in more detail in the next section of this article where further criticisms of Krashen's Input Hypothesis will be reviewed.

[3] Learners seemed to ignore the correct use of the Spanish copula verb 'estar' in the native speaker's input and produced a utterance with the wrong copula verb 'ser' in several occasions.

[4] In cognitive psychology (Shiffrin and Schneider 1977; McLaughlin, Rossman and McLeod 1983), a distinction has been made between controlled and automatic modes of processing. Controlled processes are tightly capacity-limited, and require large amounts of processing energy and effort, while automatic processes do not require large amounts of processing energy, and do not interfere with controlled processes.

[5] As defined in VanPatten (1996), communicative value refers to the relative contribution that a form makes to the referential meaning of an utterance, and it is based on the presence or absence of two features: inherent semantic value and redundancy.

[6] However, Tomlin & Villa (1994) review several studies within cognitive psychology and suggest that consciousness or awareness is not a necessary component of attention, i.e., no component of attention (alertness, orientation or detection) requires awareness.

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Listening to lectures.

Anne Jensen.

Summary.
The aim of this paper is to present an overview of perspectives involved in studying lectures and an example from a quasi-experimental study in which I analyze the characteristics of lectures and of the modifications found in lectures addressed to L2 learners.

1. Introduction.

The title of this paper can be seen from two perspectives:
1. What do we **hear** when we listen to lectures, that is what are the characteristics of lectures?
2. What do we **do** when we listen to lectures, in other words what are the processes used by students in (academic) listening?[1]

This paper will elaborate in more detail the first question, the characteristics of lectures, and less the problems which arise when we try to understand a lecture, though the two perspectives are naturally related.

The lecture is still the predominant activity in much university teaching in the different faculties in Denmark and elsewhere. That is also true for the Humanities though the number of students in each class is probably lower here than elsewhere. And the number of students is perhaps exactly, along with the hereditary tradition, the ritual as Herskin (1995:127) calls it, our reason for maintaining this activity, - although few of us seem to think that lectures always create optimal learning situations. In the Humanities language students are not only met with this new activity for which they have to learn the rules, but also with the fact that several of the lectures are presented to them in the foreign language they are studying. And what is more: they are often presented by non-native speakers (NNSs).

In 1994 a book, a collection of articles about L2 lecture listening, was published, namely "Academic Listening. Research perspectives" edited by Flowerdew. Unfortunately it focusses only on English as a second language.

But why should we study what goes on in lectures, or more specifically in L2 lectures? Apart from the fact that linguists have an intellectual interest in analyzing

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any kind of discourse and systematize their observations, the research which focuses on lectures also has several practical implications.

One is the possibility of making students aware of the characteristics of lectures once we know them. Chaudron argues that it is

> important for second-language teachers to be aware of the marks of general lecture style, in order to prepare their students to anticipate both general lecture structure and signals of informations flow, and the signals in lectures of opportunities for questions and interaction with the lecturer. (Chaudron, 1995:75)

Secondly, we can use the lecture data for new experiments in which we can study how learners actually comprehend lectures and the features that seem to influence comprehension. And, thirdly, if the characteristics found in experienced teachers' lectures turn out to be beneficial for the listeners' processing of input, we can teach them to inexperienced teachers and to the non-native speaker teachers mentioned above.

2. Pragmatic factors involved in listening to lectures.

When we listen to lectures or at least most lectures, we notice that they are different from other listening activities, that they do not really fit into the traditional registers of written or oral communication. In this respect, it is surprising that while for many years there was a tendency to maintain the dichotomy of oral and written language, and to view each of them as unified phenomena, the study of listening and reading processes has only recently been separated. In other words, researchers involved in research on language production separated language products according to the medium involved in them, i.e. in discourse and text. On the other hand, until the 1960s, researchers involved in studying comprehension, - thought, or at least pretended, that the processes involved in reading and listening comprehension were similar once the initial processing stages were accomplished, or more precisely, that reading was parasitic on listening (Danks & End 1987, Samuels 1987). Today the dichotomy of oral and written language is considered too simplistic, and at least in the French tradition we use the word "discours" when talking about both written and oral language. But we also know that even if listening and reading processes are interrelated there are reasons to believe that the differences in oral discourse and written texts influence the comprehension processes (Horowitz & Samuels 1987).

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Among the characteristic conditions for lecturing are the following which supposedly influence language usage just as much as the fact that they are delivered in an oral mode:

1. The situation where lectures are heard is very specific: one lecturer in front of listeners in a lecture room. S/he may use support: notes, books, overheads, chalk and blackboard and perhaps video.

2. The most salient characteristic of the lecture is probably that it is non-collaborative[2] (or transactional as opposed to interactional as Rost calls it (1990, chapter 5)). It means that there is little or no verbal feedback from listeners, which of course excludes the possibility of having clarification requests and comprehension checks which are known to be significant aids to comprehension from several studies (for example Pica et al. 1986). The lecturer therefore has to try to predict the problems that students will meet when listening to his/her lecture and plan in a manner that makes it easier for them to process and retain.

3. Lectures focus on propositional meaning, i.e. they are message oriented, their raison d'être is to inform about a certain subject contrary to much other oral communication where we find a whole range of different speech acts (to promise, to ask, to thank, to apologize etc.).

This means that lectures are decontextualised or at least contextualised in a rather special way. A lecture is normally, in everyday teaching, one in a series of lectures on related subjects that students know about from former lectures and from the reading they have done. However they can also be isolated lectures presented by guest lecturers, where the context is only created by the title of the lecture, the abstract plus the listener's former knowledge.This former knowledge can be considered as a great help, since there is a substantial body of research that shows that prior knowledge normally improves our comprehension and recall of text and discourse (for a general overview see Harley 1995, chapter 7).

4. The background knowledge in lectures is more specific, or as Flowerdew puts it:

> In a lecture, listeners are likely to require a knowledge of the specialist subject matter, while in conversation, necessary background knowledge will be more general. (Flowerdew 1994:11).

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5. Contrary to a lot of other oral communication, lectures are planned. The course of the lecture is, in other words, not as unpredictable as for instance the course of a conversation. However, there is room for unplanned discourse even in the most formal lectures, for instance asides (ex. jokes, comments..) which have been studied by Strodt-Lopez (1991).

6. There is an unequal relationship between speaker and listener and it is institutionalized. This means that the lecturer has the control of the floor and decides whether and when listeners can ask questions and make comments.

These six points refer to what we could call the distinctive features for the conditions of lectures. They are all part of the expectations that students have about what is likely to happen when they attend a lecture, or the "scripts" (Schank & Abelson 1977, see also Harley 1995:228-231) for comprehending lectures. And they influence what lecturers think is appropriate to do and say while lecturing.

3. Distinctive features of the lecture.

Unfortunately, only a few characteristics of the distinctive linguistic features of lectures are available, because the - mainly British - researchers who have written dissertations about lectures, especially in 1970s and some in the 1980s have not published their results and thus the contents of the dissertations are generally not available.[3]

Fortunately, some studies have been published, as in the case of an interesting article by Chafe and Danielewicz (1987) who report a number of results which stem from a comparison of conversations, lectures, letters and academic papers produced by 20 subjects.

