COMMUNICATIVE TASKS AND INTERACTION CAN CONTRIBUTE TO LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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SUMMARY OF THESIS
COMMUNICATIVE TASKS AND INTERACTION CAN CONTRIBUTE TO LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The purpose of this study is to discover the value of classroom negotiation of meaning and confirm if Communicative tasks really provide opportunities for negotiation of meaning and content. It is assumed that negotiation promotes acquisition based on the finding that negotiation fosters comprehension and that comprehension promotes acquisition. This research attempts to identify whether negotiation leads to interlanguage development and if modification helps acquisition.

It is important to recognize which devices and strategies the students use in the classroom to negotiate meaning and how they provide opportunities for negotiation of meaning and content leading to language acquisition. There are a variety of conversational moves that language learners use to resolve communication breakdowns. Communicative language teaching involves the students in purposeful tasks that are embedded in meaningful contexts which reflect and practice the language as it is used authentically in the world outside the classroom.

The study suggests that different kinds of tasks can potentially contribute in different ways to acquisition and demonstrates that the design and type of a task affects the kind of interaction, the negotiation of meaning, the use of communication strategies and communicative outcomes. The most important properties of tasks that will work best for acquisition are those that stimulate negotiation and through this provide comprehensible input and feedback and push learners to reformulate their own utterances.

It is concluded that interaction can facilitate development by providing opportunities for learners to receive comprehensible input and negative feedback, as well as to modify their own output, test hypotheses and notice gaps in their interlanguage. Studies have demonstrated that negotiation of meaning facilitates comprehension but there is still little direct evidence that the negotiation of meaning affects second language development.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to identify the strategies the students use to negotiate meaning and content when they are confronted with a word or utterance they do not understand. The outcome of this study will demonstrate how the students overcome this problem in order to express what they want to say. The study reveals how communicative tasks and interaction provide opportunities for negotiation of meaning and content leading to language acquisition.

The negotiation of meaning has been the focus of a number of studies in second language acquisition research. Researchers have identified a variety of conversational moves that language learners use to resolve communication breakdowns. These studies have demonstrated that negotiation of meaning facilitates comprehension but there is still little direct evidence that the negotiation of meaning affects second language development.

Chapter I of this study is dedicated to the Investigation Outline. The problem that will be investigated is formulated and the hypothesis states the possible solutions to the outlined problem. It defines the objectives of the investigation, which are considered the guidelines of the study, and the arguments that justify the investigation that is being carried out. This chapter mentions also the preliminaries of the research describing similar studies that have been done previously that have some relationship with the investigation that is taking place.

Chapter II is dedicated to the Theoretical Background. The intention of this part is to develop the main theoretical aspects related to the problem of the investigation. Current and appropriate bibliography of the topic being researched was reviewed and is presented and explained in this section.

Chapter III describes the Methodology of the Investigation. The investigation type is defined and the informants with whom the study will be carried out are determined. The variables used in the study are defined as well as the techniques and instruments used for data collection. The procedure used for the implementation of the study is also described in this chapter.

Chapter IV is dedicated to the Discussion of the Results. Once the data has been collected a well-detailed analysis has been done and the results are given in this chapter. Furthermore, a personal reflection on the research has also been included.

The Conclusions of the study are presented in a separate section, which determine if the proposed hypothesis was guessed correctly or not and if the objectives were reached or not. Likewise, some contributions and suggestions of the investigation for further research as well as some limitations of the investigation are also specified. The bibliography and appendices are found at the end of the study.

CHAPTER I
INVESTIGATION OUTLINE

1.1. Formulation of the Problem

How can communicative tasks really help students learn and acquire the language?

1.2. Hypothesis

1.2.1. General Hypothesis

Communicative tasks can provide opportunities for negotiation of meaning and content which can lead to language acquisition, compared with the traditional form-focused pedagogy applied several years back.

1.2.2. Specific Hypothesis

- Clarification requests facilitate learners to produce output modifications and pushed output may have a long-term effect.
- Negotiation of meaning invokes feedback, drawing the learner's attention to gaps between the input and the learner's output.
- Different task variables and features have an influence on interaction and will foster acquisition.

1.3. Objectives

- To establish the need to negotiate meaning in the classroom.
- To determine how students react to communicative tasks and their effects on language acquisition.
- To identify the devices students use in the classroom to negotiate meaning and content.
- To recognize the communicative strategies students apply to overcome their linguistic deficiencies in order to say what they want to say in a communicative task-based instructional setting.

1.4. Justification of the Investigation

It is vital to carry out this investigation to discover the value of classroom negotiation of meaning. A basic principle of second language learning is the need to negotiate meaning in any language-learning situation. Once meaning is established, comprehension follows. It is assumed that negotiation promotes acquisition based on the finding that negotiation fosters comprehension and the speculation that comprehension promotes acquisition. Clusters of meaning result in schemata, which serve as the basis for sustained communication and ultimately, permanence of language learning.

This study attempts to identify whether negotiation leads to interlanguage development and whether modification helps acquisition. Negotiation of meaning can trigger the use of learning strategies by the learner, thus the importance to recognize which devices and strategies the students use the most in the classroom, and to analyze which contribute to produce output modifications in response to them.

1.5. Antecedents of the Investigation

There have been several studies done on this topic. Some of them will be detailed as follows:

1.5.1. Roy Lyster's Study - Negotiation in Teacher-Student Interaction

In this study, Lyster explored the role of negotiation in teacher-student interaction and argues that the negotiation of meaning, defined as a set of conversational moves which work toward mutual comprehension, is too limited to fulfill its pedagogical potential in teacher-student interaction in communicative and contend-based second language classroom. Drawing on examples from immersion classrooms, where the prime focus is on delivery of subject matter in the second language, he presents an argument in support of a more comprehensive view of negotiation that accounts for corrective feedback and distinguishes between meaning-focused and form-focused negotiation in teacher-student interaction. The database referred to in his paper is described in detail in Lyster & Ranta (1997).

1.5.1.1. Recasts and Meaning-focused Negotiation

One of the primary goals of teachers is to ensure the comprehension of subject matter and they use a variety of negotiation of meaning strategies to enable their students to comprehend content presented through the second language:

- Use of body language, realia, visuals, manipulatives and other contextual clues
- Use of predictability in classroom routines and redundancy in repetitions, paraphrases, examples, definitions and synonyms
- Use of input modification such as a slower rate of speech, simple vocabulary, simple grammatical structures, etc.

Teachers help students get their meaning across by encouraging them initially to use both verbal and non-verbal means of communication and they make interpretations of the students attempts to communicate by responding with various reformulations and expansions that also serve as confirmations and confirmation checks. As students expand their production, teachers need to increase their student's opportunities to use the second language and to refine their productive skills. Once students have acquired a language level that sufficiently meets their communicative needs, second language

development tends to level off. At this point, meaning-focused negotiation becomes limited as a strategy for developing target language accuracy and may even contribute to the leveling-off effect.

In second language acquisition research, where the goal is to develop second language knowledge and skills, negotiation of meaning is considered more specifically as a set of conversational moves used in dyadic interaction. According to Long, negotiation of meaning comprises the following types of interactional features:

- Input modifications (partial self-repetition, stress on key words, decomposition, etc).
- Semantically contingent responses (recasts, repetition, expansions).
- Conversational modification (confirmations, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, clarification requests).

Many second language studies have demonstrated that the negotiation of meaning provides learners and their interlocutors with a useful set of communication strategies that facilitate comprehension. However, there is still little direct evidence that the negotiation of meaning affects second language development, as it can only be deduced that negotiation promotes acquisition based on the finding that negotiation promotes comprehension and the speculation that comprehension promotes acquisition. There is also some debate concerning the pedagogical value and feasibility of meaning-focused negotiation in student-student interaction and its effectiveness in drawing learners' attention to form in teacher-student interaction, since negotiation of meaning aims primarily to achieve "comprehensibility of message meaning" (Pica 1994). Pica also acknowledges that target language accuracy plays only a secondary role in negotiation, as is has been defined: "Negotiation, by definition, focuses on the comprehensibility of message meaning, and on the message's form only insofar as that can contribute to its comprehensibility. Learners and their interlocutors find ways to communicate messages through negotiation, but not necessarily with target-like forms"[1].

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[1] Pica, T. (1994): "Questions from the Language Classroom: Research Perspectives", *TESOL Quarterly* 28: 49-79.

According to Long's taxonomy of negotiation of meaning strategies (1996), one type of semantically contingent feedback that has received increasing attention is the recast – a well-formed reformulation of a learner utterance with the original meaning intact. Lyster argues, based on his studies, that recasting is not the most effective way of drawing young second language learners attention to form, since teachers frequently use recasts to respond to ill-formed utterances. In most cases, these moves do not draw attention to form because they compete with a similar proportion of teacher repetitions of well-formed utterances. Recasts of ill-formed utterances and repetition of well-formed utterances together tend to confirm or disconfirm the content or veracity of a learner's message, but not its form.

Long believes that recasts, because they maintain the learner's intended meaning and in that way free up other cognitive resources required for learners to focus on form, provide ideal opportunities for learners to notice error in their interlanguage production. However, in the case of content-based second language classroom discourse, Lyster argues that "When student's attention is focused on meaning in this way, they remain focused on meaning, not form, because they expect the teacher's immediate response to confirm or disconfirm the veracity of their answers"[2].

Recasts, repetition, expansion, confirmation, and confirmation checks thus come together in meaning-focused negotiation to create contexts of "pragmatic ambivalence". Pragmatic ambivalence occurs when a speaker's intentions are left unclear, perhaps intentionally to avoid a face-threatening act or to encourage further communication. Students are left in these cases to their own devices to figure out the teachers' intentions and to determine which modifications represent corrections as opposed to those that merely represent a possible variation in form. In these contexts and according to Lyster's studies, he believes that negotiation of meaning is unlikely an effective strategy for drawing learners' attention to form, but it appears to be an effective strategy for content delivery, because it allows teachers to keep their

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[2] Lyster, R. (2002a): "Negotiation in Immersion Teacher-Student Interaction". *International Journal of Educational Research* 37: 237-253.

students' attention focused on content in spite of their gaps in second language proficiency.

His studies showed that for learners to notice the mismatch between their non-target utterance and the teacher's recast, they need, first, to know that their output was non-target-like and, second, to intentionally hold the non-target-like utterance in memory long enough to make a cognitive comparison. This seemed possible when the teachers draw attention intentionally to recasts by adding stress for emphasis or by reducing the learner's utterance to isolate the reformulation. These so-called partial recasts accounted for about one-quarter of all recasts and it was these shortened recasts that learners tended to notice.

In Doughty & Varela's (1998, cited in Lyster 2002a) classroom study investigating the effects of corrective feedback, the teacher repeated the learner's error before recasting and added stress for emphasis. By doing this, the teacher makes the comparison relevant for the learner. In fact, repetition of the error with added stress often sufficed to prompt student to self-repair, making recast unnecessary. The results of the study therefore support the effectiveness of repetition of error as a corrective feedback move.

1.5.1.2. Prompts and Form-focused Negotiation

In order to foster the students' interlanguage development, teachers need to incorporate ways of "pushing" students to produce language that is not only comprehensible but also accurate. Lyster and Ranta (1997, cited in Lyster 2002a) identified four interactional moves that teachers use to push learners to improve the accuracy of their non-target output:

- Clarification request: the teacher indicates to the student, by using phrases such as "Pardon me" and "I don't understand", that the message has not been understood or that the utterance is ill-formed in some way, and that a repetition or a reformulation is required.
- Repetition: the teacher repeats the student's erroneous utterance, adjusting the intonation to highlight the error.

- Metalingusitic clues: the teacher provides comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the students' utterance, without explicitly providing the correct form (e.g. "Do we say "goed" in English?")
- Elicitation: the teacher directly elicits correct forms from students by asking questions such as "How do we say that in French?" or by pausing to allow students to complete the teacher's utterance or by asking students to reformulate their utterance (e.g. "Try again").

In Lyster's study, these four interactional moves were used alone or often in combination and accounted for more than one third of all feedback moves. He qualified them as "negotiation of form" for two reasons. First, unlike other types of corrective feedback (recasts and explicit correction), these moves return the floor to students along with cues to draw on their own resources, thus allowing for negotiation to occur bilaterally. Second, in contrast to the conversational function of negotiation of meaning, the four moves comprising the negotiation of form serves as pedagogical function that draws attention to form and aims for accuracy in addition to mutual comprehension.

Two of these moves, clarification requests and repetition, have also been identified as involving negotiation of meaning, but Lyster found that teachers often used these two moves, not because they did not understand, but rather to pretend incomprehension and thereby intentionally draw attention to non-target forms. Consequently, he regrouped these moves, along with elicitation and metalinguistic clues, as negotiation of form. Basically, what distinguishes all four moves from other feedback moves is the way in which they serve as prompts for students to self-repair. That is, these moves do not provide learners with correct rephrasing and instead push learners to retrieve the correct forms from what they already know. Lyster refers to these moves as "prompts" rather than negotiation of form, in order to distinguish them more categorically from negotiation strategies that focus on message comprehensibility.

1.5.1.3. Differentiating Form-focused and Meaning-focused Negotiation

Gass (1997) argues that negotiation of form and meaning are not easily separable in dyadic interaction with native and non-native speakers. As a result, many researchers conflate form-focused and meaning-focused negotiation and refer only to "negotiation or negotiated interaction" without clearly distinguishing focus on form from focus on meaning, yet usually implying that the negotiation is meaning-focused.

However, Lyster's research over the last 15 years has convinced him that the distinction between form-focused and meaning-focused negotiation is a crucial one and that important negotiation work in classroom interaction is not necessarily meaning-focused.

Lyster believes that overlaps will unavoidably occur in attempts to classify negotiation moves as either form-focused or meaning-focused. This is particularly likely in the case of clarification requests and repetition of learner error, because the speaker's intentions underlying these moves can definitely change according to context. They tend to be used to check comprehension of meaning in conversations, but to question formal accuracy (not meaning) in teacher-student interaction (Lyster & Ranta 1997). Likewise, because recasts are embedded in confirmations and confirmation checks, the intention underlying a teacher's recast appears above all to confirm or disconfirm the veracity of student responses in classroom interaction. On the other hand, when teachers shorten the learner's utterance to isolate the linguistic error and then add stress to emphasize the correct form, the intention to draw attention to form is likely to be much clearer.

According to Lyster, what distinguishes form-focused and meaning-focused negotiation most essentially is the way in which form-focused negotiation provides prompts for learners to self-repair, thus engaging them in retrieval processes (accessing and using stored information) that differ from those activated by meaning-focused negotiation.

1.5.1.4. Differentiating Form-focused Negotiation and Explicit Correction

Lyster's study considers form-focused negotiation and explicit correction as different types of discourse moves, distinguished most importantly by the types of learner repair they allow for. In form-focused negotiation, the teacher withholds correct forms and instead prompts students to retrieve correct forms from what they already know. In explicit correction, the teacher supplies the correct form and clearly indicates that what the student had said was incorrect. Although explicit correction draws attention to form, it does so in a way that does not allow negotiation because the teacher provides the form and the student repeats the teacher's alternative form but does not create an opportunity for self-repair. Lyster believes there are other moves, such as elicitation and metalinguistic clues, that are more likely than explicit correction to prompt learners to respond and in these cases student responses involved peer- or self-repair. He found that self-repair results not necessarily from explicitness, but rather from the prompts that are intended to engage students in the negotiation.

1.5.1.5. Support for Self-repair

Feedback makes students notice problems in their output and pushes them to conduct an analysis leading to modified output. Research shows that participants remember items that they have generated in response to cues better than items merely provided to them. Learners also recall target features that they utter in response to teacher prompts more than features that are recast by the teacher.

According to Bot (1996, cited in Lyster 2002a), second language learners benefit more from being pushed to retrieve target language form than from merely hearing the forms in the input, because the retrieval and subsequent production stimulate the development of connections in memory. Self-repair provides second language learners with opportunities to proceduralize target language knowledge already internalized in declarative form and by doing this to increase their control over these already-acquired forms.

1.5.1.6. Conclusions of Study

According to Lyster, meaning-focused negotiation provides teachers with a useful set of communication strategies that facilitate comprehension during classroom interaction. One of these strategies, as already mentioned, is to recast learners' utterances as a means of confirming the meaning and at the same time provides second language exemplars that serve as a positive evidence. Recasts embedded in meaning-focused negotiation are ideal for facilitating the delivery of complex subject matter and provide supportive, scaffolded help that serves to move the lesson ahead when the target forms in question are beyond the student's current production abilities. Recasts may also facilitate the internalization of these new forms. In addition, recasts that reduce the learner's initial utterance to isolate the error then add intonational stress for emphasis may serve as negative evidence by drawing attention to the mismatch between the interlanguage form and the target form.

Form-focused negotiation, on the other hand, enables learners to increase their control over already-acquired forms by prompting them to retrieve correct forms from what they already know. It may be particularly favorable in communicatively oriented and content-based classrooms where learners have many opportunities to communicate but have a tendency to do so with a classroom code easily understood by both teacher and peers. In these situations, negotiating for comprehensibility and continued recasting of what students already know are not effective strategies for guaranteeing continued development of target language accuracy. Similarly, continued prompting of learners to draw on what they have not yet acquired will be likewise ineffective.

Lyster concludes by saying: "Some of the most effective second language teachers, therefore, may be those who are willing and able to orchestrate, in accordance with their students' language abilities and content knowledge, both form-focused and meaning-focused negotiation, without abandoning one at the expense of the other"[3].

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[3] Lyster, R. (2002a): "Negotiation in Immersion Teacher-Student Interaction", *International Journal of Education Research* 37: 251.

1.5.2. Lyster and Ranta's (1997) Study: Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake: Negotiation of Form in Communicative Classrooms

This study took place in four immersion classrooms at the primary level. Transcripts totaling 18.3 hours of classroom interaction taken from 14 subject-matter lessons and 13 French language arts lessons were analyzed using a model developed for the study and comprising the various moves in an error sequence. Lyster and Ranta (1997) measured the frequency and distribution of six different feedback types of learner "uptake" or response to feedback (explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition) used by four teachers where the frequency and the distribution of the different types of learner uptake following each feedback type was measured.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) were concerned with corrective feedback as an analytic teaching strategy. Therefore, in reporting on the types and distribution of corrective feedback moves and their relationship to learner uptake (i.e., responses to feedback) the purpose of their study was to determine first, whether error treatment was what they called, "negotiable" and, "if so, to what extent such pedagogically motivated negotiation (i.e., of form) occurred in communicative classrooms and, finally, what moves constituted such exchanges"[4].

They stated very clearly the three research questions of their study:

- What are the different types of corrective feedback and their distribution in communicatively orientated classrooms?
- What is the distribution of uptake following different types of corrective feedback?
- What combinations of corrective feedback and learner uptake constitute the negotiation of form? (Lyster and Ranta 1997).

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[4] Lyster, L. and L. Ranta (1997): "Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake: Negotiation of Form in Communicative Classrooms", *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19: 42.

Results showed that the four teachers gave some kind of corrective feedback 62% of the times, but 38% of the time, learners' errors were followed by a teacher or student topic continuation move. Of all the feedback moves provided by a teacher in response to a learner, only 55% lead to learner uptake and only 27% lead to student repair. Teacher preference order for different feedback types were as follows: 55% for recasts, 14% for elicitation, 11% for clarification requests, 8% for metalinguistic feedback, 7% for explicit correction and 5% for repetition. It was noted that the low 5% for repetition could be due to the fact that it co-occurs with other feedback categories. The results showed that feedback did not lead to uptake because there was topic continuation provided by the teacher 75% of the time or by other students 25% of the time. Recasts as the most popular feedback technique, was also the least likely to lead to uptake of any kind: only 31% of the recast moves lead to uptake. Clarification requests (88%), metalinguistic feedback (86%), repetition (78%) were found to be best at eliciting uptake. For repair, metalinguistic feedback, then repetition, and clarification requests scored the best.

This study seemed to support claims that learners who were not given the correct form, who were only given signals to correction, were more active (and successful) in negotiating form.

Some teachers may use recasts or not encourage self-repair because they do not want to "interrupt the flow" of communication in communicative classrooms. However, "data analysis revealed that none of the feedback types stopped the flow of classroom interaction and that uptake – that is, student's turn in the error treatment sequence- clearly does not break the communicative flow"[5]. On the contrary, uptake means that the student has the floor again, rather than the teacher. Overuse of recasts as communication continuation moves can lead to a teacher-driven classroom.

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[5] Lyster, L. and L. Ranta, (1997): "Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake: Negotiation of Form in Communicative Classrooms", *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19: 57.

1.5.3. Study by Roy Lyster: Negotiation of Form, Recasts, and Explicit Correction in Relation to Error Types and Learner Repair in Immersion Classrooms

This study investigated specific patterns of a reactive approach to form-focused instruction: basically, corrective feedback and its relationship to error types and immediate learner repair. The database is drawn from transcripts of audio recordings made in four French immersion classrooms at the elementary level, totaling 18.3 hours and including 921 error sequences. The 921 learner errors were coded as grammatical, lexical, or phonological, or as unsolicited uses of the first language. Corrective feedback moves were coded as explicit correction, recast, or negotiation of form (i.e., elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, or repetition of error).

In contrast with previous studies of error treatment in second language classrooms, which showed that teachers' use of corrective feedback was relatively unsystematic, this study revealed a certain degree of systematicity in the teachers' treatment of specific types of oral errors. First, the proportion of error types receiving corrective feedback from the teachers reflected the rate at which these various error types actually occurred. Second, the teachers tended to provide feedback on phonological and lexical errors with a certain amount of consistency (at rates of 70% and 80%, respectively); grammatical errors received corrective feedback at a lower rate, but accounted for the highest number of corrective feedback moves in the database nonetheless. Third, the teachers tended to select feedback types in accordance with error types: namely, recasts after grammatical and phonological errors and negotiation of form after lexical errors.

1.5.3.1. Conclusion of the Study

Overall, the negotiation of form proved to be more effective at leading to immediate repair than recasts or explicit correction, particularly in the case of lexical errors and also in the case of grammatical errors and unsolicited uses of first language, but not in the case of phonological errors; the latter clearly benefit from recasts. This pattern suggests that the teachers were on the right track in their decisions to recast phonological errors and to negotiate lexical errors

and that perhaps teachers could draw more frequently on the negotiation of form in response to grammatical errors, because almost two thirds of all grammatical repairs resulted from this type of feedback. A preference for providing feedback in this way is supported the argument that language learners are likely to benefit more from being "pushed" (Swain, 1995) to retrieve target language forms than from merely hearing the forms in the input, because the retrieval and subsequent production stimulate the development of connections in memory.

1.5.4. Study on Interactionally Modified Input and Learning Outcomes

It was Long (1980) who made an important distinction between modified input and modified interaction. This interaction had special features which helped the participants negotiate meaning (namely, comprehension checks, confirmation checks and clarification requests).

When second language learners face communicative problems and they have the opportunity to negotiate solutions to them, they are able to acquire new language. This claim has been referred to as the Interaction Hypothesis (Ellis 1990). Thus, Long supported the idea that negotiated interaction is essential for input to become comprehensible.

Two studies which investigated the relationship between interaction and acquisition will be discussed. Those studies are the following ones:

- S.M. Gass and E.M. Varonis (1994)
- R. Ellis, Y. Tanaka and A. Yamazaki (1994)

In Gass and Varonis' (1994) study, one of their six hypotheses suggested is of special relevance. Hypothesis 2 predicts as follows "Interaction yields better non-native students comprehension".

Sixteen native and non-native dyads performed the task. The non-natives were at the high intermediate level and they had to describe where to place objects on two different scenes. According to their results, Hypothesis 2 was confirmed. When non-native students were allowed to negotiate meanings, they made fewer errors in placing the

objects. Similarly, the researchers got more accurate results when the description of the scene was interactive.

As far as the learning outcomes are concerned, their study suggests the potential effects of interaction on the incorporation of forms, but both authors claim that they are not yet in a position to talk about actual acquisition of new forms.

Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki's article reports two studies which investigated the effects of modified interaction on comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. The subjects they chose were 79 third-year students at public high school for the first study, and 127 first-year high school students for the second one.

The participants were administered a pretest to establish a set of lexical items unknown to them. In the treatment, they had to listen to the directions which told them what object to place in a specific place. The treatment was followed by two posttests and a follow-up test which took place one month after the second posttest. The researchers then pointed out five hypotheses out of which number 2 and 3 dealt with negotiation, comprehension and acquisition.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that learners receiving input through interaction would achieve higher levels of second language comprehension than those exposed to other types of input. The outcomes of their study supported the prediction. In this sense, the students who were given the change to negotiate their problems in comprehension were more successful in carrying out the directions.

Hypothesis 3 suggested that learners in interactive situations would learn and retain more second language words than those learners who received other kinds of input. This turned out to be the case, as the learners who negotiated the input achieved higher vocabulary acquisition scores in the immediate posttest and, what is more important, they maintained this advantage over time.

Finally, and in the light of their results, the authors support a causative relationship between negotiated interaction and acquisition. However, they also acknowledged the fact that different aspects of

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language may not be acquired in the same way. Therefore, it is still a research question whether interaction can promote the acquisition of other aspects of the second language.

1.5.4.1. Conclusion of Study

The article by Gass and Varonis demonstrated that negotiation was a facilitating factor on input comprehensibility. Similarly, Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki found that through interaction, learners achieved higher levels of second language comprehension. Furthermore, their results showed that by negotiating the input, their learners had reached higher vocabulary acquisition scores. Despite these encouraging findings, the effect of interaction on acquisition remains controversial. Ellis (1991) has suggested that comprehension does not necessarily lead to acquisition. Pica (1994b) considers it difficult to find a direct relationship between comprehension of second language input and internalization of second language forms. However, it is possible to establish an indirect relationship between negotiation and acquisition: through interaction learners can detect differences between their interlanguages and the target language, and this awareness of the differences may make them modify their output. This belief is in line with Long (1980), who suggested that negotiated interaction indirectly promoted second language acquisition.

1.5.5. Study by P. Foster on Negotiation for Meaning and Peer Assis tance in Second Language Classrooms.

This study investigates the value of language classroom negotiation of meaning from both cognitive and sociocultural perspectives. According to Long (1996) comprehensible input gained through interactional adjustments such as negotiating meaning and modifying output is central to second language acquisition, and much research has been undertaken to discover which classroom activities give learners the greatest benefit from this type of interaction (Pica 1994b). This study discusses the measures typically used to identify negotiated interaction and proposes that more rigorous definitions need to be employed to separate signals of communication problems from signals of interest and encouragement. In the study reported, learners were recorded during an interactive classroom task, and the incidence of

negotiation moves (learners' clarification requests, comprehension and confirmation checks) was calculated by counting only those instances where communication problems were clearly signaled.

The quantitative results showed that the incidence of negotiating meaning was very low. A qualitative analysis of the data subsequently investigated what was going on in the long stretches of interaction that lacked any signs of meaning negotiation. Learners actively assisted each other to transact the task through co-construction and prompting. Learners expressed interest and encouragement while seeking and providing assistance and initiating self-repair of their own utterances, all in the absence of communication breakdowns. Obtaining completely comprehensible input appeared to be of lower priority than maintaining a supportive and friendly discourse. Negotiation is one of a range of conversational processes that facilitate second language acquisition as learners work to understand and express meaning in the second language.

1.5.6. Study by MacKey, A. and Philp, J. on Conversational Interaction and Second Language Development: Recasts, Responses, and Red Herrings?

This study examines the effects of negotiated interaction on the production and development of question forms in English as a second language. The study focused on one feature of interaction, recasts, which have recently been the topic of interactional work in the second language acquisition literature (Long 1996, Lyster & Ranta 1997). The study explored the relationship between recasts in conversational interaction and short-term second language development. Long's updated version of the Interaction Hypothesis (Long 1996) claims that interaction is facilitative of second language development and that implicit negative feedback, which can occur through interaction can have this positive effect. Recasts are one implicit negative feedback. Although some studies have demonstrated positive effects for interaction in second language development (Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki 1994), an important next step is the attempt to isolate the effect of individual interaction features, such as recasts, on second language development.

The study compared groups of learners who received interactionally modified input with learners who received the same input containing intensive recasts in order to investigate: the effect of recasts on learners' short term interlanguage development, and the nature and content of learners' responses to recasts.

The results suggest that for more advanced learners, interaction with intensive recasts may be more beneficial than interaction alone in facilitating an increase in production of targeted higher-level morphosyntactic forms. These positive developmental effects were found for recasts even though, recasts were usually not repeated and rarely elicited modification by the learners. This study, therefore, suggests that recasts may be beneficial for short term interlanguage development even though they are not incorporated in learners' immediate responses.

Previous studies of recasts have examined their effect by focusing on the responses of learners or through immediate posttests. However, second language acquisition researchers such as Gass (1997) have cautioned that factors such as instruction, focus on form, and interaction may have delayed developmental effects.

1.5.7. Study by Loewen S., and Philp, J. on Recasts in the Adult English Second Language Classroom: Characteristics, Explicitness, and Effectiveness

As mentioned above, a number of descriptive studies of language classrooms have identified recasts as a frequent form of feedback used by teachers following learners' non-target-like oral production. Some classroom-based researchers (e.g., Lyster 1998) have suggested that recasts are less effective than other forms of feedback because of the ambiguity of their potentially corrective purpose.

This study focused on both the provision and the effectiveness of recasts in 12 adult English second language classrooms throughout 17 hours of meaning-based interaction. There were 12 teachers and 118 learners who participated, with class sizes ranging from 6 to 14 students. Comparisons involving the incidence of recasts, elicitation, and metalinguistic feedback, together with learner responses (e.g.,

successful uptake) following these types of feedback, revealed that recasts were widely used and, similar to other types of corrective feedback, were beneficial at least 50% of the time, as measured by posttests.

The recasts differed according to characteristics that emphasized their corrective purpose. Logistic regression analysis revealed certain characteristics that were associated with successful uptake and with accuracy on posttests. Stress, declarative intonation, one change, and multiple feedback moves were predictive of successful uptake, whereas interrogative intonation, shortened length, and one change were predictive of the accuracy of the test scores.

This study suggests that recasts vary in implicitness and that these differences may have an impact on their effectiveness, both in terms of learners' successful uptake and subsequent use. Moreover, the ambiguity of recasts is greatly reduced by the phrasal, prosodic, and discoursal cues that teachers provide. The effectiveness of recasts is likely to be affected by these cues and other factors, such as degree of difference between the recast and the non-target-like utterance.

CHAPTER II:
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Communicative Language Teaching

Current second language teaching methodologies based on Communicative Language Teaching suggest that there is a benefit in switching from traditional teacher-centered to a learner-centered classroom setting. One of the main differences with traditional ways of teaching languages lies in the role of teacher and learner. The communicative approach shifts the focus to the learner in several aspects of classroom instruction: the curriculum reflects the needs of the learner, the activities engage learners in communication (involving information sharing and negotiation of meaning) and the teacher's role is that of a facilitator in the communication process (Nunan 1989).

Communicative language teaching suggests having students work in small groups in order to maximize their opportunities for communicative practice. Acting as a guide of procedures and activities during communicative activities, the teacher is responsible for establishing situations that are likely to promote communication. Students interact with others, they are actively engaged in negotiation of meaning, they have an opportunity to express themselves by sharing ideas and opinions and they are responsible for their own learning. Communicative language teaching calls for a very active role for learners in the classroom and increased responsibility for their own learning.

2.2. Negotiation and Second Language Acquisition

Some interactionist theorists maintain that second language acquisition takes place through conversation interaction.

Long (1983b, 1989) studied the ways learners interact with native speakers. He started his researches agreeing with Krashen's comprehensible input theory. Krashen hypothesized that language data which could be understood but with a slight effort, and which were slightly more advanced than the learner's level of understanding, fostered learning. He claimed that a type of input called "i + 1", where the "i" represents the current level of the learner's knowledge, and the "+1" an input which is slightly above this level, would promote language learning. Although the importance of this concept of comprehensible input was considered paramount by many researchers, and became a dominant theme in Second Language Acquisition theories, interactionist critics pointed to some of its insufficiencies. They doubted that mere exposure to input, even if comprehensible, could promote language learning. When reading a book, watching a TV program, or listening to a radio broadcast learners do not interact with the source of language: the communication is unidirectional. They do not have the opportunity to show that they have not understood the message, to ask for clarifications or repetitions.

On the basis of these considerations Long, although accepting the comprehensible input theory, decided to study how input is made comprehensible. His researches showed that native speakers consistently modify their speech when they interact with non-native speakers. Most native speakers seem to adjust naturally their speech to the non-native speaker's needs, in order to facilitate communication. Modified interaction involves not only linguistic simplification, but also other types of modifications.

According to Long, negotiation comprises the following interactional modifications:

- **Comprehension checks:** efforts by the native speakers to ensure that the non-native speaker has understood.
  NS: lessons start at 9:00 a.m. Do you understand?

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- **Clarification requests:** efforts by the non-native speaker to clarify something which has not been understood. They led to further modifications by the native speaker.
  NS: Could you show me your ticket, please?
  NNS: My ticket?
  NS: Yes.

- **Self repetition or paraphrase:** the native speaker or the non-native speaker repeats their sentences either partially or in their entirety.
  NS: I bought some cheese yesterday when I went to the market. I bought some.

- **Other repetition**: the native speaker or the non-native speaker repeat what the conversational partner has just said.
  NNS: I met him this morning.
  NS: Oh yeah, you met him.

- **Here-and-now topics:** topics limited to the immediate environment, or to experiences the native speaker imagines the non-native speaker has had.
  NS: did you prepare this by yourself?

- **Expansions:** native speakers react to non-native speakers' errors by correcting and expanding what they have just said.
  NNS: I have read it already yesterday.
  NS: Oh yeah, of course you read it yesterday.

- **Topic-initiating moves:** more abrupt and unintentional topic shifts are accepted when native speakers interact with non-native speakers. (According to Pica 1987, it seems that this is due to the fact that even if interlocutors may want to understand each other, they do not always have the time or motivation to work toward this goal. This is why topic switching is so frequent in native speaker / non-native-speaker interaction).
  NNS: I arrived here first this morning.
  NS: Can you show me your work?

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- **Shorter responses:** high frequency of yes-no responses

- **Other linguistic adjustments** typical of native speaker / non-native speaker interactions include the following:

- **Phonological:** slower paces speech: more use of stress, pauses, more clearly enunciated, avoidance of contractions
  Morphology and Syntax: more well-formed utterances, shorter utterances, less complex utterances, few "wh" questions

- Semantics: fewer idiomatic expressions, high average lexical frequency of nouns and verbs.

(The examples and definitions above are paraphrased from Long 1983, 218-219).

On the basis of his analysis, Long inferred that modified interaction is necessary for language acquisition.

The model he proposed shows the relationship between interactional modification, comprehensible input and language acquisition and stresses the importance of conversation (interaction) in producing comprehensible input. It also implies that modification which takes place during interaction is more useful to learners than mere linguistic simplification which is planned in advance.

2.2.1. Negotiation in the Analysis of Classroom Discourse

Pica's research was moved by the need to find empirical support for the thesis of Long that learners' comprehension of new input is fostered when they engage in negotiation of meaning with their interlocutors (Pica 1987). Her initial research focused on the way contributions made by negotiation aid learners' comprehension of input during one-to-one native speaker and non-native speaker interaction. Findings showed that when non-native speakers ask their interlocutors to clarify or confirm the meaning of a message, either by direct appeal, or by repeating with rising intonation, part of what had just been said; their receptive and expressive capacities in a second language are advanced. This happens also because these interactional moves force

learners to draw more deeply into their language resources and this manipulation of the existing language system has been shown to be a beneficial to language learning.

Pica then moved to analyze interactional features in classroom environments. It could be expected that such a social context as a language classroom, where most events (lessons, discussions, drills, dialogues, etc.) are constructed through the interaction of teachers and students, should provide the best opportunities for restructuring interactional moves, i.e. confirmation and comprehension checks and clarification requests. However, research showed that these moves were significantly smaller in classroom context that those found in native speaker and non-native speaker interaction outside the classroom. Classroom interaction seemed to be mostly made of acts when learners simply display their knowledge and skills, while teachers instruct, evaluate and monitor learners' performance.

Pica suggested that these findings could be explained by considering the teacher-student role and status relationship which are created and rule most classroom activities. First it should be remembered that a necessary precondition for interactional modification is the need interlocutors have to understand each other. However, what usually happens during a class period is that teachers have already a clear idea of what their students are likely to say, because of the material, the tasks and activities they have prepared. This means, teachers can predict the scenario that their lesson plans will generate. Therefore, such an interactional modification as topic shift is very unlikely to happen naturally in classroom discourse. Another important reason why classroom activities bring few opportunities for classroom members to restructure their interaction is because of the unequal status relationship existing between learners and teachers. Learners may avoid asking teacher to clarify their sentences because they fear that their clarification requests and confirmation and comprehension checks "will be perceived as challenges to the knowledge and professional experience of the teacher"[6]. The logical consequence of this

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[6] Pica, T. (1989): "Second Language Acquisition, Social Interaction and the Classroom", *Applied Linguistics* 8: 12.

consideration is that activities which build collaboration and sharing of responsibility for the learning process among classroom members can create the right environment for interactional modification to take place.

In light of her findings on the inadequate interactional features found in classroom environments, Pica (1994b) devoted her more recent research on the study of tasks that could create the right opportunities for classrooms participants to modify and restructure their interactions. She found that an activity which requires students to exchange information forces learners to make sure they understand each other's production and work towards making themselves understood. This creates the natural context for plenty of interactional modifications to take place. The information exchange task which resulted to be one of the most successful in promoting interaction is the "jigsaw", where each participant holds a decisive part of the overall information, and where the contribution of everyone is essential to complete the task. The findings of her research were that the negotiation of meaning required by the structure of the task led to more accurate comprehension, and that the highest interactions were also the best comprehenders.

Another important finding was that when pre-modified input alone was the only source of information comprehension was significantly worse than when unmodified input was used together with the opportunity to ask clarification questions or signal difficulty.

Pica concluded by advising teachers to work toward negotiation with their students, and to design and use tasks which promote equalized interaction.

2.2.2. Negotiation of Meaning and Learner/Learner Interaction

One of the main underlying principles of the studies on negotiating meaning is that all data emphasize task-based instruction and learner/learner interaction. Because of this, the first set of pedagogical implications for language learning relates to activities that involve the negotiation of meaning in dyadic and group interactions.

In terms of classroom practice, this means that educators should introduce such activities as problem solving, decision making, opinion exchange, picture dictation, and

Jigsaw tasks, as mentioned above, are standard communicative exercises for developing fluency in the target language. These types of activities provide an ideal atmosphere for negotiating meaning in appropriate contexts. Learners have opportunities to receive input that they have made comprehensible through negotiation and at the same time, to produce comprehensible output, an output which learners have made comprehensible to other learners through negotiations.

Teachers who use the communicative approach can justify these types of activities because they encourage learners to produce comprehensible output. The findings of interactional studies support the importance of interaction and the negotiation of meaning in developing proficiency in the target language, thus confirming the importance of negotiated interactions in the production of comprehensible output, one of the basic principles of the communicative language approach.

2.2.3. Listener Strategies during Negotiation of Meaning

There are different listener response moves during negotiation of meaning, and the various strategies have different effects on the continuation of the discourse.

A Global reprise typically results in a repetition or rephrasing of an entire utterance or it simply states that the learner has not understood. *A continuation signal* means that the listener has understood. These are considered *global questioning strategies*, because they refer to the whole utterance.

Local questioning strategies: A lexical reprise is a question referring to a specific word in the preceding utterance or simply repeating a word or phrase with a rising intonation. *A fragment reprise* is a question referring to a specific part of the preceding utterance without specifying a specific lexical item. A lexical gap questions a word or term used before, which the listener has understood but cannot

remember. *Positional reprise* refers to a specific position in the preceding utterance, as for example: "*I don't understand the last part.*"

Inferential strategies: Hypothesis testing refers to the use of specific questions to verify whether an inference about what the speaker has said is correct. *Forward inference* sets a question that elaborates on previously given information.

It is possible to say that because different strategies result in different types of language use, they have a differential effect on language acquisition. The important discourse strategies are those that can be shown to be general in nature and can be theorized to contribute to acquisition.

One of the aims of communicative tasks is that they require that the students negotiate the meaning of the message in order to succeed at exchanging information and get the conversation going. When working in pairs to solve real communication tasks, students are usually faced with some kind of linguistic problems, it could be lexical, grammatical, phonological, semantic, or pragmatic. Once one of the partners notices a gap or suffers some confusion, the pair will suspend the normal flow of the conversation in order to resolve their miscommunication. In Gass' words "Negotiation refers to communication in which participant's attention is focused on resolving a communication problem as opposed to communication in which there is a free-flowing exchange of information"[7]. Usually these negotiations result in the correction of specific mistakes and promote the evolution of the second language learners' interlanguage towards the target.

This process of negotiation of meaning has been included under the Interaction Hypothesis, which states that the conditions for second language acquisition are very much enhanced by having second language learners negotiate meaning with other speakers.

2.2.4. Effects of Negotiation in Language Acquisition

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[7] Gass, S.M. (1997): *Input, Interaction, and the Second Language Learner,* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 108.

Many researchers agree that interaction enriches the input to the learning mechanisms. According to them, negotiation of meaning promotes language acquisition to occur. Gass (1997) also acknowledges negotiation as a facilitator of learning and claims that negotiation draws attention to erroneous or inappropriate forms, and also creates a situation in which learners receive feedback through direct and indirect evidence, and, as a result, this facilitates second language learning. Researchers are still not able to confirm how interaction does this, however, Carroll (2000) attempts to clarify possible functions of negotiation of meaning in relation to enhancing of learning and argues that negotiation helps the learners make more precise choices of lexical items, and this might strengthen the learner's encoding of a given form and lead to greater practice, which will enhance recall of relevant items.

Long (1997), believes that if students are given adequate opportunities, second language learners can and do learn much of a second language grammar incidentally and implicitly, while focusing on meaning or communication. However, he also thinks that a focus on meaning alone is insufficient to achieve full native-like competence. Therefore, he proposes to focus on form. This is a modern pedagogical approach which has attracted much attention in recent years and respects learner-centeredness. Negotiation of meaning plays an important role here as it invokes feedback, and feedback draws attention to gaps between the input and the learner's output. This means that when feedback is given to the learner by another participant in the conversation, the learner starts monitoring the interaction more consciously and attempts to verify, practice and possibly memorize correct and appropriate forms in the conversation. By doing this, negotiation of meaning can promote the use of learning strategies by the learner. The language learner that is capable of using a wide variety of language strategies appropriately can improve his or her language skills. Also, language learning strategies contribute to the development of the communicative competence of learners.

2.3. Communication Strategies

Discourse strategies are associated with the negotiation of meaning and are listener-oriented, communication strategies are typically seen as speaker-oriented.

They are used to communicate meaning for which students lack or cannot access the requisite linguistic knowledge. Most of the strategies identified are related to lexis, but some can apply to any linguistic problem.

Some of the communication strategies that have been identified are:

2.3.1. Reduction Strategies: Where the learner gives up a topic or abandons a specific message.

2.3.2. Achievement Strategies: where the learner decides to keep the original communicative goal and attempts to compensate for insufficient means for achieving it.

These could include:

a)   Approximation, for example "worm" is substituted for "silkworm".
b)   Paraphrase, for example: it sucks air is substituted for "vacuum cleaners".
c)   Word coinage, for e. substituting "picture place" for "gallery".
d)   Conscious transfer, i.e. constant use of the first language by literally translating a first language expression.
e)   Appeals for assistance.
f)   Mime.

According to Faerch and Kasper (1983, cited in Ellis 2003) communication strategies are seen as part of the planning stage, they are used when speakers experience some kind of problem with their initial plan that prevents them from executing it. There are other similar models of communication strategies, but the key issue is what motivates learners to use one type of strategy rather than another.   Other

specialists believe that learners look to conform to two general principles of communication – the principle of clarity and the principle of economy. The first one requires speakers to be informative and clear while the second ones require them to be brief and economical.

Communication strategies are an important component of strategic competence, which is the competence required to make effective use of one's linguistic and pragmatic resources.

2.3.3. Communication Strategies and Language Acquisition

Communication strategies are very important for understanding second language communication. Some of these strategies might help acquisition by keeping the conversation going and therefore ensuring more input for the learners and are also considered an important vehicle for producing pushed output that fosters acquisition.

The relationship between communicative ability and language acquisition can be seen as two-way – the more language learners acquire, the more communicatively effective they become, while the more effective they are as communicators, the more opportunities for language acquisition they will be able to obtain for themselves.

2.3.4. Communicative Effectiveness

The students overall communicative effectiveness will be affected by the extent to which participants engage in the negotiation of meaning and make use of communication strategies. The study of communicative effectiveness is very important for the study of tasks. It examines the interactions that arise out of a task in relation to the outcome achieved, and it also provides a basis for determining whether a particular task works in the sense that students can achieve a satisfactory outcome.

2.4. Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching

Task-based teaching provides learners with opportunities for learner-to-learner interactions that encourage authentic use of language and meaningful communication. The goal of a task is to "exchange

meaning rather than to learn the second language"[8]. Research suggests that learners produce longer sentences and negotiate meaning more often in pair and group work than in teacher-fronted instruction (Doughty & Pica 1986). Interactive tasks may be most successful when they contain elements that

- Are new or unfamiliar to the participants;
- require learners to exchange information with their partners or group members;
- have a specific outcome;
- involve details;
- center on a problem, especially an ethical one, such as deciding in a small group who should take the last spot in a lifeboat, a nuclear physicist or a pregnant woman; and involve the use of naturally occurring conversation and narrative discourse.

Prabhu (1987) deserves credit for originating the task-based teaching and leaning, based on the concept that effective learning occurs when students are fully engaged in a language task, rather than just learning about language. In second language teaching and learning, a task is often viewed as an outcome-oriented instructional segment or as a behavioral framework for research or classroom learning. It can be defined as an activity in which "the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (task) in order to achieve an outcome"[9].

One feature of task-based learning is that learners carrying out a task are free to use any language they can to achieve the outcome, language forms are not prescribed in advance. As language users, human beings have an innate capacity to work out ways of expressing meanings. Learners do not simply take note of new language input and attempt to reproduce it. As soon as they put language to use by attempting purposeful communication, they begin to adjust and adapt

[8] Willis, J. (1996): *A Framework for Tasked-Based Learning*, London: Longman, 147.
[9] Ellis, R. (1999): *Learning a Second Language through Interaction*, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 151.

input to enable them to create new meanings. They are not aiming to reproduce a series of languge forms in conformity with target norms.

Their aim in language use is to create a meaning system which can operate rapidly and efficiently in real time. In order to achieve this goal they will use and develop language forms to which they have been recently exposed, but will also adopt strategies which sometimes lead them to ignore grammatical facts and to create for themselves forms which are not sanctioned by the target norms. The purpose of a communicative task, therefore, is to encourage learners to develop towards the creation of a meanig system. Learners adopt different strategies and different language forms in the achievement of the goal, depending on their stage of language development, their degree of involvement with the task, the cognitive challenge the task presents and other factors.

In task-based approaches, therefore, language development is prompted by language use, with the study of language form playing a secondary role. However, recent research suggests that while communicative language use is the driving force for language acquisition, we also need to focus at some point on language form if acquisition is to be maximally efficient. Skehan (1996, cited in Carter and Nunan 2001), argues that unless we encourage a focus on form, learners will develop more effective strategies for achieving communciative goals without an accompanying development of their language system. As a result, learners may fossilise at a relatively low level of language development. Skehan (1992, cited in Carter and Nunan 2001) suggest that learning is prompted by the need to communcate, but argues that will will be more efficient if there is a need to focus on acuyracy within a task-based methodology and if there is a critical focus on language form within the task-based cycle.

The challenge for task-based learning, therefore, is to devise a methodology that gives learners the freedom to engage natural learning processes in the creation of a meaning system, but which also provides them with incentives to "restructure" their system in the light of language input.

As noted by Richards and Rodgers (2001) and Willis (1996), a task has a natural series of stages, such as preparation for the task (pre-task) the task itself or task cycle, and follow-up (post-task).

The pre-task phase has two basic functions: 1) to introduce and create interest in doing a task on the chosen topic, and 2) to activate topic-related words, phrases and target sentences that will be useful in carrying out the task and in the real world. A third, optional function is the inclusion of an enabling task to help students communicate as smoothly as possible during the task cycle.

The task cycle consists of the task(s) plus planning and report phases in which students present spoken or written reports of the work done in the task(s). During the task phase, students work in pairs or groups and use whatever linguistic resources they possess to achieve the goals of the task. Then, to avoid the risk of developing fluency at the expense of accuracy, they work with the teacher to improve their language while planning their reports of the task.

Before or during the task cycle, the teacher can expose students to language in use by having them listen to a recording of other people doing the task, or by having them read a text related to the task topic.

The final phase in the framework, the language focus, provides an opportunity for form-focused work. In this phase, some of the specific features of the language, which occurred naturally during the task, are identified and analyzed. Among the possible starting points for analysis activities are functions, syntax, words or parts of words, categories of meaning or use, and phonological features. Following the analysis activities, this phase may also contain a practice stage in which the teacher conducts practice of the new word, phrases, or patterns which occurred in the analysis activities, the task text, or the report phase.

A critical focus on language form may be achieved through consciousness-raising techniques which encourage learners to reflect on language to observe recurrent and typical patternings. Consciousness-raising activities help the learner to notice a specific feature of language in context as a first step towards its acquisition. Such activities will

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encourage the learner to make hypotheses and further generalizations about the language which contribute to present or future learning.

Task based teaching looks for texts that are learner centered discursive practices that encourage the learners to continuously be engaged in shaping and controlling the discourse. In a traditional form-focused pedagogy, language is considered as an object and the learners are required to act as learners. In a task-based pedagogy, language is treated as a tool for communicating and according to Ellis (2001); the teacher and students function primarily as "language users." Even in communicative teaching, students and teachers find it difficult to consistently orient language as a tool and adopt the role of language users, because they "think" that the teacher needs to teach and the students need to learn the language. However, the objective of communicative task-based teaching is for the students to forget they are in a classroom and why they are there. Students need to pretend they can learn the language indirectly through communicating in it instead than directly through studying it. Students need to be motivated to access each other views in order for a task to have an impact on negotiation.

There has recently been a lot of research investigating the relationship between interaction and comprehension-acquisition, addressing different issues as for example the difference between a teacher fronted and small group interactions and the effects of learner's variables such as proficiency level, age, gender, background.

Task factors influence on interaction and the different task variables have an impact on the amount of meaning, negotiation and the use of communication strategies and communicative effectiveness. The task variables to consider in a study relate to what Skehan (1992, cited in Carter and Nunan 2001) calls "task features", i.e. variables relating to the goal, type of input and conditions of a task.

2.4.1. Required versus Optional Information Exchange / Information-gap versus Opinion-gap Tasks

It is possible to distinguish between information-gap tasks and opinion-gap tasks. Information-gap tasks involve an exchange of

information while opinion-gap tasks involve learners in going beyond the information given by adding their own ideas. In an information-gap task the information provided is split, this means the learners do not all have the same information while in an opinion-gap task it is shared. In information gap tasks information exchange is required (this means learners cannot complete the task unless they exchange the information) whereas in opinion gap tasks it is optional. From a psycholinguistic point of view, this appears to be the main difference.