The most important results are the following:

1. When analyzing vocabulary, they find that there is less lexical variety (type/token ratio is lower) in lectures than in letters and academic papers, but slightly more than in conversations. According to Chafe and Danielewicz, this is due to the necessity of rapid production in spoken language, which does not allow the speaker to search for words, or to revise them to any great extent once they are uttered. So, according to these researchers, the constraints inherent in the two modes (the spoken and the written) are the most influencial factors. They do not consider

whether the different recipients, that is the readers and the listeners, influence language choices.

2. Secondly, they find that the number of hedges used in lectures and conversations is higher than in letters and papers. Hedges are words like *sort of*, *kind of* that indicate that the speaker is not satisfied with the lexical item s/he has chosen, but cannot find a more precise one.

3. They find more literary vocabulary in lectures than in conversation.

4. When they look at intonation units, defined as a single coherent intonation contour followed by a pause, and likely to be a clause (Chafe & Danielewicz 1987: 95), they find more words (7.3) per intonation unit than in conversations, less than in letters and academic papers (9.3). The increase in intonation length is mainly due to the more frequent use of prepositional phrases, nominalizations and attributive adjectives and nouns.

5. Finally they find much more coordination of sentences in lectures than in letters and academic papers, but less than in conversations.

Chafe and Danielewicz (1987:111) conclude that the lectures they examine use a:

> Mixed kind of language, still controlled by the constraints of rapid production, but striving after some of the elegance and detachment of formal writing.

This reminds us of Tannen (1982) who talks about lectures as being "an example of spoken language that is very writtenlike".

From the characteristics given above, one may get the impression that lectures are one uniform kind of communication. However this is not true. Dudley-Evans & Johns (1981) (as quoted in Chaudrons and Richards 1986) and Dudley-Evans (1994) establish three categories of lectures: a reading style, a more informal conversational style and a rhetorical style:

In the reading style the lecturer reads from notes or speaks as if s/he was reading from notes. This style is characterized by short tone groups, and narrowness of inonational range, with falling tone predominating. In conversational style, the lecturer speaks informally with or without notes. It is characterized by longer tone groups and key-sequences from high to low. And

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finally, in rhetorical style we find the lecturer as performer, s/he uses a wide intonational range, often exploiting high key and even boosted high key. There are frequent asides and digressions in this style.

The lectures we have been considering until now were lectures addressed to native speakers (NSs) by other native speakers. Let us now consider L2 lectures.

4. L2 lectures and modifications.

When we look at the micro-skills involved in listening to lectures we realize that academic listening requires quite a lot of effort from L1-listeners, and it is therefore not difficult to imagine that L2 students generally find lectures difficult to follow, at least in the first years of their studies. Besides, we have to bear in mind that they often have additional problems with understanding lexical items, with syntax and phonology, and with recognizing discourse markers, and finally perhaps also with an academic culture that is different from the one they are used to. Even if L2 learners have achieved a level where they do not have direct problems with these things they may use so much cognitive capacity that little is left for processing the actual content of the lecture. A shared experience for most language students is probably the feeling of having understood everything in a lecture without being able to remember it.

Native speakers seem to be aware of these difficulties when lecturing to L2 students. Just like native speakers in other situations, they are able to adjust or modify their speech to what they **perceive** as being the level of the learner. Parents modify when speaking to children (motherese or caretaker speech) and some people even modify when they speak to the elderly or to pets. People also modify when speaking to foreigners, (foreigner talk). Teachers modify when they speak to learners (teacher talk) and of course also to L2 learners (a mixture of foreigner and teacher talk). Finally we have also discovered that university teachers modify when lecturing to L2 students.

As we can see, people modify whenever they perceive a linguistic, an intellectual or a social difference between themselves and the listener. One could argue that what happens here is that speakers adjust their speech to the person they are speaking to and that this is true for any communication. Firth and Wagner (1997) for instance have argued that the word "modification" seems to indicate that a baseline version has somehow been changed to suit a certain group of listeners. Even if we agree that the word modification is unfortunate if it is understood in that way, it is clear that there is still a considerable difference, not so much in kind but more in degree between speech adressed to other native speakers and speech

addressed to speakers who are perceived as being linguistically "impared" (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991:125-126). This means that a comparison is necessary as a control of the results we find, otherwise we could not know whether some feature or other is peculiar to modified language.

People are not always aware that they modify and when they are, they are only partly conscious about what they actually do. When asked, they generally report that they try to speak slowly and that they "explain things". Linguists have ways of systematizing these modifications and they have found a whole range of characteristics. Interestingly enough, this kind of modified language seems to have traits in common with other simplified registers, like pidgin/creole and interlanguage, but also with forms found in old language. Comparisons have been made of different registers for example of relative clauses in interlanguage and relative clauses in Old French (Flament-Boistrancourt 1985).

Cadierno (this volume) has already mentioned some of the characteristics found in modified language and what is important here is to draw attention to the fact that the characteristics were both lexical, syntactical, phonological and discursive.

When the mainly quantitative results from these studies are presented in tables, like in Chaudron (1988), we easily get the impression that they are comparable. It is difficult to compare the studies because of the following reasons:

- data are collected in different situations,
- within the studies different situations which do not seem comparable are compared (ex. teaching and conversation with colleagues),
- different analytical methods are used,
- different features are examined in different studies,
- there are methodological or statistical problems in several of the studies (see also Chaudron 1988:89).

It is therefore much more difficult than it would seem at first to get a uniform picture of the adjustments involved.

All these reasons together with the fact that very few studies have examined adjustments made in other languages than English, and that only one study (Wesche & Ready 1985) has examined modifications in university L2 lectures, made me want to carry out my own research of which I will present one aspect here.

5. Modified input in L2 lectures – a study.

5.1 Design

The work is still in progress and the preliminary title in English is: "The characteristics of French Modified Input in University Lectures". Another study, where the effects of modifications on comprehension of lectures are examined, has been undertaken, data are collected but not analysed yet.

Data for the present study were collected in the following way: A study was designed which involved 3 native speakers of French who were all experienced university teachers. They were asked to choose an article among 15 articles and to prepare short lectures based on it. The 15 articles were selected by me following two criteria: a) The topics of the articles were supposed to be unknown to the undergraduate students who were involved in the project and b) at the same time they were supposed to be of general interest. The first native speaker preferred to talk about one of her own stories rather than an article since she is also a writer of fiction. This was allowed since I thought it was important that the native speakers spoke about something they felt strongly about and also because short summaries of novels for example are often part of the literature teaching. The second one chose to talk about Canadian French, le québécois, and the language situation in Québec. The last native speaker chose an article on child psychology.

The native speakers were asked to prepare their lectures as they would normally do when they teach. They were allowed to take notes and to use them when speaking, but they were asked not to look at the article during the lecture. This was to ensure that they had prepared the lectures so well that they would be independent of the language of the articles and therefore free to adjust their speech to the listeners. They were also told that they were expected to convey the same "propositional content" or information, as I called it, to the three groups of listeners they were going to talk to, and that I was going to check the listeners' comprehension after the experiment. They were not told that I was interested in modified input in order to avoid the "Hawthorne effect"[4] and thereby keep the validity of the study.

The listeners were asked not to give feedback during the lectures and the lecturers were aware of the fact that no interaction was going to take place. This was because I wanted the experiment to reflect an everyday situation in the university classroom where teachers often lecture without getting feedback, at least for longer periods of time and also because I wanted to get comparable data.

The three groups of listeners were: native speakers of French and first and second year students of French from the University of Copenhagen. The lecturers

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were allowed 10-15 minutes of conversation with each group immediately before they began lecturing in order to get to know the listeners.

The first native speaker's lecture was tape-recorded, the two other lectures were videotaped in a professional studio. The lectures lasted between 5 and 15 minutes and the total of recorded speech was 1 hour and 26 minutes.

The data were transcribed and are analysed for modifications of length, speech rate, pauses, articulation, marked stress, syntax, vocabulary, and finally, modifications of discourse. The results of the analyses of speech rate and pause length and frequency are reported in Jensen 1995.

5.2 Structuring the lecture.

This presentation will concentrate on modifications of discourse, more specifically on how one of the lecturers presents the main ideas to the three groups and how discourse markers are used to structure the lectures.

The lecture presents Bruno Bettelheims theories about the role of playing in childhood, how playing allows the child to make analyses of events in the past and in the future, how playing is an important activity in exercising not only the body but also the thought, and finally how playing teaches the child perseverance. The lecture describes how parents' attitudes towards the child's plays influence him/her and what happens to children who are deprived of the possibility of playing.

We may expect that all lectures consist of an introduction, an exposition of two or three main ideas, each with explanations, examples etc., and finally a conclusion including a summary. It would then be easy to analyse the lectures with the tools and the French equivalents to markers in English described in, for example, Chaudron and Richards 1986 and Nattinger & DeCarrico 1993. However when analyzing my lectures I soon realized that they do not follow this pattern. Young (1994) reports having similar experience with lectures on language teaching. The open question is whether it is possible to develop methods for analysing any kind of lectures and any style of lectures, or if the lectures which have mainly been analysed until now i.e. lectures in economics, in science and in engineering are so different from lectures in the Humanities that we have to develop new methods for analysing them?

In the following I will present an analysis of the psychology lectures from my study as a way of illustrating both methodological problems and some of the modifications, I have chosen to present an analysis of the openings and the closings of the lectures. The lecturer announces what she is going to talk about in the following way: she refers to an article/ an extract from a book by Bettelheim,

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whom she introduces, and says that she is going to talk about child psychology and the responsibility of the parents in creating situations that are optimal for the child's development. To the NSs she reveals that she is going to talk about the role of playing in the middle of the introduction, to the second year students she waits until the end and when lecturing to the first year students she chooses not to tell them in the introduction.

Let us first look at the openings[5]:

> Bonjour / euh aujourd'hui eu:h j'ai à vous parler eu:h d'un article qui a été publié dans.... (NS)
> [Good morning today I am going to talk to you about an article which was published in...]
>
> Eh bien bonjour / euh aujourd'hui eu::h on m'a demandé de vous présenter / eu:h un article / euh qui a paru dans......(second year)
> [Well hello today I have been asked to present to you an article which was published in...]
>
> Bien / aujourd'hui on m'a demandé de vous présenter // u::n article / qui a été publié dans ...(first year)
> [Well today I have been asked to present to you an article which was published in...]

Except for the fact that the lecturer tells the first and second year students that she has been **asked** to present an article, which justifies her presence, there are no major differences between the versions addressed to the three different groups of listeners. They begin with a greeting and/ or a marker (bien) telling them that the lecture is going to start, followed by a presentation of the origin of the article.

Let us now look at the closing of the lectures:

> (...) mais d'une manière générale la conclusion l'idée de l'ar / de cet extrait c'est-à-dire / le **jeu** a une importance primordiale / depuis le départ / pour créer des gens qui peuvent être plus tard / relativement / harmonieux // merci. (NS)
> [(...) but in general the conclusion the idea of the ar of this extract that is playing is of vital importance from the beginning in creating people who later can be relatively harmonious thank you]
>
> (...) / voilà donc ce que euh Bruno Bettelheim présentait / dans cet extrait tiré encore une fois d'un livre qui s'appelle / je suppose / pour être des parents

acceptables / pour être de bons parents en quelque sorte // merci (second year)
[(...) so that is what Bruno Bettelheim presented in this extract taken once again from a book called I suppose how to become acceptable parents how to become good parents in a way thank you]

(...) // donc vous voyez en **gro:s** l'idée du texte est / **le jeu** / est **très** important / le jeu c'est le plaisir il faut pas l'oublier / mais **attention** parents / hein ne / **cassez** pas / tous les / les choses positives hein / tous tous les résultats positifs / que le jeu peut donner aux enfants / autrement / ils vont avoir des problèmes plus tard / hein / /voilà donc en gros l'essence hein les points essentiels qu'on peut tirer à mon avis / de l'article // merci. (first year)
[(...) so you see in broad outline the idea of the text is playing is very important playing equals pleasure don't forget that but watch out parents uhm don't destroy all the the positive things uhm all all the positive results that playing can bring the children otherwise they are going to get problems later uhm so that is in broad outline uhm the most important points that in my opinion you can deduce from the article thank you.]

The closing is important for the lecturer because it is her last chance to make the students understand the content of the lecture. She does that differently in the three cases: In the case of the NSs, she underlines the importance of playing, to second year students she underlines the parents' role by repeating the title of the article, and in the lecture to the first year students she mentions both. In doing so she uses markers at the beginning and at the end of the conclusion, to underline that she is about to summarize the main points in her lecture: "vous voyez en **gro:s** l'idée du texte est..." and at the end: "voilà donc en gros l'essence hein les points essentiels....." . You will notice other adjustments: use of stress on keywords and pauses in: "l'idée du texte est / **le jeu** / est **très** important" and finally the use of direct speech with imperatives to underline the role of the parents: "mais **attention** parents / hein ne / **cassez** pas / tous les / les choses positives hein / tous les résultats / (...)." Notice the 'hein' which I have chosen to translate by 'uhm' and which means approximately 'n'est-ce pas' but signals a kind of involvement, an invitation, which is noticed several times in the lectures addressed to the first year students.

In short, the first year students walk out of the lecture room with the main topics fresh in their memory because they have been stated clearly at the very end of the lecture.

If we look at the closings in the way we have just done, we may think that the three groups of listeners get different ideas about what the main topic of the lecture is. But that is not the case, however, neither for the students who listened to the

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lectures, nor for the students that I have tested afterwards for the comprehension study mentioned above. We may ask why not? Because the structure of the lecture is not the expected one with an introduction, an exposition phase and a conclusion.

Actually, when we look at the NS lecture, we notice that the conclusion is stated quite early in the lecture where the lecturer says:

> (...) il faut retenir d'après l'article / euh l'idée essentielle qui est / d'accord le jeu apprend beaucoup / **mais** il faut laisser au jeu sa valeur ludique (...) et là je passe pratiquement à la conclusion de l'extrait. (NS)
> ["according to the article one should mark the essential idea which is okay the play teaches you a lot but you should let the play keep its play value (...) and here I jump practically to the conclusion of the extract"]

And later on:

> pour terminer (...) disons que le mot clé // qu'on peut retenir comme parent (...) (NS)
> [to conclude (...) let's say that the key word that you can remember as a parent (...)]

So actually the conclusion is not only given at the end in the NS-version but also twice in earlier parts of the lecture, the first one occuring already when she is one fourth through the lecture.