In a series of studies, Doughty and Pica found that small group work in language classrooms only resulted in more negotiation work than teacher-fronted lessons when the task was of the required information type. Pica and Doughty (1985 cited in Ellis 2003) found that when they compared performance on an optional information exchange task there was no difference, basically because there was little negotiation in either participatory condition. However, in Pica and Doughty (1985, cited in Ellis 2003) they used a required information exchange task and found that there was significantly more modified interaction in group work than in a teacher-fronted lesson. They concluded that the crucial factor determining the amount of meaning negotiation was the task type rather than participatory organization, and comment: "Neither a teacher-fronted nor a group format can have an impact on negotiation as long as these tasks continue to provide little motivation for classroom participants to access each other's views"[10].

Foster (1998, cited in Ellis 2003) compared the amount of negotiation that occurred when learners performed required and optional information exchange tasks in both pairs and in groups. She found that, irrespective of tasks, there was more negotiation in the pairs than in the groups. Nevertheless, the required information exchange tasks more consistently elicited negotiation than the optional information exchange tasks. Foster concluded that overall the best context for negotiation was one involving dyads performing a required information exchange task.

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[10] Ellis, R. (2003): *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 86.

2.4.2. Information-gap: One-way versus Two-way Tasks

One-way tasks and two-way tasks are required information exchange tasks that are distinguished in terms of whether the information to be shared is split one-way, i.e. held by a single person or between two or more people. In the case of one-way tasks the responsibility of completing the task successfully is placed on the participant who holds the information, although other participants con contribute by demonstrating when they comprehend and when they do not.

On the other hand, in two-way tasks all the participants have to participate in order to complete the task. Long (1989, quoted in Ellis 2003) feels confident enough to claim that two-way information gap tasks produce more negotiation work and more useful negotiation work than one-way information gap-tasks.

2.4.3. Task Outcome: Open versus Closed Tasks

Another variable that affects the outcome of tasks is the open/close difference. Open tasks are those where the participant knows there is no predetermined solution. (Most opinion-gap tasks are open because learners are free to decide on the solution).

Closed tasks on the contrary are those that require the learner to reach only one correct solution. It is possible to have open split and open shared, and also closed split and closed shared tasks. Long (1989) argues that closed tasks will more likely promote negotiation work than open tasks because the students need to continue working even when they are faced with a difficult situation. Problem-solving tasks elicit more spontaneous speech and wider range of language functions, including the discourse management functions associated with meaning negotiation. They need to persevere in order to make themselves understood and this fosters acquisition. In open tasks, the students do not need to perform difficult topics; basically they do not need to make an effort to communicate.

2.4.4. Topic of a Task

The topic of a task will also influence negotiation of meaning. The topic variable is likely to interact with learner variables, with individual learners differing in which topics they find more attractive to negotiate about. Studies suggest that topic familiarity and topic importance have an influence on the interaction that results from a task. Studies found that the learners' familiarity with the topic has a clear effect on comprehension. It also influenced the amount of negotiation work that took place, with the less familiar topic leading to less negotiation. It is also possible that topic can have an effect that is independent of learner factors, for example certain kinds of topics will predispose all learners to negotiate more than others. It has also been confirmed that the topic is a very important factor in determining the amount of talk produced by intermediate students.

2.4.5. Discourse Mode

Discourse mode affects the particular linguistic forms a learner uses in performing a specific task. There are strong theoretical and empirical reasons for believing that the discourse mode associated with a task will affect the extent to which participants modify their input and output in negotiation exchanges and the type of communication strategies the students use. However, there are few studies that have addressed this variable directly and many times this it is confounded with other variables.

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2.4.6. Cognitive Complexity of a Task

Tasks that are more difficult and demanding will more likely promote more meaning negotiation than cognitively undemanding tasks, as learners will need to use different strategies more frequently in order to deal with non-understanding. The level of detail in the information to be communicated affects the extent of meaning negotiation. When learners cannot rely on context or feedback to make themselves clear and when the goal of the task requires exact information, more compensatory strategies will be used and therefore more negotiation of meaning will be pursued. On the other hand, if the task is too challenging for some students they might simply give up.

It is believed that information-gap tasks and jigsaw tasks will promote more of these negotiations than other task stimuli. When working in dyads, jigsaw tasks provide each partner with only half of the information needed to solve the communication task, the partners must share their respective parts equally (i.e. two-way task), and then try to converge on a single outcome. With jigsaw tasks, the participants possess different pieces of the puzzle needed for a solution and therefore must work collaboratively to converge on a single outcome. One-way information-gap tasks assume only one person holds the pertinent information, which the other partner must solicit (one-way task), but the task can be repeated with the roles reversed or form a two-way task.

Cognitive complexity is yet another characteristic, but it relates not just to the task but also to the person. Analysis of cognitive complexity has been defined as an aspect of a person's cognitive functioning which at one end is defined by the use of many constructs with many relationships to one another (complexity) and at the other end by the use of few constructs with limited relationships to one another (simplicity). Therefore, cognitive complexity involves a person component (unobservable cognition and observable behavior) and a task structure component.

2.4.7. Task Goals

2.4.7.1. Focus on Meaning

The first potential goal of a task is to focus on meaning. In this type of syllabus, learners receive chunks of ongoing, communicative second language use, presented in lively lessons with no presentation of structures or rules and no encouragement for learners to discover rules for themselves. This is an analytic syllabus, in which any understanding of the structure of the language must come from the learner, who might or might not perceive regularities and induce rules. Grammar is viewed as developing naturally when the learner is ready for a given structure, so no structures should be discussed. The focus on meaning is sometimes not considered instruction at all, because the teacher can be viewed as simply providing opportunities for second language exposure.

2.4.7.2. Focus on Form

The second potential goal is to focus on form within a communicative, meaningful context by confronting learners with communicative language problems (breakdowns) and causing them to take action to solve the problems. In Long's (1997) view, a focus on form occurs when attention is mostly on meaning but is shifted to form occasionally when a communication breakdown occurs. Many techniques are used to meet this goal, such as "recasts" in which the instructor gives a corrective reformulation of the learner's incorrect production or understanding. With a recast, the learner must discern the difference between the correct contextualized form and the original contextualized form and figure out the underlying relationships and rule. Because the learner is involved with language analysis, this is an analytic syllabus.

However, a different type of focus on form occurs when the forms are preselected for tasks, rather than arising from learners' needs (the communication problem or breakdown during a task). This alternative focus on form is found particularly in communication-oriented textbooks, where a focus on meaning comes first, followed by a focus on form. Constraints of textbook tasks cause preselection of forms to occur, thus reducing the possibility of a spontaneous and incidental focus on form, such as that found in Long's model. In the preplanned focus on form model, the goal is to focus on preselected forms related to meaning-oriented tasks.

2.4.7.3. Focus on Forms

The third potential goal is to focus on forms by means of presenting specific, preplanned forms one at a time in the hope that learners will master them before they need to use them to negotiate meaning. The learner must synthesize all of the material himself or herself; hence a focus on forms syllabus is a synthetic syllabus. Lessons tend to be dull, sometimes difficult to understand, and not oriented toward communication, as though second language learning could be reduced to memorizing accumulated, small items and mechanistically applying many rules.

2.4.8. Focus on Form in Task-Based Language Teaching

Learners can and do learn much of the second language grammar incidentally, while focusing on meaning or communication. Research shows, however, that a focus on meaning alone is insufficient to achieve full native-like competence and can be improved upon by periodic attention to language as object. This is best achieved not by a return to discrete-point grammar teaching where classes spend most of their time working on isolated linguistic structures in a sequence predetermined externally by a syllabus designer or textbook writer. Instead, during an otherwise meaning-focused lesson, and using a variety of pedagogic procedures, learners' attention is briefly shifted to linguistic code features, in context, when students experience problems as they work on communicative tasks in a sequence determined by their own internal syllabuses, current processing capacity and learnability constraints. Focus on form is one of several methodological principles in Task-Based Language Teaching.

Focus on form refers to how attentional resources are allocated, and involves briefly drawing students' attention to linguistic elements (words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns, and do on), in context, as they arise incidentally in lessons focusing on meaning or communication, the temporary shifts in focal attention being triggered by students' comprehension or production problems. The purpose is to induce "noticing", i.e., registering forms in the input so as to store them in memory (learners do not need to understand their meaning or function, which is a question of how new items are organized into a linguistic system, and which may not occur until much later and not with metalinguistic awareness).

Focus on form is therefore learner-centered since it respects the learner's internal syllabus. It is under learner control, as it happens just when he or she has a communication problem, and so is likely, at least partially, to understand the meaning or function of the new form, and when the learner is attending to the input.

Focus on form should not be confused with "form-focused instruction". The second term is used to refer to any pedagogical technique used to draw students' attention to language form. It includes

focus on form procedures, but also all the activities used for focus on forms, such as exercises written specifically to teach a grammatical structure and used proactively, i.e. at moments the teacher, not the learner, has decided will be appropriate for learning the new item. Focus on form refers only to those form-focused activities that arise during, and embedded in, meaning-based lessons; this means they are not scheduled in advance but occur incidentally as a function of the interaction of learners with the subject matter or tasks that constitute the learners' and their teacher's predominant focus.

2.4.9. Implementing a Task

The way a task is performed can also influence the kind of interaction that takes place and language acquisition. There are different procedures which influence the negotiation of meaning, the use of communication strategies and communicative effectiveness. These are the participant roles, task repetition, interlocutor familiarity and the type of feedback.

2.4.10. Participant Role

One-way tasks can be performed in two different ways. The person holding the information can take the entire responsibility for the information exchange. On the other hand, the person holding the information can be assisted by the other participant asking questions to get the required information, being in this case interactive. The effectiveness of a one-way task in promoting negotiation can depend on if learners are asked to perform the task interactively or not, and on the communicative skills and styles of the participants. There is evidence to suggest that the participant role is an important factor, negotiation appears to be more effective if learners are active rather than passive participants in a task.

2.4.11. Task Repetition

Several researchers have found that asking learners to repeat a task has a marked interactive effect; this can be done by reversing the roles on the second occasion. It was observed that the number of indicators of non-understanding decreased in the second performance. Based on

some studies, it can be concluded that task repetition can have an effect on interaction when it involves the same task but not when it involves a different task of the same type. It was also possible to demonstrate that repeating a task can improve communicative efficiency.

2.4.12. Interlocutor Familiarity

Learners can perform a task with other learners they know or with strangers. Some studies revealed that when working in pairs or groups in which the members were familiar with each other, they used more clarification requests and confirmation checks than unfamiliar groups. The kind of interaction that takes place varies according to whether the interlocutors are familiar with each other. Doing a task with a familiar interlocutor can increase the amount of negotiation.

2.4.13. Type of Feedback

Feedback can vary according to the devices used to respond to the triggering move when there is a negotiation sequence and this will affect the learner's response specially if the output is modified or not. Some specialists (Pica, Holliday, Lewis and Morgenthaler 1989, cited in Ellis 2003) showed that learners were more likely to modify their output by making it more grammatical following requests for clarification than following confirmation checks. This confirms the importance of the type of feedback.

This finding has led to a number of task-based studies designed to investigate the effects of feedback on the output learners produce in their response move (uptake) and subsequent acquisition. The following study has examined the effects of feedback and pushed output arising in unfocused tasks. Van den Branden (1977, cited in Ellis 2003) investigated 10-11 year-old children performing a two-way task with native speaking peers and with a researcher. The type of feedback provided by these interlocutors differed, with the peers negotiating for meaning and content and the researcher negotiating more for form, i.e. alerting the learners to some of their morpho-syntactic errors and helping them to self-repair their errors. Van den Branden found that the children modified their output when confronted with negative feedback with both kinds of interlocutor. He also found that pushing learners to

modify their output had beneficial effects when the learners performed a similar task as a post-test. Irrespective of the type of negotiation, it resulted in them producing a significantly greater amount of output, providing more essential information and displaying a greater range of vocabulary. However, neither type of feedback had any effect on syntactic complexity or grammatical correctness in the post-test. This study suggests that negotiation involving pushed output aids communicative effectiveness but not grammatical accuracy. It also suggests, that the type of feedback (meaning-centred versus form-centred) does not have a differential effect. One reason for this might be that the learners in this study (children) treated all negotiation, whether of form or meaning, as message-oriented. Another reason for this result might be that the negotiation of form in this study was broadly targeted instead than focused on a specific linguistic feature. On the other hand, studies involving focused tasks have found that feedback has a positive effect on accuracy.

2.4.14. Interaction and Output Demands

Presence or absence of a demand for output is a task factor. Swain (1985) emphasized the importance of students' providing comprehensible output in task situations, often through interaction with others. Task interaction may be one-way, as in one person talking and the other listening or writing notes. It may be two-way, as in two individuals engaged in an information-gap task or sharing personal experiences. It may be multi-way, as in a group discussion, role-play, or simulation. Among many examinations of which types of tasks promote second language learning, a review by Pica (1996), reported that negotiation of meaning is most likely to occur when learners are involved in an interaction with the following four features:

- Each of the students holds a different portion of information that must be exchanged and manipulated in order to reach the task outcome.
- Both students are required to request and supply this information to each other.
- Students have the same goal.
- Only one outcome is possible from their attempts to meet the goal.

Thus, qualitative differences in the nature of the negotiation of meaning resulting from different tasks and different types of interaction, as Nunan (2004) also pointed out.

2.4.15. Working on Tasks in Groups and in Pairs

Many communicative tasks involve learners in face-to face encounters in the classroom. Interaction work in pairs and in small groups provides the basis for language acquisition. It also gives students practice in communicating and negotiating meanings, in establishing positive rapport, in maintaining a conversation with appropriate turntaking conventions and, at the same time, allows them to establish how well they can understand and make themselves understood. In lessons where reading and writing are the focus of communicative activity, work in small groups also has substantial value. When students collaborate while revising drafts of writing, for example, they can suggest improvements, correct error, and generally act as editors while reading each other's work.

Given that the overall goal of a task is to elicit language use, group and pair work have become an essential part in communicative language teaching. A task requires the participant to assume the role of language users in the sense that they must employ the same kinds of communicative processes as those involved in real-world activities. In order to engage the learners in communication, activities that involve information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction are required.

Jacobs (1998, cited in Ellis 2003) believes that when working in pairs and groups, the quantity of learner speech can increase. He also states that the variety of speech acts can increase and that in group work the needs of individual students can be attended, instead of having the teacher shape their instruction to the needs of the average student. Jacobs (1998, cited in Ellis 2003) points out that motivation, social integration and enjoyment can be increased when working in pairs and in groups and that the anxiety can be reduced. Another feature in favor of group/pair work is that it helps students learn how to work together with others. Group work can enhance learning because the students are willing to take risks and can scaffold each other's efforts.

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2.4.16. Cooperative Learning

One very important issue that needs to be taken into consideration is the social interaction between students. Working in pairs or groups does not by itself guarantee a successful outcome for the task or the conditions that promote language learning. It is not enough to simply put students together to complete a task. What is important and counts is the quality of interaction and if this permits the students to engage effectively with the task and to help and support each other's language learning. In a communicative task-based pedagogy, a key to using pair/group work lies in ensuring that students are able to work together effectively. The ability to work effectively with others is a process that requires time.

There are some matters that teachers can attend to in order to foster student cooperation in group/pair work. First of all, students need to feel convinced that the task they are asked to do is worthwhile and not simply an opportunity for some fun. They also need to be made accountable for their own contributions to the task. This can be achieved by giving each member a specific role. Some experts recommend working in pairs or in groups of four and they believe that mixed groups work better than homogeneous groups. When working with one-way information-gap tasks, collaborativeness is enhanced if the students with the lower proficiency are put in charge of the information to be exchanged. By doing this, they are creating opportunities for "pushed output" forcing the students to produce the required language. It is important that the teachers monitor how the students use the different strategies to engage in effective collaboration. The teacher assumes different roles within group/pair work, he/she observes and monitors the students' performance and intervenes when a group is experiencing difficulty.

Ellis (2003) believes that the overall purpose of task-based methodology is to create opportunities for language learning and skill development through collaborative knowledge building. He suggests some principles that can help to achieve this.

Principle 1: Make sure the task is presented at an appropriate level of difficulty. Since most of the times the teachers need to follow a strict

curriculum, it is advisable that they adjust the difficulty of the task according to the proficiency and level of the students.

Principle 2: It is important to establish clear goals for each task-based lesson, as Skehan (1998, cited in Ellis 2003) points out, it is not enough to give students tasks and assume they will develop their interlanguages simply by using the second language.

Principle 3: Students need to be informed and need to understand why they are required to perform a certain task. It is important to demonstrate students that tasks play an important role in developing their second language proficiency.

Principle 4: It is crucial that students adopt an active role in task-based lessons by negotiating meaning when a communicative problem arises. It is important to provide learners with an opportunity to participate completely in the tasks.

Principle 5: Students should feel motivated to take risks and to experiment with the language. It is important to create opportunities that help the students to achieve an appropriate level of challenge in an affective climate in order to foster "pushed output".

Principle 6: There should primarily be a focus on meaning when students perform a task. Tasks should provide opportunities for processing language communicatively by treating language as a tool and not as an object. Students should be more concerned with producing a certain output and not with displaying language. Students will achieve this only if they are motivated. The teachers can play an important role in this particular situation by varying task-based lessons.

Principle 7: Willis (1996) and Skehan (1998, cited in Ellis 2003) believe it is possible and beneficial to focus on form in a task-based lesson.

Principle 8: Skehan finds important that students need to be made accountable for how they perform a task and for their general progress and performance. A communicative task-based lesson has to help foster metacognitive awareness in the students.

2.4.17. The Role of Tasks in Teaching and Learning

The debate of recent years is based on the issue of exactly what kind of practice will lead to the development of communicative language ability. Brumfit (1984, cited in Hedge 2000) for example, argues for "natural language use" and suggests the need for what he calls "fluency activities". According to him, fluency activities "develop a pattern of language interaction within the classroom which is as close as possible to that used by competent performers in the mother tongue in real life"[11]. He and other researchers have developed a set of criteria necessary for achieving "fluency":

- The language should be a means to an end, i.e. the focus should be on the meaning and not on the form.
- The content should be determined by the learner who is speaking or writing. The learner has to formulate and produce ideas, information, opinion, etc.
- There must be a negotiation of meaning between the speakers, i.e. students must be involved in interpreting a meaning from what they hear and constructing what to say as a response. Learners should not be reliant on the teacher or materials to provide the language.
- What a learner hears should not be predictable, i.e. there should be an information or opinion gap.

According to Brumfit, fluency tasks will give students the opportunity to produce and understand items which they have gradually acquired during tasks focused on linguistic form, which he calls "accuracy work". When learners perform the different tasks, they are able to use any language resources they have acquired and are not directed into using particular structures. Members of the group would determine their own contributions and choose appropriate language for expressing ideas and opinions. They would negotiate meaning as they structure group interaction, checking that hey have understood, asking

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[11] Hedge, T. (2000): *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 57.

for clarification and further explanation, and as they speak they would use communication strategies such as paraphrase and restructuring.

Prabhu (1987, cited in Hedge 2000) suggests some tasks which require learners to negotiate meaning.

- Information-gap tasks, which involve a transfer of given information from one person to another or from one form to another, or from one place to another, generally calling for the decoding or encoding of information from or into language. The activity often involves selection or relevant information as well, and learners may have to meet criteria of completeness and correctness in making their transfer. One example is pair work, in which each member of the pair has a part of the total information and attempts to convey it verbally to the other.
- Reasoning-gap tasks, which involve deriving some new information from given information through process of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception or relationships or patterns. The activity necessarily involves comprehending and conveying information, as an Information-gap activity, but the information to be conveyed is not identical with that initially comprehended. There is a piece of reasoning which connects the two. One example is deciding what course of action is best (cheapest or quickest) for a given purpose and within given constraints.
- Opinion-gap tasks, which involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation. The activity may involve using factual information and formulating arguments to justify one's opinion, but there is no objective procedure for demonstrating outcomes as right or wrong, and no reason to expect the same outcome from different individuals or on different occasions. One example is story completion; another is taking part in the discussion of a social issue.

It is very important how learners use the activities they are provided with in order to acquire language and whether different ways of exploiting tasks provide different opportunities for learning. Skehan (1996, cited in Hedge 2000) believes that in performing a task under

time pressure, learners may place greater emphasis on communicating messages in order to complete the task quickly and may not therefore pay much attention to correctness and completeness of language form. They may use communication strategies to express ideas. Negotiation of meaning in such tasks will provide for the development of greater strategic competence and fluency, but will not necessarily lead to more comprehensible output and the development of greater accuracy.

There is an argument that a series of tasks will create opportunities for a focus on accuracy and input into the interlanguage system as well as fluency. Many teacher and textbook writers see communicative tasks as an essential ingredient in a programme but as part of a balanced diet of accuracy and fluency work. Some researchers believe that there should be more accuracy-based work early on, for beginners, but that there would be a gradual shift in emphasis as learners acquire more language and that upper-intermediate learners might be involved for a high proportion of class time in fluency work.

Linguistic competence is a fundamental component of communicative language ability. Teachers must develop communicative language ability through classroom practice but at the same time, ensure an understanding of how language works as a system and to develop an ability to use the system correctly, appropriately and creatively.

2.4.18. Tasks in Second Language Acquisition Research

The use of tasks in second language acquisition has been closely linked to developments in the study of second language acquisition. In the early years of second language acquisition (late sixties and seventies), researchers were primarily concerned with describing how learners acquire a second language, documenting the order and sequence in which the grammar of a language was acquired. Over the years, second language acquisition has become more theory-oriented with researchers seeking to test specific hypotheses based on theories of second language acquisition. Tasks have played an important role in both the early descriptive research and the later more theoretically based research. Also, tasks have become a focus of research in their own right.

In early versions of the Interaction Hypothesis (Long 1980, 1983b), Long emphasized the role that meaning negotiation played in providing comprehensible input. Long's (1996) updated version of the Interaction Hypothesis has suggested that meaning negotiation can contribute to acquisition in other ways – through the negative feedback that learners receive by means of recasts, i.e. interlocutor reformulations of learners utterances that contain errors, and through the opportunities to reformulate their own erroneous utterances in a more target-like way. These theories have led to research that utilizes tasks to investigate which kind of input – unmodified, premodified, or interactionally modified – works best for comprehension; which kind of input works best for language acquisition; and more recently, the effect of negative feedback on acquisition.

The Input and Interaction Hypotheses have also motivated several studies where the focus of the research was the tasks themselves. The goal of this research was to identify "psycholinguistically motivated task characteristics" which can be shown to affect the nature of language produced in performing a task in ways which are relevant to the second language processing and second language learning. Researchers wanted to find out which tasks were most likely to lead to the kind of meaning negotiation hypothesized to promote language acquisition. In this research the dependent variables were derived from the interactions that resulted when learners performed different tasks. Researchers investigated a variety of task variables such as whether the information exchange required by a task was one-way or two-way (Long 1983b), whether the input was shared or split, whether the outcome of a task was closed or open. Other research focused on the nature of the learner's participation in a task, examining whether tasks performed in small groups or in lockstep with a teacher led to greater meaning negotiation, and the effects of such variables as the learner's proficiency and gender on meaning negotiation.

Not all task-based research has been motivated by the Input and Interaction Hypotheses. A number of recent studies are based on Vygotskian's (cited in Ellis 2003) theory of language learning, in which he views all learning as socially constructed. When second language learners have the opportunity to interact with other users of the language, for example, a teacher, a native speaker, or another learner,

they are able to perform functions in the language which they cannot perform by themselves. With time and practice, they internalize these functions, learning to perform them independently. In this way, learning involves a progression from the inter- to the intra-mental as learners shift from object and other regulation to self-regulation. Vygotskian's theory also emphasizes how learners shape the goals of any activity to suit their own purposes. Recently, this theoretical perspective has led to task-based studies that investigate "scaffolding" and "collaborative dialogue", the supportive interactions that arise when learners communicate with others.

Other recent task-oriented research has been based on theories of language competence and of speech production. Skehan (1996, 1998 cited in Ellis 2003) has suggested that language competence is comprised of both lexis, including fixed and formulaic expressions, and grammatical rules. Native speakers make use of these two different types of knowledge by means of a "dual processing system", drawing on both lexicalized and grammatical processing but varying in which type they rely on in a given activity according to the communicative pressure they experience and their need to be precise. Skehan argues that when required to perform spontaneously, second language learners are likely to depend on lexicalized processing. He suggests that it may be possible to identify the task conditions and procedures that lead learners to place a differential emphasis on fluency. Variables investigated, include a number of input features of tasks, for example, familiarity of the information and degree of structure, of task procedures, for example if the task was to be performed dialogically or monologically and whether there was time made available for planning and of the product outcome, for example, how complex this is.

The task-based research mentioned above involves the use of unfocused tasks. However, there have also been a number of studies that have investigated focused tasks. Ellis (2003) distinguished between unfocused and focused tasks. Unfocused tasks may predispose learners to choose from a range of forms but they are not designed with the use of a specific form in mind. In contrast, focused tasks aim to induce learners to process, receptively or productively, some particular linguistic feature, for example a grammatical structure. Of course this processing must occur as a result of performing activities that satisfy the

key criteria of a task, this means that language should be used pragmatically to achieve some non-linguistic outcome. Because of this, the targeted feature cannot be specified in the rubric of the task. Focused tasks have basically two aims: one is to stimulate communicative language use (as with unfocused tasks), the other is to target the use of a particular, predetermined target features. Such tasks are of great use to both researchers and teachers. Researchers often want to know whether learners are able to perform some specific feature they are investigating in a communicative context.

Some researchers suggest that it is possible to predict the linguistic forms that will be used when particular tasks are performed. They found that the discourse genre, i.e. description vs. persuasion, elicited by tasks influenced the linguistic forms used. It was also demonstrated that the processing involved in performing a narrative and an argumentation task led to learners making different linguistic choices. Also, varying a task condition, i.e. shared versus split information influenced learners' choice of linguistic forms. Ellis (2003) demonstrated that it may be possible to push learners into using a particular grammatical form if they receive requests to clarify utterances containing an error in this structure. These studies, then demonstrated that task procedures can be manipulated to induce the use of specific features.