In the lecture adressed to second year students the same thing happens: after approximately one minute the lecturer says:

> (...) il faut quand même souligner que / la **fin** de l'extrait euh donne une énorme responsabilité au parents (...)
> [(...) I have to underline that the end of the extract gives an enormous responsability to the parents (...)]

and:

> // euhm donc ce sont le:s les éléments essentiels // à / comprendre dans ce texte and donc d'une manière générale à retenir / **le jeu** / est un élément important (...),
> [well these are the essential elements to understand in this text and in general to remember that the play is an important element]

and:

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le mot clé / c'est que / les parents doivent (...)
[the key word is that parents must (...)]

The first year students, on the other hand, have to wait until the end of the relatively long lecture (almost 15 minutes in total compared to 9 (NS-version) and 11 minutes (second year version)) addressed to them to find discourse markers that indicate that the conclusion has been reached, but then they were presented with the rather long closing which we looked at earlier.

5.3 Conclusion.

The examples given above illustrate several things:

Firstly, we cannot expect all lectures to follow a straight forward plan with an introduction, an exposition phase and a conclusion. So when we analyze them we should be aware of the fact that things overlap, they are not straightforward and we should therefore try to find a method than can cope with this fact.

Secondly, if researchers use experimentally modified lectures in comprehension studies, which has been the most common method used (see among others Kelch 1985 og Ross, Long & Yano 1991), they have the advantage of being able to attribute understanding to isolated items which they have themselves manipulated in the lectures. The first problem with this is that modications may work together, so that the effect of all of them together is more important than the effect of the sum of the isolated items; in other words, the whole may be greater than the sum of the parts. The second problem is that these experimentally modified versions always keep the same overall structure, but, as we have seen, a major modification may be the very organisation of the whole lecture, an aspect which has been overlooked in SLA-research until now.

Notes

[1] See e.g. Horowitz & Samuels 1987.

[2] Though one may object that nods, smiles, gestures etc. are a kind of feedback that may influence the lecturer, and that the term non-collaborative is therefore unfortunate.

[3] Some exceptions include studies of the following aspects of lectures: Definitions (Flowerdew 1992) , vocabulary elaborations (Chaudron 1982), macro-organizers (Nattinger & DeCarrico 1992) and discourse markers (Chaudron & Richards 1986).

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[4] The expressions refers to the fact that subjects in experimental studies may be affected by what they think the researcher expects them to do or say.
[5] Transcription conventions: Bold is used for marked stress, / indicates pause, // indicates long pause, : indicates long vowel, :: indicates very long vowel.

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A conversation analytic view on listening comprehension: Implications for the classroom

Catherine E. Brouwer

Abstract

What and how can we teach our students so that they become better at listening in interaction? This is a question often asked by second and foreign language teachers. In this paper, Conversation Analysis, a methodology which addresses the question of how interaction works, is suggested as a resource for developing pedagogical tools for teaching listening. After an introduction to Conversation Analysis (CA) as a methodology, the relevant notions and findings for listening theory and pedagogy are presented. On this basis, it will be demonstrated how CA findings can be applied to listening comprehension instruction.

1. Introduction

This article is an attempt to combine an area of study with a methodology. The area of study is second or foreign language pedagogy, the methodology is conversation analysis. The aim of this article is to offer some suggestions to solve a problem. In Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature on listening comprehension (see for example Dunkel (1991); Rost (1990)) distinctions are made between different listener activities. Listener activities (sometimes called *listener roles*) are dependent on speech situations.

At one end of the continuum we find what has been called *non-participatory*, *non-collaborative* or *transactional* listening. These terms refer to the activity of listening **to** spoken texts or communications, which are often monologic. This type of listening is done in situations that, for miscellaneous reasons, do not allow listeners to interact with the speaker. Examples are listening to the radio, to a lecture, or to a lawyer making his final statement. In these situations the listener's influence on the talk is quite limited.

At the other end of the continuum we find *interactional* listening or *listening in interaction*, which means participating **as** a listener **in** a communication. This listening activity entails visible and/or hearable involvement of the listener to a much higher degree, and it includes making contributions to the talk. Because participants in interaction shift from being a listener to being a speaker and back, they actually shape the talk together with the other. In other words, there is a

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difference between for example listening to lectures (Jensen, this volume) and being a listener in a conversation. The problem I want to address here concerns listening in interaction, and what been, on several occasions, raised by second language teachers: What and how can we teach our students to help them become better at listening in interaction?

The answer to the problem can be regarded as consisting of two parts. First, we have to address the question of what listening in interaction is. Then we can consider how to teach it. Answering the first part of the question is not an easy task. That has to do with the fact that the nature of listening in interaction has not been studied very much, and, therefore, we do not know very much about it. In order to find out how to teach it, we will need to have some idea of what listening in interaction entails, and what kind of skills are involved.

A way of pursuing answers to this question would be to turn to a methodology that, instead of addressing the question of what listening comprehension entails, addresses the question of how interaction works. And I will suggest Conversational Analysis (CA) as such a methodology.

There are several reasons for selecting CA as a methodology to shed light on what listening in interaction is. The most important reason seems to be the central goal of conversation analytic work:

> (...) the description and explication of the competences that ordinary speakers use and rely on in participating in intelligible, socially organized interaction. At its most basic, this objective is one of describing the procedures by which conversationalists produce their own behaviour and understand and deal with the behaviour of others. (Heritage & Atkinson 1984: 1)

In essence then, CA seeks to answer the following questions: How do people manage to understand each other, how do they make themselves understandable, and how do they make meaning? The fact that understandability and meaning are stressed as the focus of research makes this methodology particularly attractive for our purpose.
A second reason is that CA research seeks to explain what is demonstrably going on for the participants **themselves**. CA researchers strive to avoid application of the researcher's framework in their analyses. This is important in the light of our quest: It seems more fruitful to take a look at what participants are **demonstrably doing** in interaction than to find out what listening in interaction is about by explicating what should be happening or what might be happening according to psychological, cognitive or linguistic models. Further reasons for turning to CA are

the insistence on working with naturally occurring data, and the micro level of analysis.

In this paper, then, I will turn to findings of Conversation Analysis which can shed light on what listening in interaction might be about. The second part of the problem, how we can teach it, will then be dealt with accordingly: What can findings of CA contribute to a pedagogical framework for teaching listening?

Some caution is in order here. First, let it be clear that CA findings relate to interaction as such, and not to listening in interaction in particular. Moreover, most CA work is done on American English, and on interactions between native speakers. So we have to be cautious when applying these findings to, first of all, listening in interaction, second, native-non-native interaction or lingua franca interaction and third, other languages than American English. Nevertheless, I believe that CA findings can be useful for the purpose of creating a pedagogical framework for teaching listening.

1. CA as a methodology

CA is a sociological discipline. Conversation analysts basically study everyday talk as social actions. Not only conversation is studied, but also *institutional talk* such as classroom discourse, business interactions and the like, and this is why CA scholars name what they study *talk-in-interaction*, and not conversation.

CA studies how talk-in-interaction is organized. Basically, CA studies how participants make meaning. This presupposes the assumption, that the participants themselves make meaning and CA scholars take that to be in a very detailed way. The enterprise of CA is thus to investigate the organization of the making of meaning. A basic position here is that the meaning of talk is not ruled by some pre specified social system or language system. Rather, the meaning of talk is:

1. <u>produced</u>, not pre specified,
2. produced <u>in a specific context</u>
3. produced in a specific context <u>by the participants of the interaction</u>

The way this organization of the making of meaning is studied is by looking closely at the details of naturally occurring data. These data are taped on video or audio tape, transcribed and then analysed.

An example of how the meaning of talk is produced by the participants of the interaction, is the following excerpt. This stems from an interaction between a Korean student, S, and an American employee, F, at the information desk of a school where students learn English as a Second Language:

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Excerpt 1

1 F	and we'll make a special price for you
2 S	oh you can make a special [price] for me [oh]
3 F	[yeah:]				[a-]=
4	or any student

(Brouwer & Kidwell, 1a)

Let us look at the meaning of the word *you* in the first line of this excerpt. *You* can be second person singular or plural. The meaning of *you* is not pre specified as referring to one specific person or specific persons. That depends on the context it is produced in. In this context, F working at the information desk of the school and giving information to S, it might refer to S as an individual, or to all students, including S, as a group. In the lines following, S and F work out together what *you* in line 1 means. First, S repeats Fs turn altering *you* to *me*. Hereby she proposes the *you* in the first line to mean S as an individual. This proposal is not directly rejected by F in the last line: *or any student*, rather, she is adding something: *you* in line 1 does not only mean S as an individual, it also includes any other student.

So, together, F and S have worked out the meaning of *you* as referring to S as an individual plus any other student. Note that F and S have both contributed to this, in other words, that the participants together have produced the meaning of *you* in a specific context.

Meaning is thus not pre specified, but is negotiated by the participants. It is important to note that the notion of *negotiation of meaning* in CA differs from the one in most SLA-studies on interaction. In SLA, the term is used to indicate mechanisms that are activated whenever there is some kind of interactional trouble, i.e. as some kind of communication strategy (Gass & Varonis 1985; Long 1983; O'Malley, Chamot &Küpper 1989; Rost & Ross 1991; Scarcella & Higa 1981; Tyler 1995; Vandergrift 1997; Varonis & Gass 1985a; Varonis & Gass 1985b). In CA however, negotiation of meaning is assumed and shown to go on all of the time. Negotiation of meaning is thus seen as the **essence** of talk in interaction.

If we compare CA with psycholinguistic methodology, where you mainly find the studies on listening comprehension, there are some differences. First, it studies naturally occurring data, not elicited data. Second, it is a qualitative methodology. Furthermore, CA methodology also differs from the interaction studies that Cadierno (this volume) describes. First because CA exclusively studies naturally occurring data, and second because CA focuses on what participants are doing interactively and how they do it rather than look at implications for cognitive

operations and language acquisition. And also here, the difference is qualitative research instead of quantitative. A further outline of differences between 'Interaction studies' and CA methodology and criticisms can be found in a series of papers by Firth and Wagner (Firth & Wagner 1997; Wagner 1994; Wagner & Firth 1997).

2. Some notions from CA that are relevant for L2 listening theory: Recipient design and recipient display

CA findings can be a useful supplement to the findings of psycholinguistic research on listening comprehension and the interaction studies when it comes to pedagogical tools. CA research has shown that making meaning or *negotiation of meaning* is done in an orderly way. That is, there seem to be procedures for the negotiation of meaning, there is some kind of method in it. CA researchers have already described a part of the procedures that participants employ in order to make meaning. And of course, descriptions of the procedures by which participants make meaning are of interest to scholars and teachers of listening comprehension. One of the ways the procedures for making meaning can be described is under the headings of the terms *recipient design* and *recipient display.* Recipient design is described in the literature as follows:

> One key aspect of this process is recipient design, the multiplicity of ways in which participants take into account the particulars of who they are talking to, and the events they are engaged in, in the organization of their action. (Schegloff 1992: 192)

In other words, participants design their utterances for specific listeners in specific contexts. And they do that in 'a multiplicity of ways', that is, with regard to syntax, word choice, speech rate, gaze, prosody, body posture, and so on and so on. Recipient display is described as follows:

> (...) , within interaction participants are faced with the task of accomplishing understanding and, as part of this process, displaying to each other their understanding of the events in progress at a particular moment (...) . (Goodwin & Duranti 1992: 22)

That is to say that listeners display their understandings of utterances. Again, this is done in a multiplicity of ways, and often implicitly. Recall excerpt 1:

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Excerpt 1

1 F and we'll make a special price for you
2 S oh you can make a special [price] for me [oh]
3 F [yeah:] [a-]=
4 or any student
(Brouwer & Kidwell, 1a)

In the second line, S is displaying an understanding of the turn in line one, not only with regard to the word *you* but an understanding of the whole turn. For example, by saying *oh*, S signals that she has understood Fs turn as new information. The analyst may conclude this from his or her *membership knowledge* (see introductions to CA, for example:(Nofsinger 1991; Psathas 1995), i.e. that *oh* normally is used as a news receipt. But it is important to explicate how Ss turn is a *relevant* next action. This is done by looking at what happens before and what happens after, or in other words, by analysing what F and S are doing *sequentially*. First, what F is doing in line 1 can be seen as an assertion. Possible relevant next actions, then, are treating this as news, or, reversibly, indicating that this is **not** news. Ss treatment in 2 can be seen as relevant. Moreover, by a positive treatment of l.2 in l.3 and by adding extra information, F shows to S (and thereby to the analyst) that **she** regards it as a relevant action. If an action is found not relevant, then it will ordinarily be observable in the data. Producing a relevant second action in itself can thus also be recipient display - it is like saying: "I am producing this now because I find it a relevant next action to what I understood you produced." In a way, recipient display is producing a **candidate** relevant action, which then can be accepted as relevant or rejected.

Recipient design and recipient display generate each other. Not only do participants design their utterances for specific listeners in specific contexts, but listeners also display their understandings of those utterances. Recipient display informs a speaker of how a prior utterance has been understood but also of how subsequent utterances can be designed. There is thus a constant back and forth of displayings of understandings by which the participants interactively construct meaning - and this is what is called negotiation of meaning. So, participants in a conversation make meaning by employing recipient design and recipient display.

3. Listening in interaction as an interactive skill: A supplement to a cognitive view on listening

The above mentioned notions of negotiation of meaning, recipient design and recipient display can be regarded as the interactional aspects of listening in interaction. These aspects have been barely touched upon in listening comprehension research. However, they might contribute to listening pedagogy. The arguments for this are the following.

First in terms of researchability: We cannot study cognitive aspects of conversational listening at this moment. We do not know enough about the details of talk-in-interaction to be able to make inferences about underlying cognitive operations (Goodwin 1987, f.x.)). And we do not know enough about how talk-in-interaction works to be able to model it in experimental designs. We need to study the interactional aspects of listening-in-interaction by looking at what listeners are actually **doing** in interaction. By *what they are doing* I mean the observable actions that listeners perform in interaction. For this, we need to look at data from naturally occurring talk-in-interaction.

Second, in terms of teachability: We cannot teach students how to do cognitive operations - that can only be done indirectly. Moreover, we cannot teach the persons that have to design their talk for NNSs to do that in a way that would aid NNSs, since we do not have these persons in our classroom. We can, however, teach students the skills with which they can perform actions in order to make sense of others' talk interactively. We can teach our students ways of making others design their talk according to their abilities: As I have argued, recipient display does not only work as a way to show how talk has been understood, but has also some kind of prospective value. So, instead of being helpless victims of whatever NSs are saying, NNSs have quite a large influence on what is said to them, and how it is said. In other words, one way of going about teaching listening in interaction is training students in how to make use of that influence.