Other studies have investigated consciousness-raising tasks. Ellis (1991, 2003) examined whether the grammatical understanding that resulted from learners performing a consciousness-raising task was as good as that resulting from traditional grammatical explanations provided by a teacher. They also examined whether the quality of meaning negotiation that results form such tasks was comparable to that derived from unfocused tasks. The consciousness-raising tasks used in these studies led to a good understanding of the target grammar points and resulted in plentiful meaning negotiation.

More recently, researches have turned their attention to how participants in a task temporarily suspend attention to meaning in order to focus on form. By switching attention to form during the performance of a task teachers can incorporate form-focused instruction into meaning-focused instruction methodologically, rather than through

task-design. This branch of task-based research has been motivated by findings from second language acquisition which indicate that even after years of content-based instruction learners fail to acquire full grammatical and sociolinguistic competence (Swain 1985) and also by developments in second language acquisition theory that stress the importance for acquisition of conscious "noticing" of forms in the input. A temporary focus on form can be achieved in a number of ways, for example when teachers respond to learner errors (Lyster and Ranta 1997), when they draw learner's attention to the usefulness of specific forms in the task they are performing or when learners collaboratively try to solve some linguistic problems in order to complete a task.

Second language acquisition research involving tasks show a development from a time when tasks were viewed simply as instruments for investigating second language acquisition to the present, where tasks are now seen as objects of enquiry.

2.5. Interaction and Language Acquisition

2.5.1. The Interaction Hypothesis

Interaction refers to communication between individuals, particularly when they are negotiating meaning in order to prevent a breakdown in communication (Ellis 1999). Research on interaction is conducted within the framework of the Interactive Hypothesis, which states that conversational interaction "facilitates language acquisition because it connects input (what learners hear and read); internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention; and output (what learners produce) in productive ways"[12]. Interaction provides learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input and feedback (Gass 1997, Long 1996, Pica 1994b) as well as to make changes in their own linguistic output (Swain 1995). This allows learners to "notice the gap" between their command of the language and correct, or target-like, use of the language.

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[12] Long, M. (1996): "The Role of the Linguistic Environment in Second Language Acquisition", in Ritchie, W.C. and T.K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Academic Press, 451, 452.

Empirical research with second language learners supports the debate that engaging in language interactions facilitates second language development.

Pica (1992, 1994 cited in Ellis 2003) believes that opportunities to negotiate meaning help language learners in three main ways: First, they help learners to obtain comprehensible input, negotiation facilitates comprehension. This happens when the conversational modifications that arise through negotiation break down the input into units that the learners can process better and easily. Second, Pica proposes that negotiation provides learners with feedback on their own use of the second language. Last, Pica also suggests that negotiation helps learners to adjust, manipulate and modify their own output. The best results are shown when the more competent speaker requests clarification of the less competent speaker. Learners seem to be pushed into producing output that is more comprehensible and because of this more similar to the target-like language. It is possible to say that interaction can contribute in a number of ways to language acquisition. The more opportunities for negotiation (meaning and content) there are, the more likely acquisition is.

It is possible to say that acquisition is facilitated when interactional modifications lead to comprehensible input via the decomposition and segmenting of input and when learners receive feedback. Acquisition is promoted when learners are pushed to reformulate their own utterances.

Interactional modification involves the use of comprehension checks and requests for clarification. A way to quantify the amount of negotiation that takes place in a conversation resulting from tasks is counting the number of utterances performing these discourse functions. But, by doing only this, we are not taking into consideration those qualitative aspects of discourse that are important for acquisition. Despite this idea, it can be concluded that the Interaction Hypothesis has a lot to offer to task-based research. It provides a theoretical basis and some defined discourse categories to analyze the interactions that appear when a task is performed. Even though it is not a good idea to evaluate tasks only in terms of the quantity of meaning negotiation they

provide, it is said that communicative tasks will definitely contribute to at least some aspects of language.

Long believes that what makes input to be comprehensible is modified interaction, or negotiation of meaning. In Krashen's input hypothesis, comprehensible input itself is the main causal variable, while Long claims that a crucial element in the language acquisition process is the modified input that learners are exposed to and the way in which other speakers interact in conversations with the learners.

Long (1983, cited in Gass 2002) investigates conversations between a native speaker and a non-native speaker and proposes his Interaction Hypothesis as follows: "Negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the native speaker or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways".[13]

Interactional adjustments make input comprehensible, and comprehensible input promotes acquisition and therefore interactional adjustments promote acquisition. When a meaning is negotiated, input comprehensibility is usually increased and learners tend to focus on salient linguistic features.

Caroll (2000) also summarizes Long's Interaction hypothesis as follows: "Speakers in conversations negotiate meaning. In the case of conversations between learners and others, this negotiation will lead to the provision of either direct or indirect forms of feedback, including correction, comprehension checks, clarification requests, topic shifts, repetitions, and recasts. This feedback draws the learner's attention to mismatches between the input and the learner's output".[14]

At the discourse level, modifications include feedbacks such as recasts, comprehension checks, clarification requests, self-repetition or paraphrase, restatement and expansion of statements and topic switches.

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[13] Gass, S.M. (2002):"An Interactionist Perspective on Second Language Acquisition", *in Kaplan, R.B. (Ed.) The Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics, 174.*
[14] Caroll, S.E. (2000): *Input and Evidence: The Raw Material of Second Language Acquisition, Amsterdam:* John Benjamins B.V., 291.

Long claims that these modifications can provide greater transparency of semantic or syntactic relationships for learners, and he proposes that interactional modification may be the crucial factor in facilitating comprehension by non-native speakers.

Both Long and Krashen, as well as other researchers, see comprehensible input as a source of acquisition and support the view that comprehensible input is necessary for language acquisition to occur. However, as mentioned previously, some researchers argue that comprehensible input is not sufficient to promote acquisition.

Swain (1995) advances her comprehensible output hypothesis which claims that output, in addition to input, is also critical in second language acquisition. Output allows learners to create awareness of language knowledge gaps, experiment with language forms, and structures and obtain feedback from others about language use.

Comprehensible output assists learners to notice a "gap" between what they want to say and what they can say, leading them to recognize what they do not know or are forgetting about the target language. Noticing a problem pushes the learner to modify his or her output and in doing so, the learner may sometimes be forced into a more syntactic processing mode.

Comprehensible input obtained through interaction and also comprehensible output play an important role in interaction.

2.5.2 Classroom Interaction

The term classroom interaction refers to the interaction between the teacher and learners and amongst the learners in the classroom. Descriptions of classroom interaction focused initially on the language used by the teacher, especially teacher questions and the learner responses elicited teachers' feedback and turn-allocation behaviour. These features were examined in light to find how they affected interaction and the opportunities for learners to engage in language production. Recent studies have paid more attention to leaner talk, examining not only the language produced by learners in response to the

teacher, but also their communication strategies, and the relation between task types, learner interaction and opportunities for negotiation of meaning.

For more than two decades, the focus of classroom interaction research had been on what is observable; more recently researchers have begun to question analyses of classroom processes based only on the observable. It was felt that the "unobservables" in the classroom, such as teachers' and learners' psychological states, including beliefs, attitudes, motivations, self perception and anxiety, learning styles and cultural norms, play an important part in shaping classroom interaction.

Research on the observable aspects of classroom interaction relates to three main aspects: input, interaction and output. Input refers to the language used by the teacher, output refers to language produced by learners and interaction refers to the interrelationship between input and output. Early studies focused on the input provided by the teacher, especially the phonological and syntactic features of teacher speech and teacher questions. These studies show that, in order to make their speech comprehensible to learners, teachers generally speak slower, use simpler syntactic structures, exaggerated pronunciation, clearer articulation, more repetitions and more basic vocabulary than when speaking to native speakers. Such modified speech, which contains features similar to "care-taker speech", has been referred to as "foreigner talk". Investigations have been conducted on whether such modifications do in fact make the input more comprehensible to learners. The findings were inconclusive, leading researchers to question whether the modification of input by the teacher alone is sufficient to make the input comprehensible, and whether they ought to examine the interaction between the teacher and learners.

Studies of the interaction between the native speaker and the non-native speakers showed that when the input provided by the native speaker is incomprehensible to the non-native speaker, they enter into a negotiation of meaning in which the non native speaker asks for clarification, repetition or confirmation, resulting in a modification of the structure of interaction. Based on these findings, researchers argue that this kind of negotiation provides optimal comprehensible input to the learner and therefore, facilitates second language development.

Research on interactional modifications has focused largely on the presence of modification devices to determine the amount of comprehensible input made available to learners. However, there is not much empirical research on the relationship between different kinds of interaction and the rate of second language development (Ellis 1988, cited in Carter, R. and D. Nunan 2001).

An important dimension of classroom interaction is teacher questions. It is possible to differentiate questions with only one acceptable answer (closed questions), and those with more than one answer (open questions) and questions to which the teacher has an answer (display questions) and those to which the teacher does not (referential or genuine questions). After some studies, it was found that display questions were predominant in teachers' interaction with learners, and that referential questions were more conductive to the production of lengthier and more complex responses by learners.

When teachers do not get a response from the learners, they often need to modify their questions. Long and Sato (1983) identified a number of modification devices used by teachers, including syntactic modifications (such as making the topic salient and decomposing complex structures) and semantic modifications (such as paraphrasing difficult words and disambiguation).

Besides teachers' questions, both turn-allocation by the teacher and turn-taking by learners contribute to learners' opportunities to participate in the interaction. According to Seliger (1997, cited in Carter, R. and D. Nunan 2001) learners' turn-taking behaviours seem to have some correlation with second language acquisition. It was found that those learners who generated high levels of input by initiating and sustaining their turns (called High Input Generators) outperformed those who generated low input by being passive and not taking turns unless called upon (called Low Input Generators). He concluded that high input generators were better able to turn input into intake because they were testing more hypotheses about the target language and for this reason, were more effective language learners. Other researchers, though, did not find a positive correlation between learners' participation and their second language achievement.

The types of tasks in which learners engage and the number of participants in a task also affect learners' participation. Studies have been conducted on learners' participation in tasks involving pair work, group work and the whole class. It was found that compared to teacher-fronted interaction in whole class work, both pair work and group work provide more opportunities for learners to initiate and control the interaction, to produce a much larger variety of speech acts and to engage in the negotiation of meaning. For this reason, tasks involving a small number of participants are believed to facilitate better second language acquisition.

Studies of task types and learners participation investigated how task types affected the quantity and quality of negotiated interaction and learners language output. The findings show that two-way tasks which required information exchange in both directions for task completion involved more negotiation than one-way tasks with unindirectional information flow. Similarly, closed tasks let to more negotiation of meaning, more conversational adjustment and more learners' speech modifications towards the target language than the open tasks, in which information exchange was less restrictive.

It has been argued that learners' engagement in the negotiation of meaning facilitates second language acquisition because it provides learners with the opportunity to obtain comprehensible input, to express concepts which are beyond their linguistic capability and to focus on the part of their utterance requiring modification (Gass 1988).

Closely related to learners' output is teacher's feedback on the output. Early studies considered teacher feedback as being either negative evaluation or positive reinforcement. More recent studies point out the need to re-consider the notion of "errors" and to see teacher feedback as providing the scaffolding for learners as they formulate their hypotheses about the language.

2.5.3. Feedback and Negotiation in Interaction

The feedback-uptake sequence that contains negotiation of second language form may be an important type of interaction for learners in the classroom context. Lyster and Ranta claim that "the negotiation of form involves corrective feedback that employs either elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, clarification requests, or teacher repetition of error, followed by uptake in the form of peer- or self-repair, or student utterances still in need of repair that allow for additional feedback"[15]. The negotiation of form is the didactic function of negotiation as it involves corrective feedback to the second language learner. The other function of negotiation is conversational as it entails the negotiation of meaning (Lyster & Ranta 1997). Pica believes that the "twofold potential of negotiation - to assist second language comprehension and draw attention to second language form - affords it a powerful role in second language learning"[16].

Participation in interaction involving negotiation may facilitate second language development as it can draw the language learner's attention not only to second language form but also to meaning. Second language learners engage in the conversational function of negotiation to assist comprehension, establish mutual understanding, and overcome communication difficulties. "When learners interact with native speakers or other learners, they often experience considerable difficulty in communicating. This leads to substantial efforts by the conversational partners to secure mutual understanding. This is often called the negotiation of meaning"[17]. This type of negotiated interaction may involve the clarification, confirmation, modification and repetition of utterances which the second language learner does not understand "The result of the negotiation of meaning is that particular types of input and

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[15] Lyster, L. and L. Ranta (1997): "Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake: Negotiation of Form in Communicative Classrooms", *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19: 58.

[16] Pica, T. (1994b): "Research on Negotiation: What does it Reveal about Second Language Learning Conditions, Processes and Outcomes?" *Language Learning* 44: 508.

[17] Ellis, R. (1985a): *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 301.

interaction result. In particular, it has been hypothesized that negotiation makes input comprehensible"[18]. Moreover, when a learner is required to make their output comprehensible, as is often the case in negotiation, this may assist second language acquisition. Negotiation in the content-based classroom is an important component in the second language learning experience. As the work of negotiation can lead to comprehensible input and output, it is arguable that exposure to English input in the content-based class without comprehension of meaning through negotiated interaction is insufficient for second language learning.

2.5.4. Current and Future Trends on Classroom Interaction

Current research on classroom interaction has begun to investigate unobservable aspects of classroom interaction. Observable interaction could be affected by a number of factors, e.g. individual learning styles: while some learn better by actively participating, others learn better by listening and internalising the input. Another factor is learners' psychological state: some researchers observed that learning a foreign language is a psychologically unsettling process, threatening learners' self-esteem as a competent communicator. To cope with this anxiety, many learners adopt the avoidance strategy of being uncommunicative.

Yet another factor is cultural norms: Studies of turn-taking behaviour of Asian students showed that their participation is strongly guided by what they believe to be proper classroom behaviour (Sato 1982, Johnson 1995, Tsui 1995, cited in Carter and Nunan 2001).

Current research adopts an ethnographic approach which investigates classroom events from a participant's perspective, in naturalistic rather than experimental settings and in its entire "holistic" context.

Another important aspect of classroom interaction and second language learning is the innate ability of the learners. Second language

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[18] Ellis, R. (1985a): *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 142.

acquisition is considered to be the result of interaction between the learner's mental abilities and the linguistic environment.

Even though "interaction may give the learner the best data to work with, the brain in turn, must work out a fitting and relevant model of that input"[19]. The second language learner's awareness of the form of input and the attention the learner can give to that form may be critical to successful language learning (Pica 1994b). Furthermore, the learner's focus on form must occur in conjunction with but not interrupt communicative interaction. In sum, while interaction may make an important contribution to the process of second language learning, the learner is still the vital processor of the form and meaning of the language.

Long proposes "that environmental contributions to acquisition are mediated by selective attention and the learner's developing second language processing capacity, and that these resources are brought together most usefully, although not exclusively, during negotiation of meaning"[20].

2.5.5. The Role of Input, Intake and Interaction

According to Long, second language acquisition relies on comprehensible input being available to the internal processing mechanisms of the learner. The learner's focus must be on meaningful communication and input that contains language forms which are due to be acquired next (Krashen 1981). However, comprehensible input alone is an insufficient condition for second language acquisition to occur. Input must become intake. Input is data that the second language learner hears and intake is "that portion of the second language which is assimilated and fed into the interlanguage system"[21]. Exposure to

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[19] Carter, R. and D. Nunan (Eds.) (2001): *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*, Cambridge: C.V.P., 120.

[20] Long, M. (1996): "The Role of the Linguistic Environment in Second Language Acquisition", in W.C. Ritchie & T.K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* New York: Academic Press, 414.

[21] Ellis R. (1985a): *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 159.

comprehensible input as suggested in Krashen's Input Hypothesis is therefore not enough (Krashen 1980, 1981). Comprehensible input needs to become intake for learners to develop in their second language (Ellis 1985a). Learners who engage in the regular use of their second language and receive a greater quantity of input will most likely demonstrate a greater ability to use their second language.

Input is made comprehensible through modifying interactional structures rather than through simplifying linguistic input (Long 1983b). Native speakers use various interaction modifications. Firstly, there are conversational strategies to avoid conversational trouble. Secondly, discourse repair tactics may be used to repair conversation when trouble occurs. A third group combines strategies and tactics to include a slow pace of speech, stress on key words, and repetition of utterances. Each group contains devices that the native speaker uses in conversations with the non-native speakers to modify the interactional structure. The process of this interactional modifications is described by Long (1983) as "the negotiation of comprehensible input". Negotiation that involves the restructuring and modification of interaction may occur when second language learners and their interlocutors have to work to achieve comprehensibility by "repeating a message verbatim, adjusting its syntax, changing its words, or modifying its form and meaning in a host of other ways"[22].

One of the goals of the new foreign language curricula is to provide "the occasions for the student and teacher to find the discourse needed to negotiate both the expression and comprehension of meaning"[23]. For second language learners to develop competence in the target language, the classroom context needs to provide adequate opportunities for target language use. Moreover, for comprehensible output to be produced, learners have to be pushed in their negotiation of meaning. Comprehensible output provides "opportunities for

[22] Pica, T. (1994b): "Research on Negotiation: What does it Reveal about Second Language Learning Conditions, Processes and Outcomes?", *Language Learning* 44: 494.

[23] Lange, D. L. (1990): "Sketching the Crisis and Exploring Different Perspectives in Foreign Language Curriculum", in D.W. Birckbichler (Ed.), *New Perspectives and New Directions in Foreign Language Education*, Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co., 79.

contextualized, meaningful use, to test out hypotheses about the target language, and to move the learner from a purely semantic analysis of the language to a syntactic analysis of it"[24]. Consequently, second language learners may benefit from teaching and learning innovations at the classroom level that promote the production of comprehensible output through interaction and negotiation.

2.5.6. Repair Work and Language Learning

According to Schegloff et al., (1977) and Schegloff (1979), there is a cline in conversations. In normal conversation, the norm is self-initiated and self-completed repair. In non-normal conversation, the proportion of other-initiations and other-completions is higher than would be expected. In situations where there is a constant communication breakdown, interlocutors will eventually stop to communicate. It has also been observed that in native speakers / native speakers discourse (Schegloff et al. 1977) and native speakers / advanced non-native speakers discourse (Kasper 1985), the vast majority of repair is content and pragmatic repair rather than linguistic (phonological, lexical, morpho-syntactic) repair.

These observations suggest the thesis that success in second language learning may be measured by the proportion of self-initiated, self-completed repair in relation to other-initiated, other-completed repair, and by the proportion of content and pragmatic repair in relation to linguistic repair. In consequence, the more self-initiated, self-completed content and pragmatic repair, the more native-like the interaction will be. However, the more other-initiated, other-completed linguistic repair, the less native-like the interaction will be. Hence, the optimal second language learning environment is one in which self-initiated, self-completed content and pragmatic repair dominates.

Research that investigated native speakers / non-native speakers and non-native speakers / non-native speakers negotiated interaction has confirmed the importance of self-initiated, self-completed repair over

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[24] Lange, D. L. (1990): "Sketching the Crisis and Exploring Different Perspectives in Foreign Language Curriculum", in D.W. Birckbichler (Ed.), *New Perspectives and New Directions in Foreign Language Education*, Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co., 252.

other-initiated, other-completed repair (Kasper 1985). It was found that self-initiated clarification attempts occurred in significantly greater proportions than other-initiated clarification requests (70 percent versus 30 percent, respectively). Instances of self-initiated comprehensible output occurred in significantly greater proportions than instances of other-initiated comprehensible output (73 percent versus 27 percent, respectively). These findings confirmed that to have conversations that require the kind of performances associated with successful language learning, students need to focus on self-initiated, self-completed repair.

If repair leading to comprehensible output is integral to successful language learning, then not only are clarification requests (other-initiations) important, but more importantly, the extent to which self-repair is used. Therefore, self-initiated clarification attempts and self-initiated comprehensible output should be encouraged as preferred classroom strategies, which are strategies in native speakers / native speakers' interaction (Schegloff et al. 1977).

Since the main goal of learning a second language is to approximate native speakers / native speakers' interaction, creating situations that encourage the production of self-initiated comprehensible output is a motivating teaching strategy. In conversations, these situations give the learner more opportunities to use the language and are significantly more frequent than other-initiated clarification requests and instances of other-initiated comprehensible output (Kasper 1985).

2.5.7. Interaction and Negotiation in the Language Classroom: Their Role in Learner Development

2.5.7.1. Three Views on the Contribution of Classroom Interaction to Language Development

According to Allwright, success or failure in classroom language learning typically has something, if not absolutely everything, to do with the nature of the interaction that takes place during lessons. It is crucial to understand the contribution of classroom interaction to language development. Many scholars have given different suggestions about the way in which classroom interaction might contribute to

language development, and about the way the notion of negotiation relates to the notion of interaction.

Allwright sets out three major positions and attempts to make out a convincing argument for just one of them. The first position is associated with the conventional thinking about communicative language teaching, and as such it advocates the active promotion of interaction as a productive teaching technique. The second is the "weak" form of his own "Interaction Hypothesis" (Allwright 1984) which intends only to describe what seems as an inevitable role for classroom interaction, whether or not it is regarded as a teaching technique. The third position he considers is the "strong" form of his 1984 Interaction Hypothesis. He claims that interaction can and should be advocated because it is synonymous with the learning process itself.

He argues that the first position is largely irrelevant to the important practical and conceptual issues. The third position, by contrast, is directly and centrally relevant but is at the same time too bold for its own good. The weak form of his interaction hypothesis, offers the most promising way forward in the attempt to understand what it is in language classrooms that enables language development to occur.

2.5.7.2. The Role of Classroom Interaction in Communicative Language Teaching

Allwright argues that probably the most common view of the role of classroom interaction is the somewhat narrowly "methodological" one that proposes that classroom interaction contributes to language development simply by providing target language practice opportunities. Through carefully designed classroom interaction activities, involving various forms of more or less "realistic" practice, learners can become skilled at actually doing the things they have been taught about. This view, taking into account as it does only of classroom interaction in the target language, is essentially the position of advocates of the standard model of communicative language teaching over the last two decades.

In 1981 Littlewood advocated a progression from "pre-communicative" to "communicative" activities involving various forms of interactive language practice. His underlying view of the psychology of language learning was that systematic language practice is crucial, as it was in the otherwise discredited behaviourist model of learning. But he also believed that practice should progressively emphasize relevance over repetition. This means, practice activities should progressively come closer and closer to imitating "real-life" language use. The general notion of "negotiation" (defined as "discussion to reach agreement") will be involved only if "negotiation" is itself seen as a type of "real-life" language use that is relevant to the learning purposes of the learners.

As he mentions, such a concept of "negotiation as a target language skill to be practised through simulations in classroom interaction, is a purely methodological proposal that is conceptually a very long way away from the notion of negotiated work"[25].

2.5.7.3. The "Weak" Form of the Interaction Hypothesis

This view suggests that interaction is the principle mechanism through which classroom learning is managed. It distinguishes conceptually, and crucially, between "managing learning" and actually "doing learning", and suggests that interaction is best seen as the key process whereby learning is managed, through the creation and exploitation of learning opportunities.

As stated by Allwright, this view recognizes five different stages in classroom learning. First, there is the creation of learning opportunities, for example the work done by a teacher to introduce to learners a new form in the language. This is necessarily an overt stage. Then there is the process of making such learning opportunities more individually useful to the learners. Learners may contribute significantly to this themselves by asking the questions that the teacher's presentation raises in their minds. They may also deal with

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[25] Littlewood, W. (1981): *Communicative Language Teaching: An Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 87.

this stage purely covertly, within the privacy of their own minds. These two stages, constitute the "management of learning", redefined as the creation and individualisation of learning opportunities. These first two stages, taken together, constitute a "task management" phase. The third and final overt stage is by contrast the "task performance" phase, when the learners actually do whatever learning activity has been agreed upon. The next covert stage involves the learners themselves, again in the privacy of their own minds, finding ways of processing whatever the learning opportunity offer them by way of potentially usable input. Part of the tradition of language teaching is that learners may well do the overt work without anything happening inside their heads, they may simply be "going through the motions". Even if they are mentally processing the input, this is not necessarily the final stage, because such processing may well stop at comprehension. The final stage of actual learning, according to Allwright, is represented by "central mental processing", which will need to include some way for processed input to be stored appropriately in long-term memory.

Especially important are the first two stages, the initial creation and individualisation of learning opportunities and their relationship to the third stage of overt learning task performance. It is in the first two stages, when both are overt, that can easily be seen as involving interactive work it would be reasonable to identify in terms of the concept of "negotiation".

Allwright (1988) also argued that the "seeds of learner individualisation" and autonomy work can be found whenever learners make errors. He believes that learners' spoken errors in class typically constitute an unintended initiating move in the creation of learning opportunities. This is because they offer opportunities for correcting moves, which themselves should contain material appropriate to the learning needs of the individual learner who made the error, and potentially to those of other learners in the same class. What is true of learners' unintended errors seems even more true of learners' questions. He states that when learners ask questions they would appear to be deliberately setting out to create a learning opportunity of personal significance to them. And what follows may supply material appropriate to their needs, and potentially to those of others, regardless of the intentions of the learners who asked the original question.

Such "seeds of learner individualisation and autonomy work" can also be interpreted, according to Allwright, as forms of interactive negotiation in which personally appropriate learning opportunities are managed (created and made individually useful).

2.5.7.4. The "Strong" Form of the Interaction Hypothesis

This view starts from the same suggestion that interaction is best seen as the process whereby classroom language learning is managed, but makes the further claim that in the language classroom the process of negotiation that is involved in interacting is itself to be identified with the process of language learning. In this view, interaction is language learning. It is not only the process whereby learned linguistic knowledge is practised, but rather the process whereby linguistic knowledge, and also linguistic ability, are themselves developed.

In this view of interaction, Allwright reports that the starting point is the notion of "communication". Communication is analysed as involving three fundamental processes which are interpretation, expression, and negotiation, and/or their various combinations. Communication in this sense, does not necessarily involve overt person-to-person interaction, since the conditions would be satisfied whenever a reader reads a text silently (an example of communication involving interpretation – "interaction with the text" – without expression or negotiation). But overt two-way person to person communication would, in this view, necessarily involve all three potential components of communication, where the term "negotiation" would mean at least the negotiation of meaning.