4. An example of making use of listener influence: Findings from CA research interpreted for pedagogical goals

Let us look at a description of specific forms of recipient display. I will turn to a classic paper on repair (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977): *The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation* (hereafter referred to as SJS). As the title shows, the point in this paper is not directly one that concerns recipient display or recipient design. But part of its findings can serve as a basis for developing listening activities for the classroom. The findings I refer to concern

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how participants initiate repair. The reason for this being helpful for developing listening exercises is the following: A rather explicit way of doing recipient display is showing that there is some kind of trouble with the understanding of the preceding turn. By showing that there is trouble, participants initiate repair, or, in other words, they request a redesign of the turn. The relevance for listening activities in the classroom can be illustrated with the following citation: "Successful communication is not so much a product of the avoidance of misunderstandings as of their successful detection and repair." (Suchman & Jordan 1990: 238).

In other words, repair mechanisms are needed in order to make communication fluent, they are a necessary piece in the puzzle of negotiation of meaning. Repair mechanisms are a specific tool for dealing with a prior turn, and are therefore essential for listening in interaction.

Note that the nature of trouble can be very different. It can, in the case of NS-NNS interaction be a comprehension problem due to NNS (linguistic) competence, but it doesn't have to be. Trouble can also be simply disagreeing with what the speaker says. But no matter what the trouble is, it is relevant for NNSs to be able to initiate repair. Repair initiation is a very strong way of making another participant design his or her following utterance according to one's abilities and the specific context. And it also gives the other participant a rather strong basis for designing utterances later in the interaction. So, one of the things we can teach students is how to initiate repair.

There are different techniques for initiating repair. SJS report the following:

1. The first type is what Drew (1997) refers to as an *open class* of repair initiation. This type includes saying: *huh?*; *what* , *pardon me*; *sorry?*; and *what did you say?*. A reason for calling this an 'open class' is that it is left quite open what the redesign of the turn should be. An example is 26 from SJS:

(26) A: Were you uh you were in therapy with a private doctor?
B: yah
A: Have you ever tried a clinic?
B: What?
A: Have you ever tried a clinic?

Other types are:
2. Question words such as who, where, when (example 29 from SJS):

(29) F: This is nice, did you make this?
K: No, Samu made that.
F: Who?
K: Samu.

3. Partial repeat of trouble-source turn + question word (example 36 from SJS (abbreviated)):

(36) A: No I went to a shower.
B: To a where?
A: I went to a shower.

4. Partial repeat (example 37 from SJS (abbreviated):

(37) A: Monday, Wednesday, an' Fridays I'm home by one ten
B: One ten?
A: Two o'clock. My class ends one ten.

5. *You mean* + possible understanding (ex. 39 from SJS) :

(39) A: Why did I turn out this way.
B: You mean homosexual?
A: Yes.

As SJS state, this list of types is not exhaustive. From these findings we can see the two aspects of repair initiation:

1. there are differences in the nature of what is requested as recipient design: Although there is not a simple one-to-one relationship between the type of initiation and the actual repair, basically, we can see a difference between the different types of repair initiation with regard to how and how much of the turn is requested to be redesigned. Compare doing a type 5 with a type 1. A reply for a type 5 can be a simple 'yes', because the repair initiator himself already has redesigned part of the previous turn. But that wouldn't do for a type 1.

2. there are differences in the nature of the recipient display: Some displays show more precisely the nature of the trouble than others. Compare the range of the nature of the possible trouble in example 26 with example 39: in 26, the trouble could be anything from not concentrating, sloppy pronunciation, mishearing parts of the turn, noisy surroundings, unfamiliarity with particular words or syntactical constructions, referential problems, disagreement or whatever other trouble there might be. In 39, it is much more precise what the nature of the

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trouble is, namely some inferential problem. SJS describe this in terms of a preference for strong forms of repair initiation over weak forms.

5. Towards a pedagogical application of CA results

The move from a description of specific techniques of recipient display (in this case next turn repair initiation) to a description of what students can be taught in order to get better at listening in interaction is fairly straightforward. First of all, the techniques themselves might be trained. Here we can directly use the ordering of the types 1-5 from weak to strong forms as a way of grading the complexity of the task. Weak forms require less accuracy with regard to the production of a repair initiator than strong forms do. Therefore, weak forms will be easier to do than strong forms.

But we might also think of subskills like:

-how to use wh- words (in order to train type 1 & 2)
-repetition of (parts of) utterances (type 3 & 4)
-paraphrasing (type 5)

It is a known fact that most teachers do not have the time to develop new tasks and exercises. But there is some good news. And that is that there actually are a lot of exercises or activities to be found in textbooks and language training materials, that train these types of subskills. The only problem about these exercises is that they have not been thought of as listening comprehension exercises. But with little effort, such exercises can be exploited as such - for example by doing them as oral exercises instead of written. Another possibility for teachers is to go and look at the activities in textbooks and think of them in terms of recipient design and recipient display.

6. Conclusion

Some exercises or activities found in textbooks are helpful in order to train listening-in-interaction - but they're just not thought of as listening activities, but rather as grammatical, phonetic, or communicative activities. In order to exploit them for training listening in interaction, we need to think thoroughly about what our students need to be able to do. And in order to do that, we have to have a pretty good idea of how conversation, and communication as a whole, works.

The aim of this paper was to show how the methodology of CA can contribute to listening pedagogy, and how research findings of this field can be adapted to the teaching of listening in the foreign or second language classroom.

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The example of repair initiation is a very explicit example of how NNS can exploit the notions of recipient design and recipient display. But this is by no means the only example one could think of.

It is necessary to know that the idea of a listener being active rather than passive, as researchers in SLA and other areas of study agree on, does not only refer to the cognitive aspect of listening, but also to the interactional. In other words, listeners perform actions that are aimed at understanding, and these actions can be taught. My belief is that we need to supplement the (quantitative) research on listening comprehension that focuses on cognitive aspects with qualitative research on interactional aspects of comprehension in order to lay out a theory of listening comprehension, and, thereby, build a basis for teaching listening.

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Developing Listening Tasks for Language Learning

Michael Rost

ABSTRACT
This paper provides a framework for constructing listening tasks which focus learners on particular listening strategies. The paper outlines five types of listening tasks that promote strategies that successful listeners are known to use: predicting, monitoring, inferencing, clarifying, and responding. The frameworks for the tasks specify input type, procedures, strategy focus, and outcomes. Suggestions are offered for adapting the tasks for learners at different proficiency levels.

INTRODUCTION: Input Selection and Task Design
Over the past decade a number of L2 teaching practitioners have developed listening activities that promote learner proficiency, as evidenced by learners ability to deal with progressively difficult listening texts. Central to these discussions have been the variables in a listening activity: input selection, input grading, task design, and strategy training.

The initial consideration in L2 listening development, and second language development generally, is what Beebe (1985) termed "the right stuff". As Beebe notes, learners are not just passive recipients of comprehensible or incomprehensible input, but are active participants in choosing the L2 models and samples they wish to attend to, understand, and use as "intake" for their own language development. As such, teachers' knowing what learners' preferences and motivations for wanting to listen to certain kinds of input is a key aspect of listening instruction.

The notion of "authenticity" of input selection is at the forefront of discussions of listening input. Practitioners generally agree on the importance of using "authentic" input, at least to the extent that it is suitable to the learners' interests and learning needs, and can be made accessible. Schemes for simplifying input in order to make it more "comprehensible" are now well known. However, because the research results of employing simplified input are mixed (see Flowerdew, 1994), attention has turned instead to methods of task design which allow listeners to prepare for authentic input and focus on selected aspects of meaning.

One key element of listening task design is learner preparation for listening, or what might be viewed as a pre-listening phase of instruction. Ur (1984), in one of the early teacher training works dealing overtly with listening instruction, emphasized the importance of activating the listener's purpose and sense of

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expectations for listening. This activation may be in the form of vocabulary preparation, introduction of key ideas, or preview of background information that will help prepare learners for the upcoming content. In order to introduce "real life listening" to L2 learners, Ur also underlined the importance of using relatively short listening inputs and incorporating an ongoing listener response. Pedagogic task design using short inputs (typically one or two minutes long) and overt listener response have since then become the model for listening instruction. There are known limitations to short-term memory that occur after about 60-90 seconds of listening (c.f. Bostrom and Waldhart, 1988; Cowan, 1993; Carpenter, Miyake, and Just, 1994) that suggest that one to two minutes may be an appropriate "training window" for new listening skills and strategies.

Underwood (1989) described in detail the three phases of a structured listening activity involving relatively short inputs — pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening — and demonstrated various ways of incorporating these phases into classroom practice. The structuring of listening activities has two purposes: (1) to make listening texts more accessible and comprehensible, and (2) to allow learners to see how different kinds of thinking processes help them understand the input and contribute to their general listening development. As such, clear task design contributes to learner training.

Extending this emphasis on thinking processes, Rost (1991) later formalized elements of listening pedagogy into four classes of "active listening": global, intensive, selective, and interactive. In global listening, the emphasis is on getting a general impression or "gist meaning"; in intensive listening, the emphasis is on noticing particular features of the input; in selective listening, the focus is on deriving information and constructing meaning to complete a particular task; in interactive listening, the focus is on interaction with a speaker to arrive at a mutual goal. While all four skills are part of listening proficiency, the isolation of each skill is intended to help learners bring these skills under conscious control.

Listening task design, in the schemes proposed by Underwood, Rost, and Nunan (1995), delineates four factors: (1) an input, either taped or "live", (2) a set of procedures for listeners to follow before, during, and after listening, (3) printed materials to be used, and (4) expected outcome to help evaluate the relative "success" of the task for each learner. Each of these factors can be adjusted in a variety of ways to provide the appropriate level of challenge for a group of learners.

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Strategy training and instructional design

An important complement to task design in listening instruction is strategy training. The terms "strategy" and "learning strategy" have been used in various senses in cognitive psychology to refer to a range of goal directed plans and behaviors. For purposes of discussions of task design, the simple definition of learning strategies of O'Malley and Chamot (1990) will suffice: "thoughts and actions that assist learning." O'Malley and Chamot, in their research review, note five recurring categories of learning strategies: (1) planning, (2) monitoring, (3) evaluating, (4) language processing, and (5) social-affective.

In the context of learning strategy development, listening strategies have been studied by various researchers and teaching practitioners. L2 Research methods have included experimental tasks (Rost and Ross, 1991), introspective and retrospective reports (Vandergrift 1996), teaching observations (Mendelsohn, 1998), and learner interviews and reports (Rubin and Thompson, 1994; Rost, 1994, and journals (Fujiwara, 1989).

Within these studies, there is broad agreement on the kinds of strategies that are frequently associated with successful listening. The five commonly recognized "successful" strategies are: predicting information or ideas prior to listening, making inferences from incomplete information based on prior knowledge, monitoring one's own listening processes and relative success while listening, attempting to clarify areas of confusion, and responding to what one has understood.

Table 1: 5 listening strategies of successful L2 listeners

1. Predicting
Predicting information or ideas prior to listening

2. Inferencing
Drawing inferences about complete information based on incomplete or inadequate information.

3. Monitoring
Monitoring one's own performance while listening, including assessing areas of uncertainty.

4. Clarifying

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Formulating clarification questions about what information is needed to make a fuller interpretation.

5. Responding
Providing a personal, relevant response to the information or ideas presented.

The training paradigm that has been proposed by Rost and Ross (1991), Vandergrift (1996), and Rubin and Thompson (1994) is that if learners are taught to emulate the strategies of more successful (or more proficient) language learners, those learners will accelerate their own progress.

Presentation of listening strategies by itself tends to be insufficient to ensure learner progress. In order for learners to take advantage of strategy training, they need awareness of the strategy, opportunities to see it demonstrated in actual discourse, understanding of its potential benefits, as well as targeted practice in using the strategy and experiencing its effects.

Table 2: Conditions for a listening strategy to be "teachable"

1. The learner recognizes a need to address "confusion" or to compensate for incomplete information.
2. There is a recognizable point in the discourse in which a strategy (an alternate way of processing language or interacting) can be used.
3. The alternate way has a probable payoff in knowledge or affect that the learner seeks (e.g. to understand more of the listening extract)
4. The alternate way of processing can be practiced again in an immediate context
5. The new use of the alternate produces the demonstrable effect (on interaction, understanding, or learning).

Using these criteria, very few "strategies" can readily be taught, that is, demonstrated and practiced in an instructional setting. However, it is the tenet of this paper that only salient listening strategies, such as the five presented in this paper, need to be taught and practiced. In the end, the intended effect of strategy training is to maximize the learner's attention, performance, and satisfaction in dealing with "real life" listening situations.

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Task design and strategy training: Five examples

This section illustrates five listening tasks, corresponding to the strategy types discussed in the previous section. For each task illustration, a simple input has been chosen. In actual practice, selection of appropriate input, as well as procedures for class size, needs to be considered.

TASK TYPE 1: Prediction

Purpose: The purpose of this kind of task is to encourage students to make explicit predictions about what they will hear next.

input	a short text with frequent pause points (at which points the Ss will be asked to make a prediction)
procedure	• say/play the text • stop at pre-set points to have Ss write or say their predictions for the missing parts • check predictions at each pause point, then proceed with remaining part of the text
strategy focus	Ss making explicit predictions, without worrying if their prediction is exactly correct
outcome	statements of predictions for each pause point
example	A folk tale Once there was a very proud fox. One day, he was walking in the woods and (pause point) he stepped into a trap. His tail was caught in the trap. He pulled and pulled and (pause point) he escaped, but his tail was left in the trap. He was very sad that he lost his tail, but he was also very (pause point) proud. When he went back to the pack, he said (pause point), "Look, everybody, I cut off my tail. It's much better if...
possible follow up	Ss write a short story and select 3 "prediction points" in the story. Working with a partner, they read their story and pause at the prediction points. Their partner tries to guess the next idea.

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Potential problems: Students do not actually state a prediction or make only a vague prediction. The "prediction points" you select may be too constrained, or the text itself is too difficult. (It is best, initially at least, to select prediction points that have many possible completions, and can be answered by someone with only a fair understanding of the details of the text.)