This definition of communication is related to language learning by suggesting that "interpretation, expression, and negotiation" are not only the mechanisms whereby "people deploy their current linguistic resources" (Prabhu 1987), but also the mechanism whereby they simultaneously develop them.

Considering Allwright's point of view, classroom interaction, an example of overt two-way person to person communication which has been established as an inevitable element of any classroom-based

pedagogy, can also be analyzed as involving interpretation, expression and negotiation. Classroom interaction in the target language can be seen as not just offering language practice (as it would from Allwright's first viewpoint), nor just learning opportunities (his second viewpoint), but as actually constituting the language development process in itself. However, this view does not hold that all forms of classroom interaction are equally productive for language development purposes. For such purposes, interaction must be seriously meaningful, about matters of serious concern to the participants, and therefore conducive to a serious attempt to communicate, not merely to simulate communication.

Following this line of reasoning, "negotiation" as a component process of all instances of human communication (via the concept of the "negotiation of meaning") is taken to "negotiation" as seen in connection with the discussion mentioned above of "mainstream" communicative language teaching – a process of discussion to reach agreement. Except that in this case, it is not practicing negotiating for the "real" world. The classroom is now the real world, a real world of learning in which, by explicitly negotiating the curriculum and the learning process will simultaneously develop the linguistic resources.

The problem with the above reasoning, according to Allwright, is that it moves too easily from the notion of "negotiation" in the psycholinguistic sense, as an inevitable feature of all person to person communication, to "negotiation" in the "diplomatic" sense, as a desirable feature of communication in the language classroom. If "negotiated work" is the aim of the language classroom, it is important to look for alternative sources of support for the idea. The strong form of the interaction hypothesis is not going to help reach this objective.

Allwright concludes by saying that a conceptual analysis based on the hypothesis that interaction is best seen as the mechanism for learning management (rather than as constituting learning itself) offers the best chance to understand the role of interaction in learner development. This kind of conception will help understand what "negotiated work" in the language classroom means and what can be achieved by it. Considering these ideas, it is possible to think about how negotiated work could contribute to helping learners learn how to manager their own learning, to create learning opportunities for

themselves and each other, and to make sure that the learning opportunities they create fit their own individual needs.

2.6. Learner Production and Language Production in Language Learning

Recently, several second language acquisition researchers have systematically argued that the function of second language learners' production is not only to enhance fluency and indirectly generate more comprehensible input, but also to facilitate second language learning by providing learners with opportunities to produce comprehensible output (Krashen 1985 and Long 1983). Learners achieve this by modifying and approximating their production toward successful use of the target language (Swain 1985, Swain and Lapkin 1995, Pica 1994, Pica and Holliday et al. 1989).

Swain and Lapkin (1995) maintain that in the process of modifying their interlanguage utterances for greater message comprehensibility, second language learners undertake some restructuring that affects their access to their knowledge base. "…the assumption is that this process of modification contributes to second language acquisition"[26]. Many scholars have concluded that opportunities for comprehensible input and output are equally important in language learning (Swain 1985, Swain and Lapkin 1995).

Similarly, many of these studies have shown that interactions, where the negotiation of meaning between native speakers/non-native speakers and non-native speakers/non-native speakers is prevalent, are also important for the production of comprehensible output. It is through the negotiation of meaning that both learners and their interlocutors work together to provide comprehensible input and produce comprehensible output.

Pica pointed out that "although…research has focused mainly on the ways in which negotiated interaction with an interlocutor helps the

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[26] Pica, T.; Holliday, L.; Lewis, N. and others (1989): "Comprehensible Output as an Outcome of Linguistic Demands on the Learner", *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 11: 65.

learner to understand unfamiliar second language input, we believe that it is also through negotiation that learners gain opportunities to attempt production of new second language words and grammatical structures as well"[27].

Negotiated interactions are important not only because they provide non-native speakers with an opportunity to receive input, which they have made comprehensible through negotiation, but also because these interactions provide non-native speakers with opportunities that enable them to modify their speech so that the output is more comprehensible (Long 1983, Gass and Varonis 1994).

2.7. Three Potential Sources of Comprehensible Input for Second Language Acquisition

Given the importance of input comprehension in language acquisition, current second language acquisition research has tried to identify what it is that makes input comprehensible or incomprehensible to the learner, and its role in the language-learning process. Of particular interest has been the effect of the input that is provided to the learners, the interactions which the learners engage in and how the input and interactions facilitate comprehension and foster second language acquisition.

Most studies on input comprehension have developed from Krashen's (1980, 1982, 1985) Input Hypothesis which first claimed the importance of comprehensible input in second language acquisition. The main assumptions of the Input Hypothesis are as follows:

- Access to comprehensible input is characteristic of all cases of successful language acquisition, in both first and second language acquisition
- Greater quantities of comprehensible input seem to result in better or faster second language acquisition, and
- Lack of access to comprehensible input results in little or no acquisition (Long 1982).

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[27] Swain, M. and S. Lapkin (1995): "Problems in Output and the Cognitive Processes They Generate: A Step Towards Second Language Learning", *Applied Linguistics* 16: 373.

Despite the significant influence that the Input Hypothesis has had on second language acquisition studies, it has received strong criticisms from several researchers. According to some researchers, it may be incomprehensible input which is vital to second language acquisition. It is believed that it is incomprehensibility or comprehension difficulties which can provide important negative feedback to the learner, which she believes to be necessary for second language acquisition. Swain (1985) also argues in her Comprehensible Output Hypothesis that in addition to comprehensible input, comprehensible output is also necessary for second language acquisition and that learners will be obliged, and therefore, make their output more comprehensible if communicative demands are put on them.

Long (1982) suggests four ways that input can be made comprehensible: by modifying speech, by providing linguistic and extralinguistic context, by orienting the communication to the "here and now", and by modifying the interactional structure of the conversation. He believes that all four ways may aid communication, but he especially emphasizes that the last form, i.e. modifying the interactional structure of the conversation, is most likely to aid language acquisition. As mentioned previously, Long argues that the input that has not been comprehended may become comprehensible through the process of interaction or negotiation.

2.7.1. Modified Input

Researchers have identified what it is that makes input comprehensible to the learner by investigating input comprehension in different kinds of linguistic environment. The first kind is characterized by input that has been modified or simplified in some way before the learner sees or hears it. This can be repetitions, paraphrase of words or sentences, and reduction of sentence length and complexity, among others. The studies examined describe modifications that different speakers make when addressing a child or a second language learner. It is believed that such simplifications serve to facilitate comprehension. Within the context of second language acquisition research, simplified input most often refers to second language input that has been modified

by a native speaker to facilitate non-native comprehension (called foreigner talk).

In sum, it appears that modified input enhances non-native comprehension. However, it has been noted, that not all types of modified input have proved to be equally effective. It is only possible to speculate that slower speech rate and semantic redundancy have a considerable effect in increasing comprehension, that input simplification may facilitate comprehension for beginners and that elaborative modifications may be more suitable for advanced students. It is not yet understood how different levels of comprehension foster acquisition, nor is it clear what precise factors makes input comprehensible.

2.7.2. Interactionally Modified Input

The second linguistic environment chosen as the second potential source of comprehensible input for second language acquisition is characterized by opportunities for non-native and native interactions in which "both parties modify and restructure the interaction to arrive at mutual understanding"[28].

Long (1982, 1983b) made an important distinction between modified input and modified interaction by differentiating the modified talk directed to the learner, for the modified structure of the conversation itself. In investigating the social discourse of native speakers and non-native speakers, Long (1983b) identified the strategies employed by both parties to negotiate their way through the conversational discourse. These strategies included aspects of conversation such as comprehension checks, clarification requests, topic shifts, and self and other repetitions and expansions. Long claims that speakers modify interactions using these devices in order to avoid conversation problems and repair discourse when non-understanding sequences arise. He first termed this interactional modification, which later became more widely referred to as negotiation. This term has been

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[28] Pica, T. (1987): "Second Language Acquisition, Social Interaction and the Classroom", *Applied Linguistics* 8:16.

used to "characterize the modification and restructuring of interaction that occurs when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility[29].

Long (1982) claims that the need to exchange unknown information will result in the negotiation for meaning characterized by modifications in the interactional structure of conversation, as participants seek to make incoming speech comprehensible.

Long (1996) later redefines negotiation for meaning in his updated version of the Interaction Hypothesis: "... the process in which, in an effort to communicate, learners and competent speakers provide and interpret signals of their own and their interlocutor's perceived comprehension, thus provoking adjustments to linguistic form, conversational structure, message content, or all three, until an acceptable level of understanding is achieved"[30].

In addition, and as mentioned previously, Long also emphasizes that modifications are likely to occur more in two-way tasks which oblige native speakers and non-native speaker to negotiate for meaning in order to make their speech more comprehensible to their interlocutors. Moreover, the need to obtain information from the learner means that the competent speaker must attend to the feedback he/she is receiving before pressing ahead. This allows the learner to negotiate the conversation, which in turn forces the competent speaker to adjust his or her input until what he/she is saying is comprehensible to the learner.

Hence, Long proposes that this two-way exchange of information will provide more comprehensible input, and promote acquisition better than one-way information exchange. Many researchers hold a similar view on the significance of input modifications which result from the negotiation process in interaction. The studies showed that interactionally modified input led to the highest levels of comprehension, and reported the beneficial effects of interactionally

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[29] Pica, T. (1994): "Research on Negotiation: What does it Reveal about Second Language Learning Conditions, Processes and Outcomes?" *Language Learning* 44: 494.
[30] Long, M. (1996): "The Role of the Linguistic Environment in Second Language Acquisition". In W.C. Ritchie & T .K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Academic Press, 418.

modified input over modified input. However, the studies so far have been largely limited to quantitative analyses, surface structures, and synchronic interactions. Careful studies with improved methodology which can account for the time factor, with a more qualitative and in-depth approach, are needed to substantiate the findings.

2.7.3. Modified Output

Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis claims that "only comprehensible input is consistently effective in increasing proficiency"[31]. For him, output derives from competence which only comes from comprehensible input. Therefore, he focuses only on the contribution of input, and maintains that the ability to produce second language (i.e. second language output) is the result of acquisition.

Likewise, Long's (1983b, 1996) initial version of Interaction Hypothesis was closely associated with the Input Hypothesis and therefore the focus was more on the input. However, Long, allowed more emphasis on the constitutive role for learner output. He recognized that learners could obtain interactionally modified input in the process of negotiation. This input, elicited by the learners' previous output, helps them to comprehend the input, and focus their attention on new or partially learned linguistic forms, which enables their acquisition. Consequently, in his earlier version of the Interaction Hypothesis, Long maintained the position that learner output facilitates acquisition when it elicits modified input from a native speaker, and he viewed non-native speaker output as a sort of trigger for foreigner talk. However, in the updated version of the Interaction Hypothesis, Long (1996) offers a different role for output in view of negotiation. He recognized that meaning negotiations induce learners to modify their own output which in turn may stimulate the acquisition process. Both Pica (1994) and Long (1996) point out that when learners receive implicit negative feedback on their attempts to communicate, they may attempt to reformulate their initial utterances, thereby promoting acquisition.

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[31] Krashen, S. (1985): *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*, London: Longman, 48.

The theoretical basis on the importance of output was first put forth by Swain (1985, 1995) in her Comprehensible Output Hypothesis. As already mentioned, Swain argues that while comprehensible input and the emphasis on interactional negotiation is essential, the role of interactional exchanges in second language acquisition "may have much to do with `comprehensible output´ as it has to do with comprehensible input"[32]. She points out that when learners are required to produce pushed output, they may be forced to move from semantic processing to syntactic processing.

In another study, Swain (1995) identifies different roles for output: (1) it may help learners to recognize a gap (i.e., notice) between what they want to say and what they can say, (2) it serves as a means by which learners can test hypotheses about comprehensibility or linguistic correctness, and (3) it can help learners to develop metalinguistic knowledge of how the second language works. She maintains that both comprehensible input and comprehensible output are important for second language acquisition.

It is believed that one learner's modified output may serve as comprehensible input for the interlocutor who may be a native speaker or another second language learner. According to Gass and Varonis (1989), there is evidence that the changes learners make in non-native speakers / non-native speaker interactions are in the direction of the target language, and that errors of a non-native speaker peer are not incorporated by his/her second language interlocutor. On the basis of their findings, they believe this kind of interaction is a beneficial and non-threatening context which enables second language learners to practice language and make input as well as output comprehensible through negotiation. Therefore, as Ellis mentioned, "between learners, the Modified Output of one learner often works as another learner's comprehensible input"[33]. Likewise, what constitutes interaction for one learner serves as potential input for other learners who are involved in the discourse only as hearers. As Long puts it, interaction/negotiation

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[32] Swain, M. (1985): "Communicative competence: Some Roles of Comprehensible Input and Comprehensible Output in its Development", in Gass, S. and C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in Second Language Acquisition.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 236.

[33] Ellis, R. (1999): *Learning a second language through interaction*, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 14.

"connects input, internal learners capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways"[34].

2.7.4. From Comprehension to Acquisition

It is very difficult to show the effects of input modifications on acquisition. Long (1985) points out that it is possible to establish a relationship between environmental features and language development in the following manner:

- Step 1: Show that (a) linguistic/conversational adjustments promote (b) comprehension of input.
- Step 2: Show that (b) comprehensible input promotes (c) acquisition.
- Step 3: Deduce that (a) linguistic/conversational adjustments promote (c) acquisition.

According to Long, satisfactory evidence of a-b and b-c relationships would allow the linguistic environment to be posited as an indirect causal variable in the second language acquisition. Some studies seem to assume that conversational adjustments will make input comprehensible, and therefore language development will be stimulated. The majority of the studies have focused on the first of the three steps and examined how different modifications and adjustments contribute to making input comprehensible. The second and third steps have not been adequately investigated.

Fortunately, some recent studies (e.g. Ellis 1994, Loschky 1994 and Mackey 1998) have attempted to show a direct relationship between comprehensible input and acquisition. These studies have tried to investigate the relative effects of different input types on language development by looking at the delayed effects of the treatments via pretest, post-test and/or delayed post-test designs.

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[34] Long, M. (1996): "The Role of the Linguistic Environment in Second Language Acquisition", in W.C. Ritchie & T.K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition,* New York: Academic Press, 452.

Ellis (1994) conducted a study analyzing the relationship between input modifications and comprehension, and between comprehension and acquisition of unknown lexical items. They found that interactionally modified input led to better comprehension and to the acquisition of a greater number of unknown items. Acquisition was measured by means of two post experiment tests conducted two days after the treatment and a week after the treatment, respectively; and a follow-up test which was administered six weeks after the treatment. It was found from the follow-up test that the group treated with interactionally modified input retained more vocabulary than the other two groups, i.e. baseline input group, and premodified input group. The study provides evidence of a link between interactionally modified input and lexical acquisition. However, since acquisition entails different aspects of language (syntax, morphology, etc.) which may be acquired in different ways, these aspects should be investigated further in future studies.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY OF THE INVESTIGATION

3.1. Investigation Type

The classroom study that has been carried out by this project can be considered as action research, since it was performed by the classroom teacher without the involvement of outside researchers with the aim to increase his or her understanding of the topic under investigation. In this case, the researcher's (teacher's) purpose was to learn a little about the learners' preferences and attitudes towards the study of a second language and by doing this it was possible to reflect on and evaluate his/her teaching.

Action Research is what the reflective teacher actually does in the classroom, a study of a particular classroom that is initiated by a question, and then it is supported by data and interpretation and is carried out by a practitioner investigating aspects of his or her own context and situation. A distinctive feature of action research is that it has the aim to improve or change a current situation within the educational context in which the research is being carried out.

3.2. Informants

3.2.1. Universe

This study was performed to a group of students at the "Instituto de Idiomas de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú" (INIPUC). This is one of the most prestigious English Learning Institutions in the country. The students that attend this Institution have a high educational level compared to most of the population of this country. Classes are programmed on a monthly basis, and courses have a duration of one month. Every month the teachers are given different cycles, which range from basic to advanced levels. Adults and young adults were part of the classroom I was assigned to teach that month (Upper-Intermediate 9 level).

3.2.2. Population

Number of students that took part of the investigation: 16

3.2.3. Sample

3.2.3.1. Age: The students were between 14 to 32 years old. 25% of the total population of students was between 14-17 years old, 25% was 18-22 years old, 25% was between 23-26 and the other 25% was around 27-32 years old.

3.2.3.2. Sex: 30% of the students were male and 70% were female.

3.2.3.3. Educational Level: 30% of the students were still in high school, 6% had some kind of technical education and 64% had either finished the university or were in the process of pursuing their career.

3.2.3.4. Native language background: All of the students were born in Lima, Peru, and therefore have a Spanish language background. 29% of the students spoke English at home with their family.

3.2.3.5. Proficiency Level: upper intermediate.

3.2.3.6. Socio-economic Status: based on the districts where the students live, and considering the predominant socio-economic level of those areas, we can infer that 50% of the students belong to the upper and middle class of Lima, 44% to the middle class and 6% to the middle-low class.

3.3. Variables

For this study I considered the following variables:

3.3.1. Individual variable:
A task-based learning methodology that stimulates negotiation of meaning and content.

3.3.2. Dependent variable:
The degree of interactional adjustments will promote second language acquisition.

Some variables that also influence the learners' learning process in this teaching context are the age and sex of the population, their level of instruction, the social stratum as well as their native and previous language background.

3.4. Techniques and Instruments for Data Collection

3.4.1. Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a structured technique for collecting data. The aim of the questionnaires was to get general information and collect data of the students in order to get to know their learning preferences in detail.

The observant (teacher) was present when the data was collected, guaranteeing a relatively high completion rate and if anyone had a question or found a question unclear, it was possible for the observer to explain what it was meant and the type of answer that was required.

3.4.1.1. Questionnaire at the Beginning of the Study (Appendix 1)

In the first part the data is organized in such a form that it presents students with structured but more general questions about the study of a second language, preferences to working in groups or pairs to working individually, and their motivation to get involved in activities that encouraged them to take risks and negotiate meaning. Their opinion about learning the grammar structure is also requested.

This data is then further explored through some open-ended questions dealing with the learner's feelings about learning English, the language class, how the students deal with grammar structure that has not been previously presented, and the steps the students take when they do not understand the meaning of a word. Their preference about focusing more on fluency, accuracy or both is also requested. After these questions there are some yes/no questions about the attitude the students hold towards speaking different languages and about the learning strategies used outside the classroom. Next we have some open-ended questions about the learner's background and home environment. The pattern presented in the questionnaire goes from the general and external information towards more specific and internal information referring directly to the students own personal learning situation.

3.4.2. Observation

Observation is considered an important tool for studying what actually happens inside the classroom in a systematic way. There are different schemes that have been developed for documenting classroom interaction with the aim to enable the observer (teacher) to describe as precisely as possible some of the features of communication that occur in second language classrooms. In this study the COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching) Observation Scheme was used in order to capture various aspects of communicative language used in the classroom, and to distinguish a communicative language teaching classroom from those which were more form-focused. "The observational categories are designed to capture significant features of verbal interaction in second language classrooms and to provide a means of comparing some aspects of classroom

discourse with natural language as it is used outside the classroom"[35]. The COLT scheme and others like it have been used primarily in classroom research which is intended to examine relationships between differences in teaching practices and differences in second language learning. The opportunity to observe teaching (including my own) has led to a greater understanding of the complexities of the teaching process.

The COLT observation scheme consists of two parts.

Part A: focuses basically on the description of classroom activities. It describes teaching practices in terms of content, focus, organization and types of the activity and consists of five major parts as will be described as follows:

1. Activity type: In this part the type of the activity was identified, if it was a roleplay, drill, etc.
2. Participant organization: It was noted if the activity was performed by the whole class, if the students were working in groups, pairs or individually.
3. Content: The observer identified if the focus of the class was on form, function, discourse, etc.
4. Student modality: It was observed to see if the students were involved in listening, speaking, reading, and writing or in a combination of these skills.
5. Materials: The observer took notes of the materials used in the classroom for the specific activity and recognized the source of the materials, the aim of the materials and if they were used in a controlled way.

Part B: relates and describes aspects of the classroom language used by the teachers and students and seven features are identified as part of the scheme:

1. Use of the target language: to what extent was the target language used in the specific activity.

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[35] Allen, Frohlich, and Spada 1984 quoted in Nunan, D. (1992): *Research Methods in Language Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 97.

2. Information gap: It was identified if the requested information could be predictable in advance.
3. Sustained speech: To what extent discourse is restricted to a single sentence, clause or word.
4. Reaction to code or message: The teacher was able to identify if the learners reacted to the code or message.
5. Incorporation of preceding utterance: The students were observed to see if they actually included the preceding utterances into their contributions.
6. Discourse initiation: It was observed if the students had the chance to initiate discourse or not.
7. Relative restriction of linguistic form: In this part it was taken into consideration if the students were required to use a specific form or if there was no expectation of a particular linguistic form.
8. I have added some additional features that I considered crucial to the standard scheme in order to have a better focus on the current research and to get the results the study is aiming for.
9. Devices used to negotiate meaning when students do not understand: What did the students use the most: comprehension checks, clarification requests, confirmation checks, recasts?
10. Communication strategies used by the learners when they did not possess the required linguistic knowledge and need to communicate: reduction strategies, achievement strategies, (approximation, paraphrasing, word coinage, conscious transfer, assistance, mime).

3.4.3. Questionnaire at the End of the Study (Appendix 2)

This second questionnaire which is given to the students at the end of the month aims to make the students reflect on the strategies they use when there is something they do not understand, and which devices they most frequently use when they can not communicate what they want. This questionnaire has the purpose to confirm the teacher's observation data and compare results. Direct and closed questions are presented here with the aim to have the students rank the different strategies into their order of importance. Strategies are briefly explained in order to provide the students with a better understanding of them when giving their preferences. The different strategies and devices are presented in a ranking scheme giving the students the opportunity to select their own

personal preferences when dealing with problems in the process of learning the language.

3.4.4. Test (Appendix 3)

At the end of the cycle students were given a test which included listening, reading, writing and communicative written tasks in order to test their second language acquisition during the month. The test at the end of the month can be considered a progress test, since it basically looks back over recent work of the last lesson or unit. This kind of test is designed to measure the learners' language skill progress in relation to the syllabus they have been following and provides feedback on the effectiveness of student learning and this is of interest to both teachers and students. The test provided is based on the content of the course and is used to determine if students have mastered the course content. The objectives covered in this test are those that are most emphasized in the course and those of greatest value for the students. Since this is a communicative test it tested the students in a variety of language functions. The test provided the students with similar texts and familiar task types as the ones performed in the class with the purpose to measure the learning that has been taking place, although it was also possible to measure general language proficiency.

3.5. Procedures

This can be considered the second Phase of Action Research, in which the teacher acts to implement the plan, giving the students the questionnaire to fill in at the beginning of the course, and then they were observed performing different activities and tasks. At the end of the cycle the students were asked to complete another questionnaire related to the topic that was investigated and observed in order to confirm information. The students were also given a test at the end of the month.

After having developed the questionnaire and after preparing the observational study, it is important to run a pilot study in order to identify some problems before doing most part of the research. A pilot study consists of a trial run using a small number of people similar to those that will be used as subjects. In the case of the observation, a

small piece of data was taken from the group a few days before the planned observation, in order to check that it was possible to achieve the objectives that were established.

In the case of the questionnaires, it was impossible to run the pilot study using similar people that were used in the original study. The reason for this was that the questionnaire and the research as a whole were performed without telling the students about the real purpose of them, in order to get the most representative results. Once the questionnaires were developed, they were given to two other colleagues in order to identify any problems before the real run. After checking the questionnaire and as a result of the piloting, the first questionnaire was modified in relation to the order of the questions. The new organization did help understanding allowing the students to first come to term with their global attitudes towards second language learning and then to apply some of these attitudes to their specific learning situations.

The second questionnaire followed a similar process. After checking for any problems, it was identified that an item needed to be included to help the students rank their preferences using all the different variables provided in the questions. The necessary changes were made and the questionnaires were run without experiencing any difficulties by the students.

Before doing the observational study, a "dummy run" was performed with the same group of participants, taking a small piece of suitable data. This was done once the English classes had already started and a few days before the real run. The aim of this "dummy run" was to make sure that the observation was going to meet the objectives that had been established. This trial run did not present any problems but it gave the teacher better ideas on how to collect the requested data.

3.5.1. Questionnaire at the Beginning of the Month/Study (Appendix 1)

Questions and statements were prepared and presented to the students at the beginning of the study (third day of a one month cycle). The students were granted 10 minutes and were asked to answer the questionnaire anonymously and as honest as possible.

CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1. Analysis and Results

Once the data has been collected through the different procedures and techniques it was analyzed and organized in order to establish if the objectives that had been previously set have been achieved and to determine if the hypothesis formulated at the beginning of the study was confirmed or not. Conclusions from the study have also been drawn in order to improve the teaching and learning processes and the final outcomes. The different procedures used to collect data have produced quantitative data and qualitative data, which had to be analyzed in different ways. Quantitative data is generated by any type of numerical information. This information is usually easier to collect and analyze. Qualitative data is not a result of any measurement or counting and it is much more difficult to quantify but it might result in more useful and insightful data.

Different variables have been considered in the analysis of this study. The independent variable is the age difference of the students and the dependent variable is their preference for using different strategies when various discourse and communication problems arise. Furthermore, other independent variables identified in the analysis of the study are the different task features observed in the process of observation and the dependent variables are the students' achievement, negotiation of meaning produced and the language acquisition.

4.1.1. Questionnaire at the Beginning of the Month

After having constructed and administered the questionnaire, we have interpreted the responses.

Once the data has been studied, we were able to draw conclusions and collect crucial information about why a specific student may or may not do very well in the language classroom and it also helped us determine certain trends concerning what attitudes and characteristics good language learners have. This is very helpful and beneficial when planning class-work, selecting tasks and dealing with general linguistic aspects in the classroom.

As mentioned before, our questionnaire consisted of a mixture of closed and open questions. A closed item is one in which the range of possible responses is determined by the observer, whereas an open item is one in which the learners can decide what to respond and how to respond. The responses to closed questions are more readily quantifiable and easier to analyze. Free-form responses from open questions provide more useful and interesting data but are much more difficult to quantify. The qualitative data was analyzed and grouped together under headings and as such, quantified in their categories (inductive procedure). In this way a more reliable picture of the constructs under study emerged.

From the data analyzed I was able to interpret the following information:

1. How do students feel about the use English in connection?
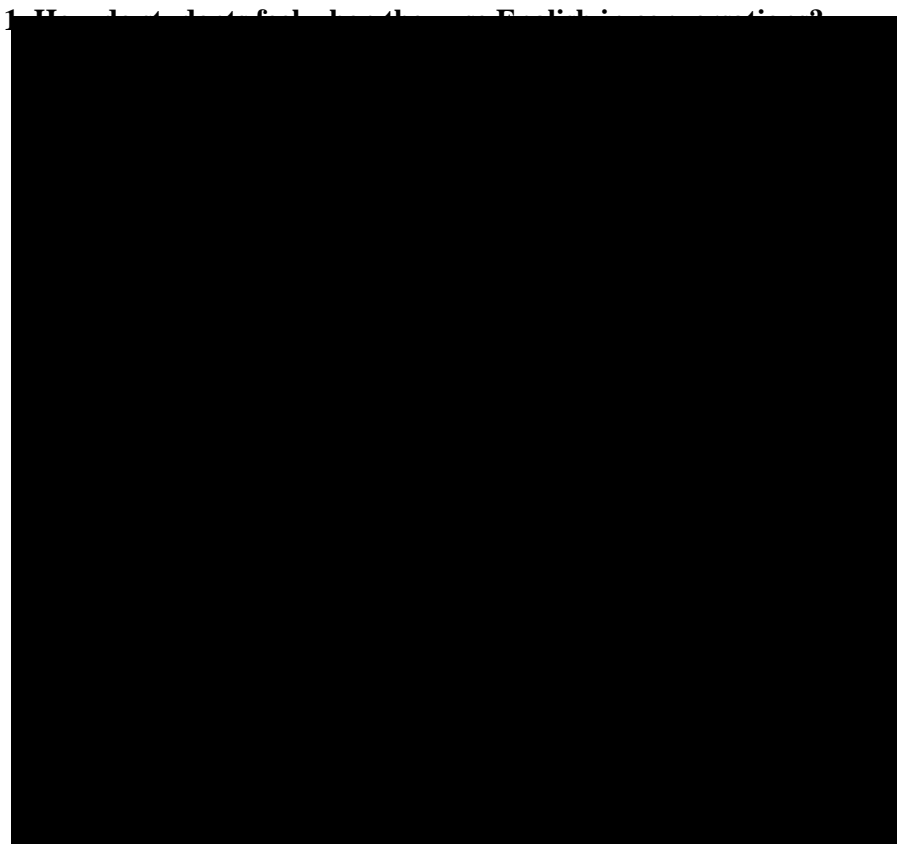
These numbers show that only a very small group in the class feels hesitant to use English in the classroom. The majority feels comfortable and confident using the target language in the classroom. The conclusion is that procedural language in the classroom is too good an opportunity to expose students to natural English to waste on the mother-tongue.

2. **Students prefer working in groups or pairs to working individually**.
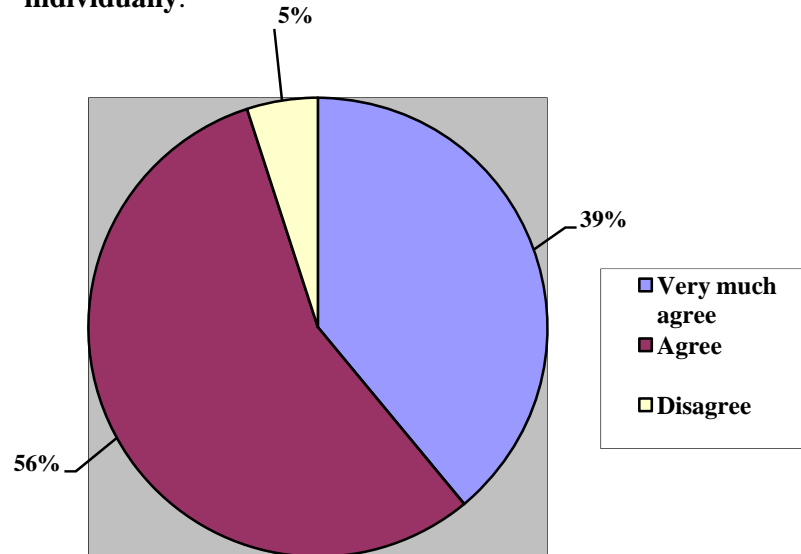
Results seem to show that students feel comfortable working in pairs or groups. This is crucial to support the findings which compare to teacher fronted interaction in whole class work; both pair work and group work provide more opportunities for learners to initiate the interaction, to produce a much larger variety of speech acts and to engage in the negotiation of meaning. Therefore, working on tasks in pairs or groups is believed to facilitate better second language acquisition. As mentioned previously, interaction in work in pairs and in small groups provides the basis for language acquisition.

3.   Do students like it when the teacher asks for their opinion in class?
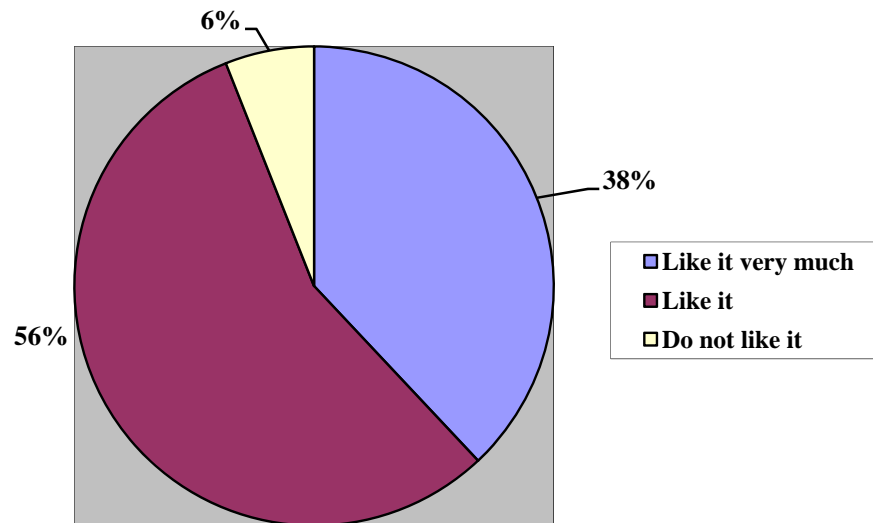
It is possible to conclude that students like it when the teacher asks them questions. As stated previously, an important dimension of classroom interaction is teacher questions. Different question forms are used by teachers to elicit students' interaction. When students do not respond to the teacher's questions, teachers usually modify their questions using different modification devices that would trigger a response and make the student participate in the interaction.

4. Do students like to be involved in activities that encourage them to take risks and negotiate meaning?
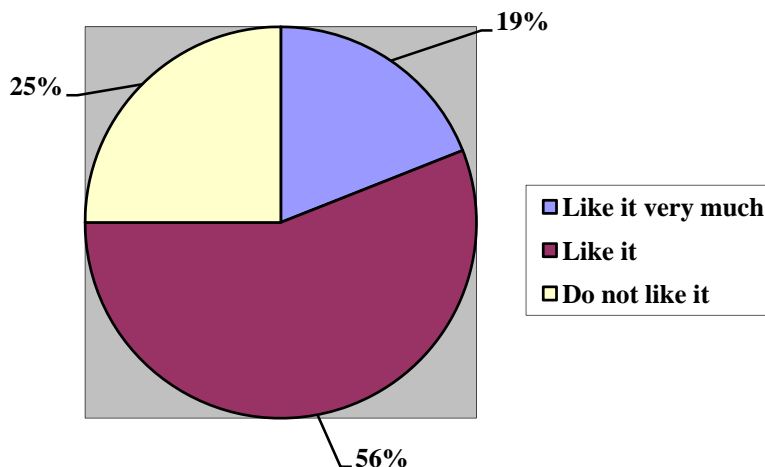
The results demonstrate that learners like to be involved in situations in which they need to negotiate both the expression and comprehension of meaning. Interaction and in particular interaction involving negotiation, enhances the second language development of English second language students. It is believed that for second language learners to develop competence in the target language, the classroom context needs to provide adequate opportunities for target language use. Moreover, for comprehensible output to be produced, learners have to be pushed in their negotiation of meaning. Second language learners benefit from teaching and learning innovations at the classroom level that promote the production of comprehensible output through interaction and negotiation.

5. What do students like most of their English classes?

Total of 16 students

Legend:
- Playing games and participating in contests
- To have more computer exercises
- The methodology
- Grammar
- Role Playing
- No answer
- Working in groups and participating in debates
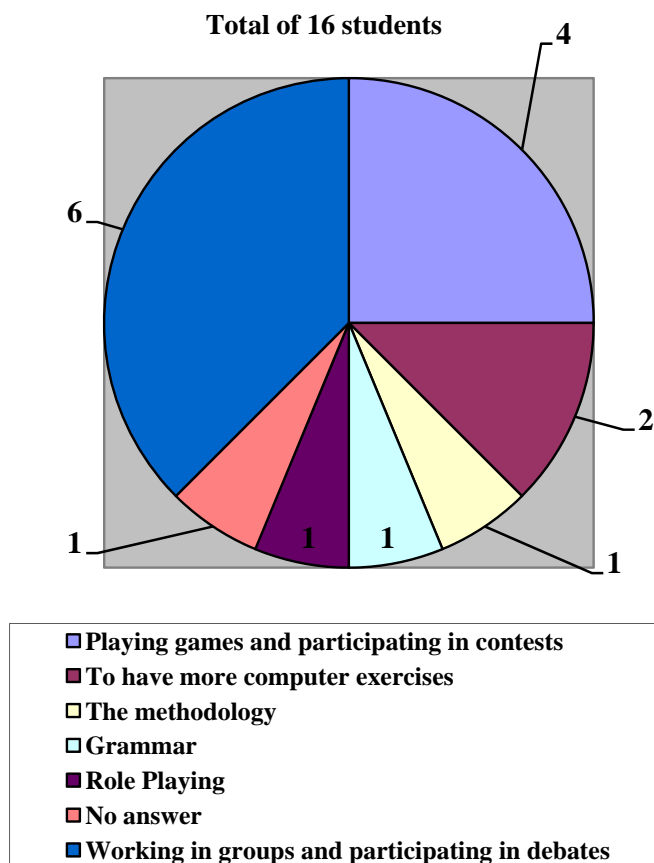
More than 60% of the students preferred tasks performed in groups or pairs. When students participate in group work their motivation increases. They feel less nervous speaking in the second language in front of their peers and they are more likely to encourage each other. Students enjoy interacting with others in groups, performing a wide range of roles including those involved in the negotiation of meaning. Learning is enhanced when working in pairs or groups because students are willing to take risks and can scaffold each other's efforts.

6. What do they think about learning the grammar structure?

Student's opinion
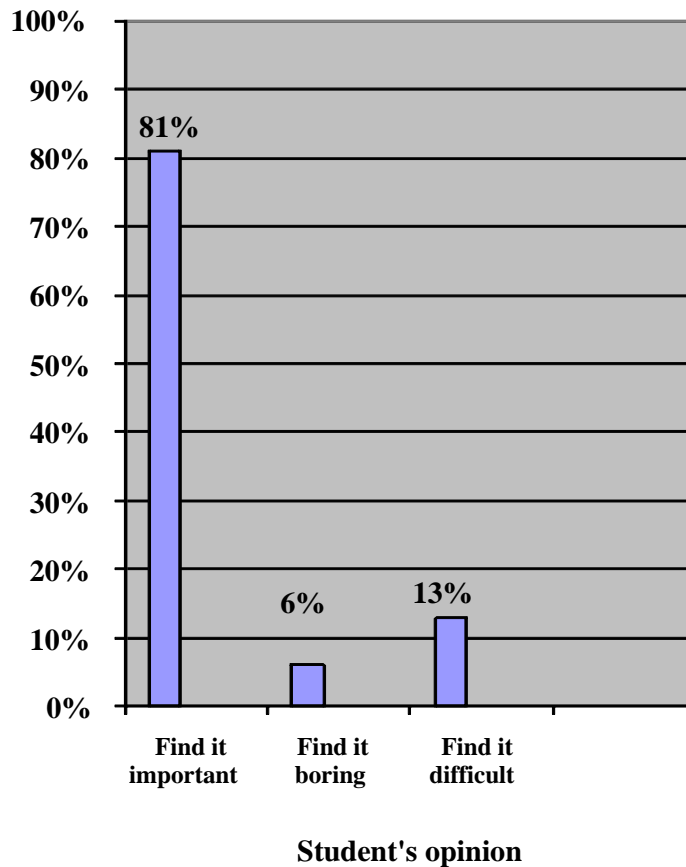
Most of the second language learners agreed that grammar is important in second language learning. Research has demonstrated that a focus on meaning alone is insufficient to achieve full native-like competence. This can be achieved using a variety of pedagogic procedures; learners' attention is briefly shifted to linguistic code features, in context, when students experience problems as they work on communicative tasks.

7. Do students find exercises where grammar structure has not been presented challenging or threatening?
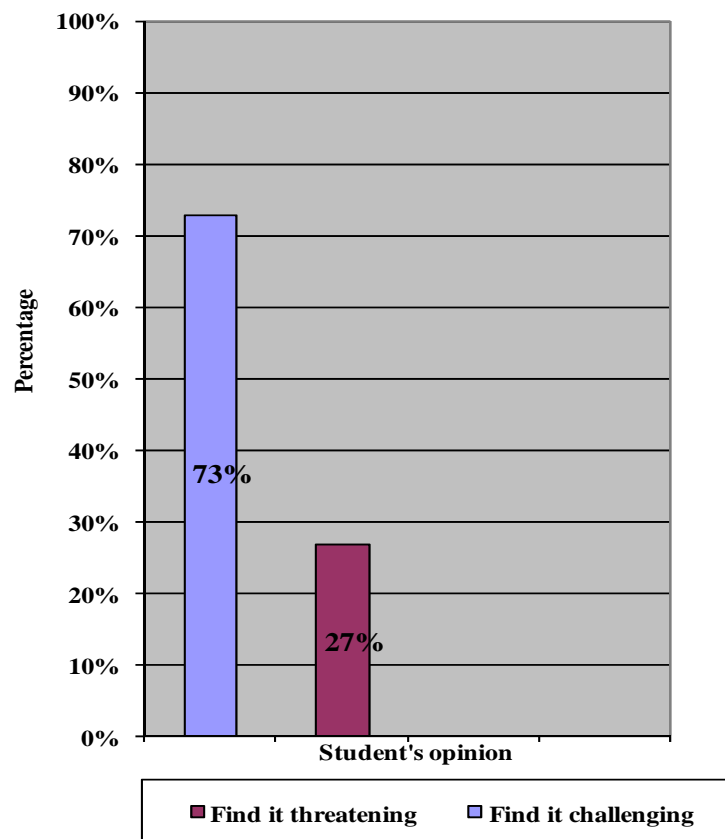
These results show that most second language learners find grammar structures challenging, and support the findings that a focus on form is essential for second language acquisition. As mentioned before, it involves briefly drawing the students' attention to different linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons where the focus is on meaning or communication.

8.   How do students feel about studying English?

Total of 16 students
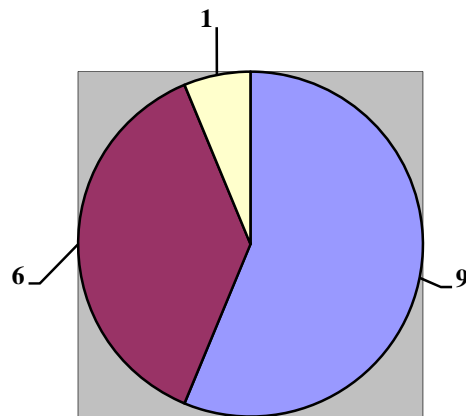
Legend:
- It is important for all the aspects of your life
- It is very exciting, every day you learn new things
- It is interesting

Pie chart values: 1, 6, 9

A vast number of students concluded that learning English was important for their life. The domination of the English language globally is undeniable. The beginning of the 21st century is a time of global transition. According to some experts, faster economic globalization is going hand in hand with the growing use of English. More and more people are being encouraged to use English rather than their own language and students are convinced that learning English as a second language is essential nowadays.

9.   What steps do students take when they do not understand the meaning of a word?

Total of 16 students

	Look it up in the dictionary and try to use it
	First, they read the context twice, if they still do not understand , then they look up the word in the dictionary
	Ask classmates or teacher
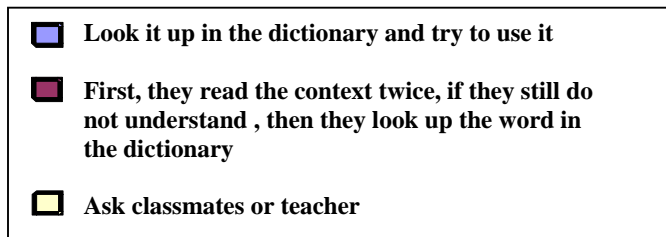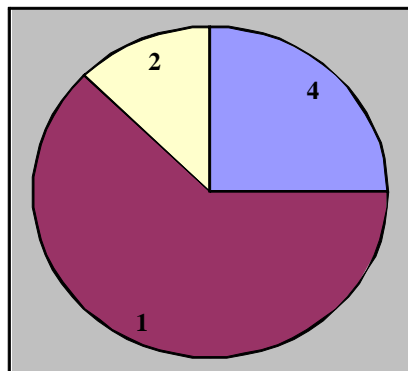
These results demonstrate that the learner's first choice to deal with an unknown word is to try to get the meaning from the context they are reading, or to look up the word in the dictionary. Studies on the negotiation of meaning, though, conclude that what makes input to be comprehensible is modified interaction. Interactional adjustments make input comprehensible and comprehensible input promotes acquisition. It can be concluded that the teacher needs to create more situations that encourage learner / learner interaction in order to provide opportunities for more comprehensible input and for interlanguage modification. Negotiation of meaning promotes language acquisition to occur, it draws attention to erroneous forms and lets the learners receive feedback through direct and indirect evidence and this can foster second language learning.

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10. Which activities do you think the classroom should focus more on?

37%

63%

☐ **Fluency and accuracy, balance both components**
☐ **Fluency**
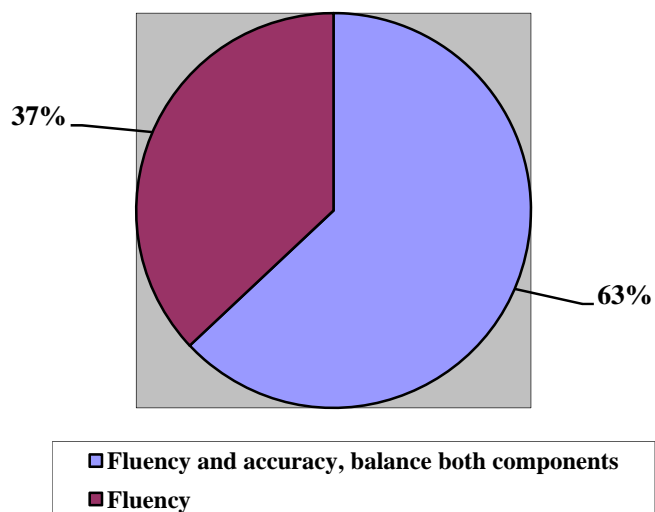
Most students agree with the findings that communicative tasks should include a balance of accuracy and fluency work. Linguistic competence is a fundamental component of communicative language ability. Teachers need to develop communicative language ability through classroom practice and at the same time ensure an understanding of how language works as a system.

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11. Which of the following activities do students perform after class in English in order to improve their language?
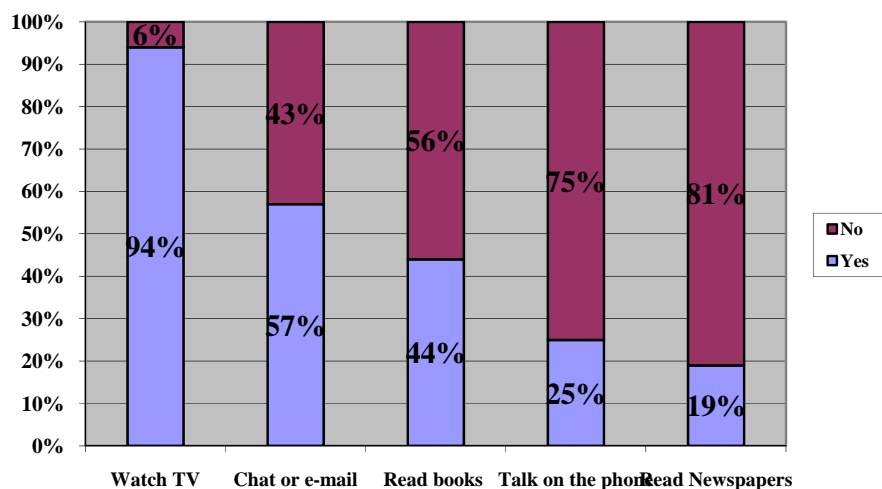
From the data collected it may become apparent that the students could do more outside the classroom to improve their linguistic abilities. The reason for this outcome could be the age group.

In this questionnaire different variables have been identified during the process. The independent variables in this questionnaire were the students' age, language proficiency and the background of each student. The dependent variables analyzed were the different preferences the students showed for studying English.

4.1.2. Observation

Most of the data collected from observations is considered qualitative information which is presented in written reports. The observer (teacher) was in charge of identifying and analyzing the most important information obtained from the observation. In the analysis of the data, two main techniques have been used, the deductive procedure, and the inductive procedure. Deductivism is the testing of a theory through the collection of data. Deductive research is performed because the observer knows what he/she is looking for in the study, the hypothesis has been established and what the observer is trying to do is to confirm or refute the hypothesis. The main procedures used in our investigation were comparisons, searching for differences and for items that were similar. After organizing and summarizing the data obtained in our observation, it was possible to classify and compare the information. Inductivism is the development of theories and principles from data collected through observation. The teacher also noted interesting behaviours in the classroom that were not predetermined in the hypothesis but he/she considered crucial to analyze them and include them as final outcomes of the study. We can sum up by saying that there is not an exclusive and right way of analyzing qualitative data; it can be interpreted in different ways.

Classroom interactions and behaviors were documented utilizing the COLT scheme. The data yielded by the COLT observation scheme indicated that the class being studied using communicative tasks provided more opportunities for negotiation than the traditional classroom pedagogy.

After analyzing some of the results obtained in our observation, we could compare a communicative task-based pedagogy with the traditional form-focused pedagogy applied several years back. Having established several significant differences in instructional treatment between a communicative task-based methodology with the traditional form-focused pedagogy it was meant to determine whether these differences resulted in different learning outcomes. In this case the different methodologies are the independent variables and the dependent variables are the findings and outcomes as a result of the different tasks and pedagogies applied to each classroom.

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Once all the categories of Part A and Part B of the COLT scheme were analyzed, we were able to observe interesting and mixed outcomes.

On Part A of the COLT scheme, successful classrooms were the ones in which students did more talking than in teacher-fronted classrooms, but most of the topics were selected by the teacher as in the traditional form-focused pedagogy. The reason for this is basically that the teacher, in most of the cases needs to follow a pre-established curriculum and finish with the program by the end of the cycle. Different activities were performed according to the interests of the students and the curriculum of the course.

In teacher centered classrooms, the teachers typically speak 80% of the time (methodology used some years ago), while in the classroom being observed most of the tasks were performed in groups or pairs, there was more students talk for most of the time and students had more opportunities to be involved in the negotiation of meaning. In the communicative classroom, when working in different tasks in pairs, students felt less nervous speaking the second language in front of their peers than in front of the whole class. The qualitative analysis confirmed that learning is enhanced by group and pair work, because students are willing to take risks and negotiate and can scaffold each other's work and outcome. It was possible to observe that the quantity of learner speech has increased.

The COLT scheme indicated that a task-based pedagogy revealed that students were exposed to many more authentic activity types than the traditional form-focused pedagogy. The texts the students were exposed to are from a range of sources, all authentic. Some are taken from literature, magazine interviews, tabloid and broadsheet newspaper, and reference books. There was often some vocabulary work that followed on from the text and some questions that provoked discussion. The students were also involved in listening activities which included authentic interviews and radio programs and an extract from a play. Some of the people are famous; some are experts in their own fields. The speaking activities were threaded throughout the units where students were stimulated to give their own opinions and participate in discussions, roleplays, simulations and a maze. The writing tasks are

linked to the units by theme and language content. As requested by the students in the initial questionnaire, tasks were also focused on form (accuracy) as well as on fluency. In these upper intermediate levels students were presented with tasks in which they had to analyze the systems of language in use working in pairs or small groups. In the traditional form-focused classroom more time was spent on classroom management and form-focused activities than on general discussion, therefore there was little need or opportunity to negotiate meaning.

The COLT scheme showed that students in a communicative classroom were asked to perform a variety of tasks. Some of these tasks were information-gap tasks where students were required to exchange information. In one of he tasks the students were involved with a two-way task in which the information provided was split. Each student had different information and each participant was obligated to participate and ask questions in order to complete the task.

Furthermore, the different methodologies differed in the way in which certain activities were carried out. On Part B, it was found that predictable activities and questions and the use of genuine questions and topic incorporation have positively influenced language learning. For example in the communicative methodology, the teacher started each activity with some predictive activities and exercises. It is difficult to say to what extent the target language was used in the various activities, it varied according to the task and the type of the activity the students were involved in.