TASK TYPE 2: Inferencing

Purpose: The purpose of this kind of task is to demonstrate how we can **infer** the general meaning of a passage based on understanding of only some of the key words.

input	medium length texts, with numerous lexical cohesion links
procedure	• write a partial list of key words from the text on the board (or OHT); the words should be in the order they occur in the story • read the words aloud • ask the students to say what they think the main ideas are or what the story outline is. • add a few more key words and expressions (in order), and ask the students to say what the main ideas are.
strategy focus	Ss making guesses about the overall meaning of the story, without worrying if they are "correct"
outcome	progressive statements by the students about the meaning or story outline
example	A partial fairy tale: The Czar and his daughters Once upon a time...czar...a daughter...walk in the woods...dragon... very frightened...scream... young knight...hear... ride his horse... fight...kill...take the daughter... czar...happy...reward...

possible follow up	Ss write a short story about themselves, consisting of at least 5 sentences. For each sentence, they choose only one or two key words. Working with a partner, they read the key words and see if their partner can fill in the missing ideas. If not, they give one or two more words in each sentence.

Potential problems: Students may not understand how activity this relates to learning how to listen. To demonstrate more graphically, you can use a tape recording and turn the volume up and down. This more realistically replicates the sense of hearing only part of the input. As noted with other listening tasks, the students may experience problems if the text is too unpredictable. For this reason, it is best initially to use highly predictable stories and sequences, such as folk tales.

TASK TYPE 3: Monitoring

Purpose: The purpose of this kind of task is to encourage students to think about and verbalize problems they have while listening.

input	a text with various factual and logical inconsistencies
procedure	T plays the tape or narrates the text. Ss give a signal (e.g. they say "stop") when they hear an inconsistency or implausible fact. Ss try to correct the fact or say why something is impossible.
strategy focus	Ss think about the logic of what they are listening to and "monitor" when they have encountered a problem
outcome	Ss identify a given number of "problems" in the text.
example	The story of "My Terrible Day" Yesterday, I overslept. I got up at 7:30. I got dressed quickly and left the house at 7:15. (X) I drove to work slowly (X) because I was in a hurry. When I arrived at the office late, my boss was very happy (X) with me. ...

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possible follow up	Ss write a similar story with factual inconsistencies. In pairs, they read their story to their partner. The partner tries to find the inconsistencies

Potential problems: Students do not notice the inconsistencies, or think that the inconsistencies in the story are due to their own listening problems. The inconsistencies may be too subtle, or the overall text may be too difficult for the strategy training to work. It is best to construct texts that have some very obvious contradictions, and it may be helpful to say in advance how many "errors" the students should try to find. You may want to read the whole story aloud all the way through once before the students note down the "errors".

TASK TYPE 4: Clarifying

Purpose: The purpose of this task is to engage students in seeking clarification: asking questions about what they are unsure of. As such, the input is intentionally vague or incomplete.

input	• Teacher (or tape) reads a set of directions or a narrative aloud • Teacher (or tape) uses only the target language (TL), though the teacher (T) may answer questions from the students (also in the TL) throughout the activity
procedure	• Students (Ss) produce ongoing response, which may be non-verbal actions, such as putting pictures in order
strategy focus	Ss requesting clarification each time they are confused
outcome	completion of the process (usually 5-10 minute activity)

example	A block arrangement task: Sample interaction: T: ...So everybody has a set of the blocks? S1: Just one? T: Well, I mean each pair has one set, right? (Ss nod) T: OK, then push all the blocks to the upper right corner of your desk...push them all to the upper right corner? S2: Right side? T: Yes, the right side. But the upper right side? Got that? (Ss doing it, some by looking at the other student). T: Now, first pick up the square block...just the square one... S3: This one? S4: Two square ones. T: OK, right, there are two square blocks. Take the bigger one... the large one and put in the center of your desk... (continues)
possible follow up	have Ss develop their own sequences for telling to partners; set up activity as pair work; or using the same props have the Ss do additional rounds of this process in pairs.

Potential problems with this task type:

• Not all students may be paying attention **to the language**; instead they may simply imitate what their classmates are doing. For many students, this may be a preliminary step in getting used to hearing the L2 in context. It is important to assure that, over several cycles of this kind of task, that all students begin to ask clarification questions.

TASK TYPE 5: Responding

Purpose: The purpose of this kind of task is to encourage students to react to what a speaker says and to prepare a verbal response.

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input	a short taped speech or lecture on a controversial topic
procedure	• students are given a vocabulary list to preview before the speech or lecture • students listen to the lecture; the T pauses the tape periodically for the Ss to write a "Why" question they wish to ask the speaker about his or her opinion • at the end of the lecture, the Ss ask their questions (e.g. "Why does the speaker think...?")
strategy focus	Ss think about the overall meaning of the speaker and respond personally
outcome	Each S provides an opinion about the content.
example	a person giving an opinion about "living together before marriage": "My boyfriend and I have been dating for about a year...and he thinks we ought to live together, but I'm not sure..."
possible follow up	Given cards with opinions about various topics, students work in small groups. Students select a card and read the "opinion." Others in the group give a response to the opinion.

Potential problems: Students may not be willing to state their true opinion or ask "real questions" if the topics are too sensitive, or if the topics are too vague. It is important to find topics that are relevant to the students, that they are able to express opinions about, and give enough detail in the input to allow for a reasoned question or response. If students are reticent to speak out, they can first write their question on a paper and then read it aloud.

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CONCLUSION: Evaluation of the approach

This paper has set out some principles for listening task design that incorporate strategy training. The tasks require selection and adjustment of three key variables: the kind of input that is used, the procedures that guide learner involvement, and the outcome that is used for assessment of "success". In addition, the variable of "strategy focus" has been added for each task design. This element calls attention to a specific listening strategy that the learners attempt to develop during the task. Indeed, this element can be seen as the guiding learning principle for the task.

The task illustrations in this paper involve relatively short inputs, what some teachers refer to as "micro listening". Many learners' goals, of course, involve "macro listening" to more extended inputs, such as newscasts, films, and lectures. Use of longer texts typically involves less overt response from the listener, but the underlying processes of predicting, inferencing, monitoring, clarifying, and responding are equally important (even though the clarification questions and responses may be internal!). The same principles of instruction apply: finding ways to promote and assess these five strategic processes, even if at longer intervals than illustrated with the shorter tasks in this paper.

The effectiveness of this approach to listening task design and instruction is best evaluated in the long term, over a series of several tasks of the same type. In this way, learners can try out the strategies in different contexts, and with texts of different levels of difficulty. White (1998) has noted that listening tasks that are most worthwhile for learners are those that allow the learner to spent adequate time actually listening, including repeated listenings. It is important for the tasks to allow learners to build the meaning themselves, not to rely on the teacher or tape script for the "correct" answer. Similarly, listening instruction should allow the learner an opportunity to analyze what may have gone wrong, and again not have to rely on the teacher. In short, successful tasks are those that maximize actual practice, engagement with the material, and contribute to learner awareness of the listening process.

Teachers are encouraged to experiment with these task types for teaching and for research on L2 listening processes and learner progress. The utility of these tasks for L2 education ultimately rests with whether use of strategy-focused tasks helps learners develop interest and involvement in listening as well as increased proficiency in listening skills.

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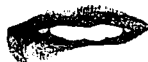

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This issue of ***Odense Working Papers in Language and Communication*** contains papers presented at a conference on L2 listening comprehension held in Odense on May 9, 1997. The articles, which address L2 listening comprehension from two broad perspectives – psycholinguistic and interactional, include both non-collaborative (listening to lectures) and collaborative (listening to conversations) listening situations, and provide some pedagogical guidelines for listening instruction in second and foreign language classrooms.

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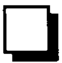

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