Part B of the COLT scheme revealed that students in a communicative task-based class spent a greater amount of time producing sustained speech, reacting to message and expanding each other's utterances than students in only a form-focused classroom, where they reacted more to code than to the message. It was also possible to observe that students in a communicative task-based classroom were less restricted in language use than students in the traditional classroom, students were expected to use any language resources they have acquired and were not directed into using specific structures, although in some form-focused exercises the students were expected to use at least certain forms. There is a section in each unit of the book which aims to get students to think analytically about

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language, giving clear examples of how language works and then gives them tasks to guide them to an understanding of the language. Also gap-fills and other exercises are provided to help students acquire the language through use. When working with grammar and in order to give students more responsibility for their learning and to peer teach, students worked in pairs or small groups analyzing the different forms of the language used.

In the communicative task-based pedagogy, it was possible for the observer to identify that learners had more opportunities to initiate discourse. The tasks provided a loose discourse structure and students were involved in both, initiating and responding roles. As a consequence, students were able to perform a wide range of language functions such as asking for and giving information, agreeing and disagreeing, giving and receiving instructions, etc.

One of the most significant results comparing the form-focused pedagogy with the communicative task pedagogy was that the form-focused instruction demonstrated that some of the students were better on the grammar tests than the other students.

It was very important to observe how the learners took advantage and used the activities they are provided with in order to acquire the language. Different ways of exploiting activities will result in different opportunities for learning. Some activities emphasized on communicating messages in order to complete a task, without paying too much attention to correctness and completeness of language form, while others gave learners a chance to prepare the content of what they were going to say and therefore focused more on correct expression, providing the students opportunities to further develop the learners interlanguage system. It is best to create a balance between accuracy and fluency activities.

Various activities were taking place while the observation was being done. For example, role plays, and they were exposed to a variety of challenging and interesting text-types in reading and listening activities, a gap-activity, and discussions in groups and in pairs. One of the tasks they enjoyed the most and that produced the best outcome was preparing an advertising campaign for a product (see Appendix 4). The

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aim of the task was to select a product which had to be relaunched because its sales figures were falling. The materials used for this activity were flash cards of different products in the market, bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, newspapers advertisements, etc. As a pre-task activity, different suggestions from the students were elicited in order to relaunch the product.

The theme of the unit they were working with was big businesses and special attention was paid to make sure the task was adjusted to the level of the students. This task was actually an extended role play, in which the activity itself consisted in having students assign each other different roles and they had to implement, prepare and present their group's proposal to the whole class about the product they had selected. It was possible to observe that in the presentations, students aimed to use some of the "technical" target language presented in class to describe trends and comparative statistics. The aim was to motivate the students to give a presentation using this kind of language, creating opportunities to negotiate meaning when a communicative problem arised. It was observed that the students' discourse was extended to complete utterances and that they reacted more to the message itself than the code. They were more interested in the outcome and since every member of the group had a different role each one was motivated to initiate discourse and to prepare their part of the presentation, and by doing this everyone participated completely in the tasks. In this kind of task, the requested information was not predictable since students had to implement and create their target, package, method of distribution and establish the price of the product. It is possible to say that this is an open task, since there is no predetermined solution and learners were free to decide on the solution and outcome.

As mentioned previously, the topic familiarity of a task, this means how well they know about the topic and how interesting the students find the topic, will also impact on the learners' propensity to negotiate meaning. Even though the language was related to business, most of the students did not reveal a problem with such a language, on the contrary, they found it useful since in many areas of life they are required to give presentations that rely on this kind of language. Though, it was possible to identify that certain students were more predisposed to negotiate than others because they felt more familiar

with the topic. Since the learners had been working together for a few weeks already, it was possible to observe that the familiarity with each other played an important role in the number of clarification and confirmation checks that were produced by them. The more familiar they felt with each other, the more they produced.   It was confirmed that students felt less nervous speaking in English with their classmates in the group than in front of the whole class.

While the students were working on the task within their group they were all eager to participate. They enjoyed interacting with the others, giving their opinion and each one encouraged the other. However, it was curious to observe that when asked for a representative of the group to present the findings and results to the class, some did not feel comfortable or not too many volunteered for this task.   This confirms the results of one of the questions in the questionnaire where students said that they really preferred working in groups or pairs to working individually like in the former teacher-centred instruction.

These type of activities provide an ideal atmosphere for negotiation. Learners have opportunities to receive input that they have made comprehensible through negotiation, and at the same time to produce comprehensible output (output that learners have made comprehensible to others through negotiations).

I was able to observe that when students were asked to perform different tasks in groups, more students got to talk for a longer time, whereas in teacher centered classrooms, the teacher usually did most of the talking. It was possible to identify that when students were exposed to different roles in the groups they had more opportunities for negotiation of meaning to take place. From my experience and after observing this group, I can say that group and pair tasks help the students become more independent learners, learners who can take responsibility for their own learning.

Throughout the observation I was able to confirm the theory that working in small groups provides the basis for language acquisition and gives the students practice in communicating and negotiating meaning, in maintaining a conversation with appropriate turntaking conventions and it also allowed them to establish how well they were able to

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understand and make themselves understood. But it is not enough to simply put students into groups to complete a task. Special attention needs to be given to the quality of the interaction and if this enables the students to engage effectively with the task in order to support each other's language learning.

Additionally, it was found that some tasks that were performed were compound in nature, that is, they have one part involving information exchange followed by a second part involving opinion-giving. It has also been concluded that when using a required information exchange task there was much more modified interaction working in small groups and in pairs than in a teacher-fronted lesson as in the traditional form-focused pedagogy. It has been observed that split information tasks provided slightly more vocabulary learning than in shared information tasks, but in general both were able to create the necessary conditions for vocabulary learning.

We can also conclude by saying that interactions that derived from a conversation task resulted in greater negotiation. This occurred because there was no required information exchange and therefore students were offered a larger range of opportunities for language use than the information gap task. It is important to keep in mind that even though information exchange tasks were effective in instigating meaning negotiation, other types of tasks provided opportunities for different kinds of language use that probably helped language acquisition.

One of the topics that was being investigated was related to discourse and communication strategies. It was possible to address this issue in quantitative terms combined with a qualitative analysis of the classroom discourse and interaction. The quantitative analysis was performed counting the utterances produced by the students in which they used some kind of discourse strategy or communication strategy and then analyzing the data. Without counting anything and taking a closer look at the data obtained by observing the classroom, it was revealed that students use different strategies when they need to cope with problems of understanding.

The observation process combining qualitative and quantitative data revealed some interesting results. Most of the younger population of the class (adolescents) preferred using comprehension checks (32%) and requests for clarification (46%), whereas only 12% used confirmation checks and 10% recasts. The adults preferred using confirmation checks by 20%, and recasts by 26% when they did not understand what the speaker had said, but the overall results showed that the devise most frequently observed by the teacher and used by the adults was the clarification requests (37%) and 17% used comprehension checks.

12.   Discourse Strategies used during the Observation Process
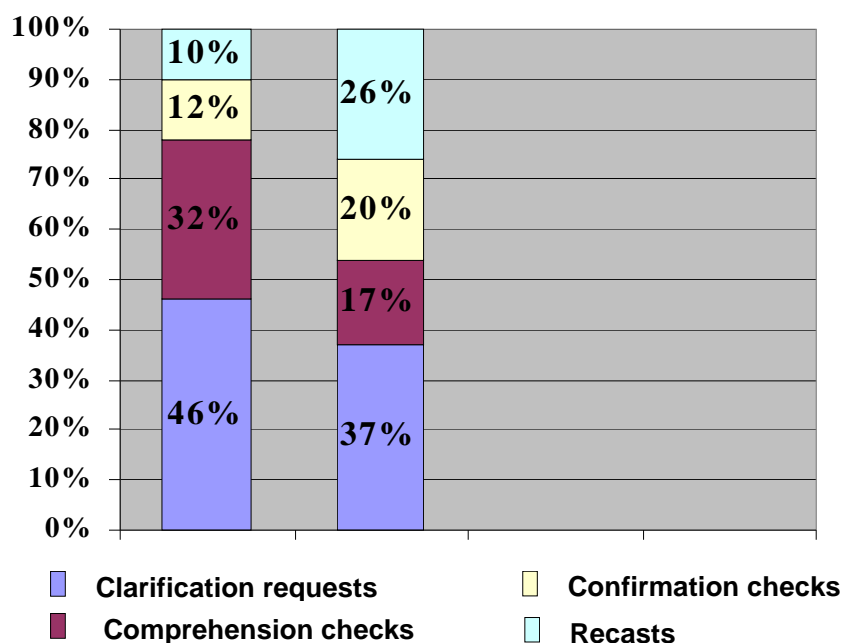
It has also been confirmed in our observation that when students had some kind of communication problem, they had to reformulate their initial utterance, many times as a response to the clarification request, confirmation checks or recasts of their partner, and by doing this they were pushed to use the target language accurately and concisely promoting language acquisition. This study also revealed that when

students received feedback from their peers in the form of clarification requests rather than confirmation checks they promoted more modified output.

This was a group where half of the students were adolescents so it was very obvious that they enjoyed working in pairs or in groups, they were very motivated and when they did not understand something they turned to their partner to ask for clarification. When the students used these different strategies in pairs in order to understand what their partner was saying they did it unconsciously. They were not aware that when eliciting clarification of what the partner had said they were achieving input that was comprehensible to them and were able to understand.

Since the group under observation had a good level of English proficiency, it was possible to identify that most of the times the strategies used during negotiation of meaning were local questioning strategies, where students presented lexical or fragment reprises, making specific questions referring to a specific word or referring to a specific part of the utterance that they did not understand. Students also used lexical gaps, asking about a specific term that they had previously understood and used but could not remember at the moment.

When the students were asked to perform a certain task and did not have the knowledge or could not remember the words to communicate it was possible to observe that they used some communication strategies in order to convey their message. At the participant's level, it was more common to see achievement strategies than reduction strategies. Results showed that the most common strategies used by this group were approximation, paraphrasing and word coinage. By using these strategies the students kept their communicative goal of what they wanted to transmit but used different strategies to compensate when they did not have all the means for achieving their original objective.

While the students were observed they had to perform some communicative open tasks, where they had to mention their attitudes to different topics related to the theme of the unit. Analysis indicated that in some cases the "topic" to be discussed about was not of interest of

everyone. The research confirmed the theory that the topic of a task will also influence negotiation of meaning. Some learners found the topic more interesting to negotiate about than others.

This observation showed that when the learners are more familiar with the topic and if the topic is of interest to them there could be more negotiation work and interaction. Since half of the class were adolescents, some of them they did not show much interest for the topic of business, describing trends and understanding graphs about different companies. It was possible to observe that these students treated the topics very briefly and then switched topics, leading to less negotiation, whereas the rest of the class showed a great interest for the topic of this unit and therefore were able to produce and generate more interaction. In a traditional form-focused pedagogy, there is usually very little need or opportunity to negotiate meaning since students are basically placed in a responding role and therefore perform a limited range of language functions. Language is treated as an object and the students are required to act as "learners", whereas in a communicative task-based environment language is seen as a tool for communicating and the learners and teacher act as "language users".

The teacher and the students in many circumstances still find it difficult to see language as a tool and to adopt the role of language users. Teachers in some cases still believe that their objective in the classroom is for them to teach and for students to learn the language. The students in a communicative classroom, on the other hand, must be convinced that they can learn the language indirectly through communicating in it instead of directly through studying it. Teachers must create the right environment for the students to forget they are in a classroom and to try to use and simulate the language that is used outside the classroom.

The observation also indicated that when students were asked to perform a task in pairs or groups, another factor that determined the degree of interaction and negotiation was the familiarity with their peers. In this specific study it was possible to observe how the age variable played an important role in this context. Students that knew each other from other cycles were more likely to interact and felt more at ease than students that were new in the group. Adolescents preferred

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working together and were more motivated to communicate among themselves than with other adults. The more they knew their classmates and the more comfortable they felt working in a specific group or with a certain person, the more clarification requests and confirmation checks they used, producing more negotiation of meaning and increasing the interaction.   It has been confirmed that when students receive feedback in the form of clarification request rather than in confirmation checks more modified output is promoted.

4.1.3. Questionnaire at the End of the Month

Before finishing the cycle, the students were given a questionnaire to fill in regarding their preferred devises used when they did not understand something and the strategies used when the students lacked the required knowledge to communicate.   The quantitative results obtained from the administration of the questionnaire differed only very little from the qualitative and quantitative observation and analysis done by the observer.

After analyzing the students preference regarding the strategies they believe they use when they do not understand something, results indicated in the ranking scheme that 57% of the students selected as their first option the use of clarification requests, the rest of the students equally selected the use of the other devises. As a second option, 36% of the students selected confirmation checks as a means for understanding the other person and 29% of the learners preferred to use comprehension checks and the other 29% selected recasts. Only 6% selected clarification checks as their second option.

As a third option 36% of the students were in favor of using comprehension checks, whereas 29% preferred clarification requests and 29% confirmation checks. Again, only 6% preferred recasts as a way to help them understand the message. Finally, as a last and fourth option, 50% of the students said to use recasts, 21% preferred comprehension checks and 21% confirmation checks while only 7% preferred clarification requests.

13. Discourse Strategies preferred by students
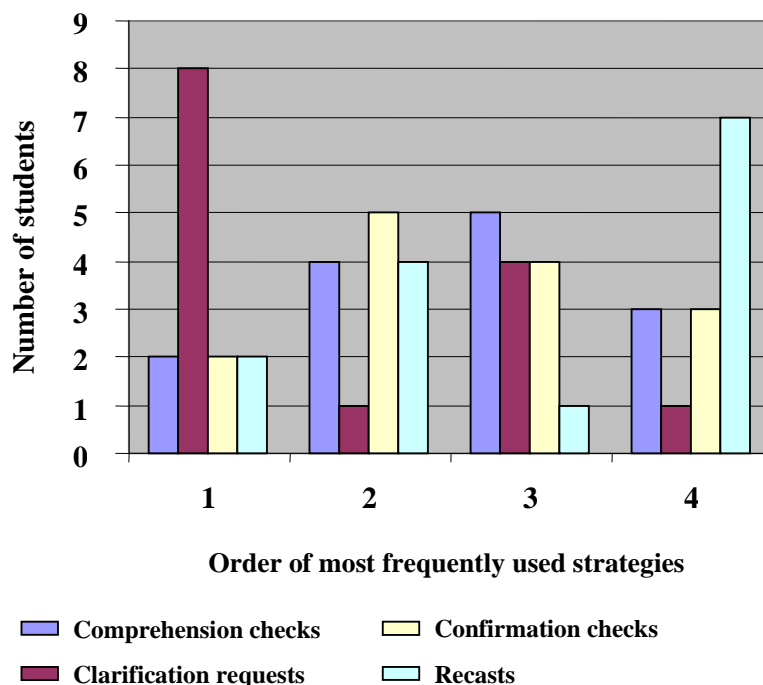
We can conclude by saying that the device most preferred by the students as their first option is clarification requests, followed by confirmation checks. The device that was used the least by the students was recasts. These numbers showed similar results as the observation performed by the teacher during several hours. This questionnaire provided quantitative information and helped demonstrate the fact that qualitative observation and analysis are needed in order to interpret and confirm the quantitative results obtained from the administration of a questionnaire.

The second part of the questionnaire requested the students to rank the communication strategies they thought they used when they could not think of the right word to communicate in order to transmit the message they want. The chart below shows the order in which the students think they use the communication strategies. In the first place students believed to prefer approximations by 40%, and then followed

by word coinage with 20%. 13% of the students selected as their first option appealing for assistance, 7% used mime, 7% had a preference for reduction, 7% for paraphrasing and another 6% for transfer. The least preferred communication devices were reduction and transfer, each with 27%, paraphrasing and appealing for help each with 13%, 7% of the students selected as their last option when trying to communicate the use of mime, 7% asking for help and 6% for word coinage.

14.   Communication Strategies preferred by students

In this questionnaire we can identify as an independent variable the different strategies and devises the students believed they used and the dependent variable is their ability to understand and to communicate using the different devises.
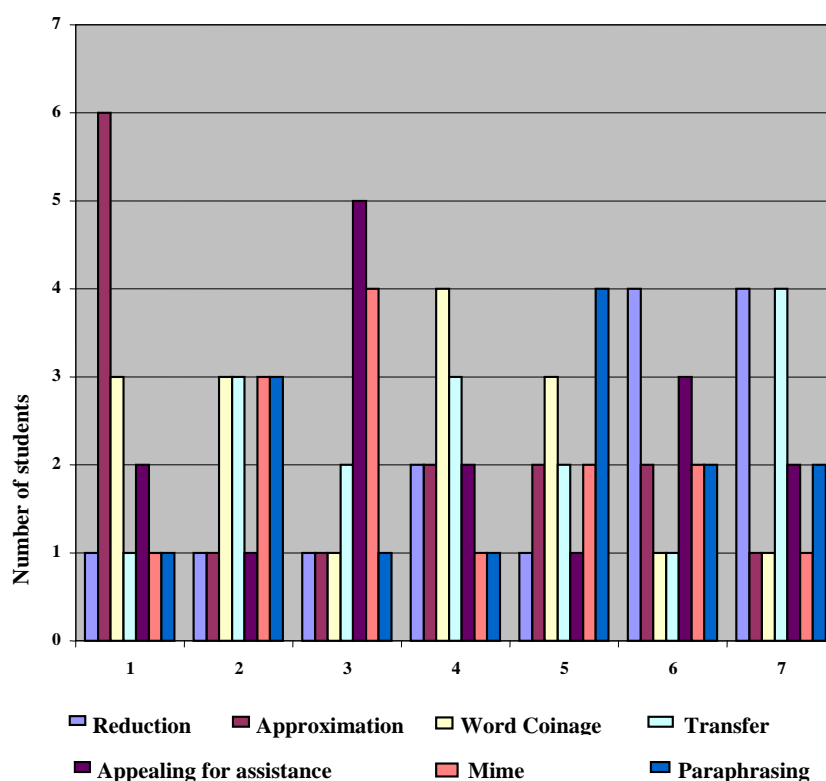
4.1.4. Test

With the move towards communicative testing, there has been a change in emphasis in the tests. In this test an authentic text type is provided which is associated with the real purpose for reading. The reading comprehension task replicates a real-world text. The writing tasks also reflect a real-world task. The aim of the writing tasks is to have the students produce in the target language, and use the language naturally for genuine communication and to relate to thoughts and feeling putting authentic language to use within a context. In real life, when people speak or write they usually do so with some real purpose. These activities are considered integrative since the students were expected to use a variety of language at any one given time. In the listening section the students had to listen to an extract from a play (similar to a task performed in class) and carry out a task.

The second part evaluates the communicative use of the language, the purpose of this exercise is for the students to try to convey the message effectively, students are not penalized heavily for mistakes on form as long as the idea that they want to communicate is clear. The grammar section evaluates correct and accurate use of the language that has been dealt in class and the use of phrasal verbs with its literal and metaphorical meaning. This task includes discrete point techniques since they test certain aspects of grammar and vocabulary.

After correcting and analyzing the test results it is possible to say that the average of the students had a good performance in most of the parts except in the grammar section where they reached only 44 % of accuracy. In the listening section the average reached 70% of correct answers, in the communicative use of the language the students obtained 74% of the total points, in the reading section the average reached 84 % of correct answers and in the writing section the students reached 82% of correctness.

15. Test Results

Parts of the Test

- **Communicative Use of Language**
- **Writing**
- **Reading Comprehension**
- **Listening Comprehension**
- **Grammar**
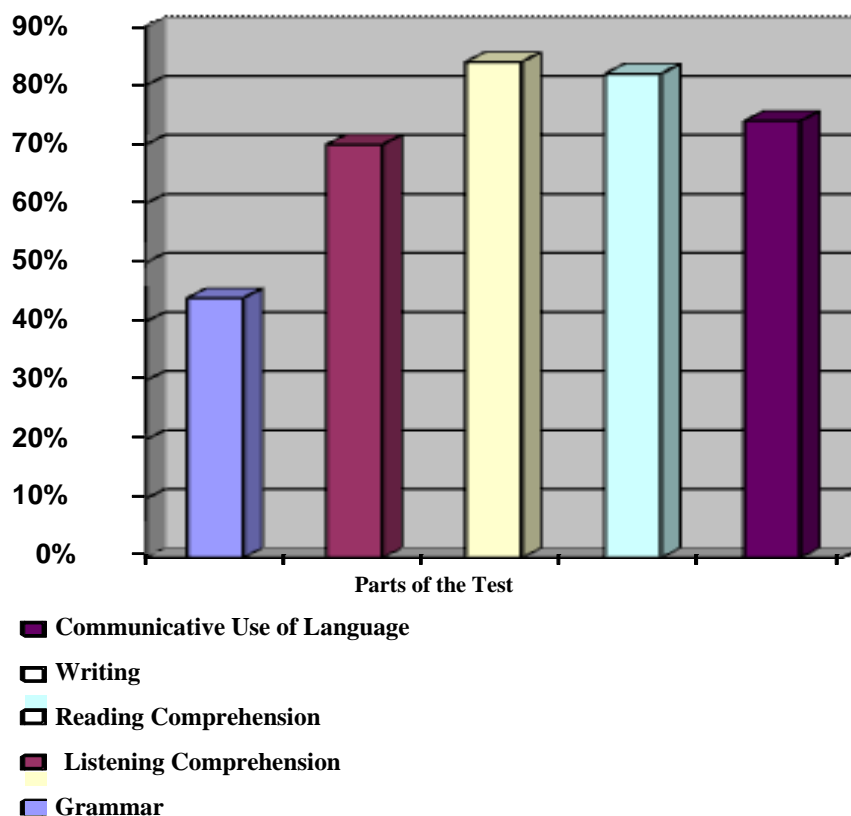
4.2. Personal Reflection on the Research

As previously mentioned, Action Research can inform teachers about their practice, it is considered any systematic inquiry conducted by the teacher for the teacher to gather information about the ways that their particular class operates, how the teachers teach and how well their students learn. It is small scale, contextualized, localized and aimed at discovering, developing or monitoring changes. The project results led to confirmation of individual opinions, observations and intuitions based on investigation and data.

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While performing the observation, I became aware that the teacher (myself) also used different kinds of strategies (basically recasts and clarification requests) when the learners encountered some kind of problems communicating, specially when the teacher did not understand what the learner was trying to say, leading the learner to "reformulate" their initial utterance. In this case the learners were pushed to use the target language and to produce comprehensible output. It was interesting and useful to reflect on my own teaching through the observation that was done regarding these strategies and the way I reacted to the utterances of the students in order to provide the student and the rest of the class with comprehensible input and feedback.

In the analysis of the different feedback types, I found that recasts accounted for more than half of the total feedback I provided during the observation sessions. When the students' language behavior was examined immediately after receiving the different feedback types, it was concluded that students' uptake was least likely to occur after recasts and much more likely to occur when they received feedback in the form of clarification requests. This made me reconsider the type of feedback I was providing the students.

Lyster (1998) and Lyster and Ranta (1997) make strong arguments for teachers to start paying attention to how they use recasts. Especially teachers should take care in making them more explicit. Teachers can write the recast as well as the original student's correction on the blackboard. I know from my own teaching, it is easy not to check that a recast has not been noticed by a student. I think that the best thing to do is to limit the use of isolated recasts and to follow up implicit corrections with explicit ones as much as possible for learners. I know that from this research, I will be more conscious of the ambiguity I could create by over-using recasts.

Lyster has argued that students in content-based second language classrooms are less likely to notice recasts than other form of correction. The reason for this is because when recasts are provided students assume that the teacher is responding to the content rather than the form of their speech.

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Research reviewed in this paper indicates that recasts are most effective when they are not used alone. Since Lyster and Ranta (1997) point out how recasts do not elicit self-correction from learners, the best way to use them, may be with forms of correction that do ask for self-correction. Results showed that recasts used in combination with other feedback types (elicitation, clarification request, explicit correction and metalinguistic cues) have had the highest rate of repair in comparison to all other feedback types. Lyster has proof in his study, that recasts alone do not implicitly teach students to notice their errors. Students need explicit attention drawn to their error and the function of the recast.

Now I see that I tend to use recasts more implicitly than explicitly. That is, I often repeat my student's incorrect utterances, but I do not always ask them to repeat my corrections or make it explicit to them that my form is not simply another way of saying what they said, but is indeed, a correction. In some situations, but not always, I tend to use recasts with clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback and explicit correction. Especially when facilitating a discussion, I use recasts as topic continuation moves.

Results showed that the type of feedback the students were receiving from the teacher was not the best one since they did not require the learner to produce improved output. Instead, the teacher was modeling what the learner intended to mean.

This project illustrated several features of Action Research, since it aimed at improving certain practices or at enhancing understanding of certain areas of teaching that sometimes teachers are not conscious of, as just mentioned in the above paragraph. In a communicative task-based methodology, the teacher usually tries to give more content-focused feedback by responding to the message content of the students' utterances and not to the form.

The test results could represent a typical communicative task pedagogy in which there was not much focus on grammar or accuracy. These numbers show only quantitative results and therefore they should be compared and interpreted with qualitative observation and analysis that was also performed in this study. This made me reflect on my own teaching and I realized that this particular group needed more focus on

form since it constitutes an important part of the task-based lesson and it is very compatible with a primary focus on message content. However, some experts like Willis (1996, cited in Ellis, 2003) believe and see that the primary goal of a task component is that of developing fluency and promoting the use of communication strategies. From my experience, this can lead to having the students develop fluency at the expense of accuracy, as occurred with this group. One way of coping with such a situation is to perform tasks that also focus on form.

The goal of second language learning is to develop fluency, as well as accuracy and complexity. Accuracy is not achieved unless learners pay attention to form. Learning may be more effective if learners focus on form while using language for communication.

From a communicative perspective, the most effective way to assist language learning in the classroom is through communicative tasks: that is, activities which encourage talk, not in order to produce language as an end, but "as a means of sharing ideas and opinions, collaborating toward a single goal, or competing to achieve individual goals". (Pica et al. 1993). These kinds of activities provide a vehicle for the presentation of appropriate input to second language learners through negotiation of meaning developing both communicative and linguistic competence. Recent research on the role of communicative interaction suggests that communicative activities that focus on meaning alone are not adequate for learning a second language.

The results of this action research led the teacher to realize that what needs to be done in my particular case is to integrate a focus on form into existing second language communicative activities. Psychologists say that learners remember things with reference to the context in which they learn them. Therefore, focus on language forms in the context of communication may encourage learning, and the forms may be easier to remember when students need them in future similar contexts. The findings of this study made the teacher become more aware of the need to encourage the language learners in the communicative classroom for both communication and learning strategies to promote the occurrence of language acquisition through negotiation of meaning.

3.5.2. Observation

The observation was non-participant, this means the researcher (teacher) simply observed the activities that were investigated and took appropriate notes related to various communicative features. The aim of this scheme was to have the observer (teacher) describe as precisely as possible some of the features of communication that occur in a communicative second language classroom. By using this kind of naturalistic research, the researcher did not intervene in the research setting and did not control naturally occurring events and patters. The observer (teacher), on the contrary, purposefully tried not to influence the normally occurring patterns of instruction and interaction, since the aim of the research was to describe and understand different processes that occur in the classroom.

The class was observed for one hour every day for five days in which the students performed various communicative tasks. The investigation sought to determine how different communicative tasks provoked negotiation of meaning and how this interaction can foster second language acquisition. Another objective of the observation was to compare a communicative task-based methodology with a traditional methodology and the effects they have on acquisition of the second language.

3.5.3. Questionnaire at the End of the Month (Appendix 2)

After finishing with the selected tasks and activities that were performed within the cycle, the students were asked to complete a second questionnaire the day of the exam (last day of the cycle), in order to confirm and compare the information and data that the teacher was able to collect through observation. The data was then analyzed and interpreted.

3.5.4. Test (Appendix 3)

At the end of the month students were given a test that is prepared by the Institution. The students had 50 minutes to complete the test.

CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude by saying that this study confirmed the hypothesis that communicative tasks can lead to the development of the communicative ability in the classroom as opposed to the traditional form-focused methodology. Results showed that communicative language teaching involved the students in purposeful tasks that were embedded in meaningful contexts which reflected and practiced the language as it is used authentically in the world outside the classroom. It was possible to establish that the design and type of a task affects the kind of interaction, it affects the negotiation of meaning, the use of communication strategies and communicative outcomes. The most important properties of tasks that will work best for acquisition are those that stimulate negotiation and through this provide comprehensible input and feedback and push learners to reformulate their own utterances. It was observed that classroom activities focused on completing tasks that were mediated through language or that involved negotiation of information and information sharing.

Results showed that two-way tasks, which require information exchange in both directions for task completion involved more negotiation than one-way tasks. Likewise, closed tasks led to more negotiation of meaning and more learner speech modifications towards the target language than open tasks, where the information exchange is less restrictive.

Based on the different research, there is evidence to suggest that the participant role is an important factor in task-based teaching. The extent to which negotiation of meaning occurs depends on such

variables as whether the information exchange is required or optional and whether the outcome is closed or open. Negotiation appears to be more effective if learners are active rather than passive participants in a task, for example, are required to contribute even when playing the listener role or are allowed to take the lead when playing the speaker in one-way tasks. Repeating a task results in increased interaction and greater communicative effectiveness. Doing a task with a familiar interlocutor can increase the amount of negotiation. Receiving feedback in the form of clarification requests rather than confirmation checks promotes modified output (uptake). However, there is no clear evidence as yet that any of these implementation variables impact on language acquisition directly.

Findings on research that has investigated the effects of task design variables on learner production show that to date, that task design variables appear to have the greatest impact on complexity. Tasks that elicit more complex language use are those where the input does not provide contextual support and contains many elements, where the information is shared rather than split and where the outcome is open, allowing for divergent solutions. In addition, complex language is much more likely in some types of discourse, for example, narrative, than in others, for example, description. There is also evidence that task design variables influence fluency. These are tasks that provide contextual support, that have familiar or involving topics and pose a single demand. Tasks that are closed and have a clear inherent structure are also likely to promote fluency. In contrast, design variables do not seem to impact so much on accuracy, although tasks without contextual support, open tasks, and tasks with a clear inherent structure have been found to lead to more accurate language use, especially if there is an opportunity to plan strategically.

Foster concluded as mentioned previously, that the best context for negotiation was one involving dyads performing a required information exchange task. Long claims that two-way information gap-tasks produce more negotiation work and more useful learner negotiation than one-way information gap-tasks. Similarly, he believes that closed tasks will more likely promote negotiation work than open tasks because students need to continue working even when they come up with a difficult situation. Problem-solving tasks elicit more

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spontaneous speech and wider range of language function. Learners are encouraged to continue working in order to make themselves understood and this fosters acquisition. On the other hand, in open tasks students are not required to make an effort to communicate.

These results suggest that different kinds of tasks can potentially contribute in different ways to acquisition. Particular tasks may predispose learners to engage in certain types of production but they can not guarantee them.

The analysis indicated that there was a negotiation of meaning between the students, the speakers were involved in interpreting a meaning from what they heard and constructed what to say as a response, without relying on the teacher or materials to give them the language. Communicative tasks had the aim to focus the students' attention on the meaning they were trying to convey, but at the same time, to ensure an understanding of how language works as a system and to develop an ability to use the system correctly, appropriately and creatively. When students worked in groups or pairs, they negotiated meaning as they structured group interaction checking they have understood the message, asking for clarification and further explanation. While students were speaking, they used communication strategies as for example paraphrase and restructuring.

Interaction can foster acquisition not only through meaning and content negotiation, but through comprehensible input, feedback and modified output. Such output serves as oral practice, aids fluency and provides learners with the opportunity to test hypothesis about the rules they have constructed for the target language. Furthermore, as stated previously, Pica showed how the use of unmodified input when opportunities for negotiated interaction are provided is superior to simplified, pre-modified input. Interaction is important for language learning because it serves as the principal means by which learners discover how units of language can be put together and how they can be separated.

In sum, interaction can facilitate development by providing opportunities for learners to receive comprehensible input and negative

feedback, as well as to modify their own output, test hypotheses, and notice gaps in their interlanguage.

Scholars believe that feedback obtained during interaction can include explicit correction and metalinguistic explanations, as well as more implicit clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetitions and recasts. This feedback, in addition to serving as a source of comprehensible input, can make problematic aspects of the learner's interlanguage salient and thus more open to revision.

The negotiation of meaning invokes feedback, and feedback draws the learner's attention to gaps between the input and the learner's output (Caroll, 2000). When this feedback is given to the learner by other participants in conversation, the learner starts more consciously monitoring the interaction and attempts to verify, practice and memorize correct and appropriate forms in the conversation. As already mentioned, negotiation of meaning, can promote the use of learning strategies by the learner. It is well accepted that the language learner capable of using a wide variety of language learning strategies appropriately can improve his or her language skills. Also, language learning strategies contribute to the development of the communicative competence of learners.

Lyster (1998) believes teachers do not have to choose between communication on the one hand and corrective feedback on the other, because they can integrate both during teacher-student interaction. Corrective feedback can be considered as part of negotiation rather than as separate from it.

For negotiation to be a useful notion in both second language research and classroom pedagogy, it needs to account for corrective feedback and include both focus on form and meaning. As such, negotiation can be a very important pedagogical strategy in language classrooms, because it allows learners to focus on form while maintaining a central focus on meaning.

Lyster (1998) suggests that corrective feedback involving the negotiation of form may help second language learners to modify their use of non-target language forms. Furthermore, "corrective feedback

that invites student-generated repair in the form of self- or peer-repair provides opportunities for learners to proceduralize target language knowledge"[36].

The analysis of the role of interaction in promoting language acquisition has demonstrated how important it is to create opportunities for interactional moves in language classrooms.

To summarize the above results from the investigation, negotiation of meaning and pushed output have shown to have some of the following effects on second language acquisition: They help promote communication and facilitate learning as they help noticing a "gap" between received input and the learner's output. Additionally, it was found that both negotiation of meaning and pushed output enable learners to receive feedback through direct and indirect evidence and help acquisition at least where vocabulary is concerned.

Results showed that clarification requests facilitate learners to produce output modifications and pushing learners to produce more comprehensible output could have a long-term effect.

When the teachers use clarification requests they tend to push learners to improve the accuracy of their non-target output. These moves, unlike other types of corrective feedback (recasts and explicit correction) return the floor to the students along with cues to draw on their own resources, and in this way allowing for negotiation to occur bilaterally and serve as pedagogical function that draws attention to form and aims for accuracy in addition to mutual comprehension. Clarification requests serve as prompts for students to self-repair, that means they do not provide learners with correct rephrasing but instead push learners to retrieve the correct forms from what they already know.

Clarification requests were found to be best at eliciting uptake. Pica and Long concluded that when learners receive implicit negative

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[36] Lyster, R. (1998): "Recasts, Repetition, and Ambiguity in Second Classroom Discourse", *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 20: 53.

feedback on their attempts to communicate, they may attempt to reform their initial utterances, thereby promoting acquisition.

These negotiation moves used in the classroom can be form-focused or meaning-focused according to the speaker's intentions underlying these moves. For example, clarification requests and repetition of learner errors tend to be used to check comprehension of meaning in conversations but not to question formal accuracy in teacher student interaction. On the other hand, when teachers shorten the learner's utterance to isolate the linguistic error and then add stress to emphasize the correct form, then the intention to draw attention to form is likely to be much clearer. The main difference, according to Lyster is that the form focused negotiation provides prompts for learners to self-repair; in consequence, it engages them in retrieval processes that differ from those activated in meaning focused negotiation.

The conclusion from the study indicated that negotiation of meaning seemed to have some positive effects on second language acquisition, even though there are still some important questions that need to be answered regarding this topic. Glew (1998) claims that learners have to be pushed in their negotiation of meaning to produce comprehensible output, and the classroom context needs to provide adequate opportunities for target language use to allow learners to develop competence in the target language. He believes that teachers need to implement communicative interaction and negotiation tasks in the classroom where production of comprehensible output is promoted, and this could have a significant impact on the language development of the students. By giving the students adequate opportunities, second language learners can and actually do learn much of a second language grammar incidentally and implicitly, while focusing on meaning or communication. However, as already mentioned, Long (1997) believes that a focus on meaning alone is insufficient to achieve full native-like competence. He proposes a methodological principle called focus on form, in which forms are determined by the learner's developing language system, not by a predetermined external linguistic description. Therefore, focus on form is learner-centered since it respects the learners' internal syllabus.

Focus on form is a modern pedagogical approach, which has attracted much attention in recent years. It is one of several methodological principles in Task-Based Language Teaching and uses communicative and interactive tasks as the central units for the planning and delivery of instruction, enabling language learners to acquire grammar through engaging in authentic language use, without recourse to a fixed grammatical syllabus. It helps students to actually communicate using appropriate social language in the culture of the target language. In this learner centered approach, the teacher has the role to encourage learners to actively learn for themselves how the language works as a formal system through communicative classroom activities or tasks. Consequently, the teacher is required to take a less dominant role and the learner is encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning.

It is important to keep in mind, as mentioned before, that it is crucial to incorporate a focus on form into the performance of the task. Researchers report this can be achieved either by responding focus-on-form episodes or in initiating episodes. In the first case, one of the participants, usually the teacher, responds to a student's utterance containing an error. In the second situation, the teacher or a student elects to take time out from the exchange of message content to attend briefly to form, usually by means of a direct query about a specific form. Such attention to form differs from that arising in lessons of the traditional, focus-on-forms kind, because the content is dictated by the student, the form only by the teacher. It also differs in another way. As Prabhu (1987 cited in Ellis 2003) points out, correction during a task is "incidental" rather "systematic" in nature. In incidental correction, only "tokens" are addressed, i.e. there is no attempt to generalize the type of error, it is seen by the participants as a "part of getting on with the activity in hand, not as a separate objective" and, crucially it is transitory.

It was concluded that teachers can employ both implicit and explicit techniques to achieve this focus on form. These techniques can be used when some kind of communication problem arises (as occurs in the negotiation of meaning) or they can be used when the teacher chooses to abandon his/her role as a language user momentarily in order to function as an instructor, i.e. to negotiate form rather than meaning.

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Teachers can play a very direct role by initiating this negotiation or they can also intervene to support a process that students have started for themselves. They can also allow or even encourage students to use the same techniques themselves, for example by accepting and responding to students' queries about form.

Some of the implicit techniques employed by teachers and students are clarification requests and recasts. In the first one, a task participant seeks clarification of something another participant has said and in this way provides an opportunity for the first participant to reformulate. In recasts, a task participant rephrases part or the whole of another participant's utterance.

One of the explicit techniques for focusing on form during a task is explicit correction, in which a task participant draws explicit attention to another participant's deviant use of a linguistic form. Metalingual comment / question are another explicit technique, in which a task participant uses metalanguage to draw attention to another participant's deviant use of a linguistic form. Query and advice are also used by a task participant to question about a specific linguistic form that has arisen in performing the task and when a task participant (usually the teacher) advises or warns about the use of specific linguistic forms.

It has been confirmed that the use of these techniques, even when quite frequent, need not detract from the primary focus on message, which is the defining characteristic of a task. In consequence, they potentially enhance the acquisitional value of a task by inducing noticing of linguistic forms that lie outside or at the edges of students' current interlanguages.

To summarize, research indicates that interactional contexts are more conducive to language development than merely providing non-native speakers with comprehensible input. They give learners the opportunity to negotiate comprehensible input, and they feel more encouraged to repair their output to make it more comprehensible. Researchers are concerned to find those tasks that work best for learning. In particular, they both grapple with the need to design tasks that draw learners' attention to second language forms and structures as well as tasks that promote fluency.

LIMITATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Despite the encouraging findings mentioned above, the effect of interaction on acquisition remains controversial. Ellis (1991) has suggested that comprehension does not necessarily lead to acquisition. His claim has been corroborated by several authors: Loschky believes that "positing a simple linear relationship between comprehension and intake is not warranted"[37].

Likewise, Pica (1994) considers it difficult to find a direct relationship between comprehension of second language input and the internalization of second language forms. It is possible, however, to find an indirect relationship between negotiation and acquisition: through interactions learners can detect differences between their interlangauge and the target language, and this awareness of the differences may make them modify their output. This claim is in line with Long (1980), who suggested that negotiated interaction indirectly promoted second language acquisition.

In this study it was possible to verify that there are a number of different task features which had an impact on interaction, but it was

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[37] Loschky, L. (1994): "Comprehensible Input and Second Language Acquisition: What is the relationship?", *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 16: 320.

very difficult to establish the extent the task variables and features had an influence on acquisition. Interaction can foster acquisition through comprehensible input, feedback and modified output. Thus, the importance to further study and identify which of the task features and variables will result in interaction. It is also important to consider the individual learner factors and situation factors when examining the tasks. One topic that still needs to be revised and confirmed is if these variables have any impact on acquisition. It is essential to study and identify what kinds of tasks are needed in order to promote second language acquisition.

One of the problems that have appeared during the observation was to identify when negotiation was really taking place and what the real results of it were. It was very difficult to identify if the "response" in the negotiation exchange really meant that comprehension had been achieved.

Some specialists believe that in order for interaction to contribute to acquisition it must provide feedback and push learns to modify their output. Carroll (2001) states that it is still unclear if negotiated interaction can accomplish anything else other than practice. Thus, further research is needed to demonstrate any relationships between negotiated input and any learning which occurs.

Furthermore, there is not much research to show that meaning negotiation will foster grammatical development of any type. However, some studies have showed that meaning negotiation facilitates grammar acquisition. It would be crucial to further study what learners really do with communicative tasks and the kind of learning that is achieved based on how learners exploit tasks in different ways.

Another matter of concern is at what point learners should be involved in tasks which encourage them to take risks and negotiate meaning. It should be considered if it is better for basic learners to start within a more secure environment of a structural approach in a teacher directed classroom.

As mentioned previously, while the negotiation of meaning can trigger the use of learning strategies by the learner, Koprowski (1999)

warns that learners also seem to operate on a "least effort" principle. This means that some language learners as well as native speakers say only what is necessary for communication to proceed. Foster's (1998, cited in Koprowski 1999) classroom research discovers that learners may take a "pretend and hope" strategy when they are confronted with a gap in understanding. Learners may fake comprehension and hope that a future utterance clears things up.

This tendency appears to greatly undermine the very value of negotiation of meaning for acquisition. Therefore, it seems that language learners in the communicative classroom need to be encouraged to utilize both communication and learning strategies to promote the occurrence of language acquisition through negotiation of meaning.

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Appendix 1:

What are your preferences?? Tell me!!

1. When I use English in conversations, I feel:
Hesitant__   Comfortable__   Confident__   Talkative__

2. I prefer working in groups or pairs to working individually.
Very much agree__   Agree__   Undecided__ Disagree__
Totally Disagree__
Why?
 _____

3. I like it when the teacher asks my opinion in class.
Very much agree__   Agree__   Undecided__ Disagree__
Totally Disagree__

4.I like to be involved in activities that encourage me to take risks
and negotiate meaning.
Very much agree__   Agree__   Undecided__ Disagree__
Totally Disagree__

5. I like
_____

6. I believe learning the grammar structure is:
Difficult__   boring__   important__ not important_____

7. Do you find exercises where grammar structures have not been
presented challenging or threatening? Why?
_____
_____
_____
_____

8. Describe in a sentence or two your feelings about studying English.

_____
_____

9. Describe briefly the steps you take when you don't understand the meaning of a word.

_____
_____

10. Do you think classroom activities should focus more on:

fluency__, accuracy__, both___

Why?_____

11. Do you do any of the following activities after class in order to improve your language?

read newspapers in English?	YES / NO
talk on the phone to native speakers?	YES / NO
watch TV?	YES / NO
read books in English?	YES / NO
chat or e-mail in English?	YES / NO

Other:_____

12. Background information:

* Where do you live?_____
* When were you born?_____
* Education level: high school__ technical__university__
* What language do you speak at home?

   _____

* Who with?_____
* How long?_____

Appendix 2:

Strategies that help you understand and communicate

I-What do you do when you don't understand something? Which of these strategies do you think help you in order to say what you want to say?

1. **Comprehension checks**: expressions designed to establish if the speakers' sentence has been understood by the other person.
A) I was *chuffed.* Know what I mean?

2. **Clarification requests**: any expression that asks for clarification of the sentence or word that was just said by the other person.

A) I was chuffed.	A) I go to the beach
B) Uh?	B) You what??
A) Really pleased.	A) I went to the beach.

3. **Confirmation checks**: expression immediately following the speaker's words intended to confirm that the sentence was understood or heard correctly.
A) I was chuffed.
B) You were pleased?
A) Yes.

4. **Recasts**: it's a word or words that rephrase a sentence by changing one or more components (subject, verb or object) while still referring to its central meaning.
 A) I go to the cinema at weekend.
 B) You *went* to the cinema. What did you see?
 A) Gladiators. It was great.

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Select the strategies that you use the most with number 1, and continue with 2, 3, and 4 being the one that you think you use the least.

Comprehension checks:__Clarification requests:__
Confirmation checks:_Recasts_

II- When you can't remember a word or cannot think of the right word to communicate, what do you do?

We can identify the following communication strategies so we can transmit the message we want:
- Reduction strategies: Where the learner abandons a specific message and simply does not communicate.
- Achievement strategies: where the learner decides to keep the original communicative goal and tries to replace the word he/she does not know, using one of the following forms:
- approximation, for example: "worm" is substituted for "silkworm".
- paraphrase, for example: "it sucks air" is substituted for "vacuum cleaners"
- word coinage, for example, substituting "picture place" for "gallery"
- conscious transfer, for example, constant use of the first language by literally translating a first language expression
- ask for help
- mime

Name: _____

Teacher: _____

I. ♪ **SECTION A: Listen to your teacher and choose the best response.**

1. a. For me? Oh! You shouldn't have.
   b. For me? Oh! You should.
   c. For me? Oh! You can.
   d. Did you really want?

2. a. The gas station? It's over there.
   b. There's no mobility in the area.
   c. You mean, my cell phone? Sure.
   d. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have.

3. a. OK. I have it in my appointment book.
   b. All right. I'll put it up then.
   c. OK. Let me give it away.
   d. Sure. I'll call him.

4. a. That's my new kitchen.
   b. Oh, some new flowers.
   c. Yeah, big bedroom, isn't it?
   d. A new block of flats.

5. a. Yes. Hardly.
   b. Yes. Profusely.
   c. Yes. Lately.
   d. Yes. Hysterically.

♪ **SECTION B: In class you heard part of a theatre play (The importance of being Ernest). You will now hear part of another famous play: Pygmalion. You may have heard about "My Fair Lady". This is the original play on which the movie is based. Listen and circle.**

1. When Mrs. Pearce tells Higgins about the visitor it is clear
   a. that she disapproves of her.
   b. that she is unused to having strange people in the house.
   c. that she is sure Higgins will want to see her.
2. How does Higgins feel when Mrs. Pearce tells him about the visitor?
   a. Angry
   b. Bored
   c. Interested
3. What does Higgins want to do once he recognizes the visitor?
   a. Send her away.
   b. Record her.
   c. Find out the reason for her visit.
4. What does Eliza think about her money?
   a. It is a pity to waste it on taxis.
   b. That Higgins will want to earn some of it.
   c. Higgins will want to teach her for nothing.
5. What does Eliza think when Higgins calls her a baggage?
   a. She is a lady.
   b. Her treatment has been unfair.
   c. Shell never find a job in a shop.

Pygmalion

1. Mrs. Pierce
2. Flower girl
3. Higgins
4. Pickard
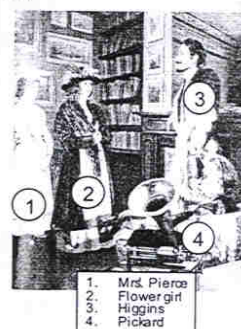
II. ✎ **Look at the pictures and read the situations. Write appropriate conversations.**

Cellphone?
Winshield?
Sidewalk?

1. A friend of yours from England is confused about some terms in American English. Help him/her.

A: _____

B: _____

A: _____
_____
_____

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2. You just read in the paper an article about someone who is good at business. Discuss with a friend what you think it takes to be a good business person.

A: _____

B: _____

A: _____

_____

_____

BUY! **DEAL!** **SPEND!**

3. Tell a friend what, in your opinion, is the role of advertising in the present society.

A: _____

B: _____

A: _____

_____

4. A friend of yours is having trouble with a writing activity. He/She wants to know how to say "speak" in at least 3 different ways. Help your friend by giving him/her illustrative examples.

A: _____

B: _____

A: _____

_____

Growl? Screech? Yelp? Snap?

III. ❦ SECTION A: Express these ideas in a different way.

1. I felt fine until Friday, when I caught hepatitis.
   I felt fine until Friday, when I went [   ]

2. I'm just waiting for all my furniture to arrive. Then I'll be established.
   I'm just waiting for all my furniture to arrive. Then I'll be [   ]

3. These instructions are too complicated. I can't understand them.
   These instructions are too complicated. I can't work [   ]

4. Hey guys! What are you doing there?
   Hey guys! What are you getting [?   ]

5. Remember to submit your homework next week.
   Remember to hand [   ]

SECTION B: Complete the expressions using a form of the word in parenthesis. (Items 3 to 5 are on p. 4)

1. His money _____ mostly in private corporations. (INVEST)

2. _____ ever _____ while he was alive? (TRAVEL)

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3. _____ a lot of spam on my mail recently. (GET)

4. We can't go in that room. It's now _____. (REDECORATE)

5. Jane _____ Tricia very tight, when suddenly Tricia let go. (HOLD)

IV. 👁 **In class, you read about success stories of immigrants to the U.S. Now read this story of a couple who succeeded in the same country and decide if the statements that follow are TRUE or FALSE.**

Hispanic Woman's "American Dream" Story:
Restaurateur Laura Sanchez

Laura Sanchez laughs. It is not the laugh of triumph or self satisfaction that might be expected from a woman who has gone from bartender to owner of three successful restaurants/institutions in the Hispanic community that are loved by loyal diners from all parts of the city and appreciated by food critics. It is the laugh of someone who enjoys life, people, and appreciates a combination of hard work and the human condition of all the people she has come into contact with over the years, and the ones she surrounds herself with today.

Just twenty-two years earlier, Laura Sanchez and her husband, Oscar, had $1250 in their pocket, two children, and a dream to own a restaurant. One day, Oscar announced to Laura that he purchased a restaurant for a mere $1200. With $50 remaining, the couple began their journey as restaurateurs, opening Dallas' original Mexican seafood restaurant, La Calle Doce, now a landmark institution. Today, Ms. Sanchez owns La Calle Doce in both Oak Cliff and Lakewood and El Ranchito, serving Northern Mexican cuisine, in Oak Cliff.

Born in Monterrey, Mexico, Ms. Sanchez inherited a strong work ethic from her widowed mother who had to work six days a week, twelve hours a day as a seamstress to make ends meet for her family of five. Ms. Sanchez applied the asset to her education and graduated from high school as class president with a full scholarship to Warren Wilson College in North Carolina. After two years, Ms. Sanchez returned home to help her mother with finances.

In 1971, her family moved to Dallas where she met her husband, Oscar. She began her restaurant training as a bartender at a high-end hamburger joint called Hamburgers by Jamies where Oscar was the manager. After a six year hiatus when her two children, Oscar and Silka, were born, she came to a turning point in her life.

"I went to Opporto, a fine dining restaurant that featured lobster. I noticed two things: the enthusiasm of our waitress and that she was pushing a cart of food rather than carrying a tray. I knew this is where I wanted to work."

Opporto owner Mrs. Lee, who later became her mentor, hired Ms. Sanchez. Mrs. Lee taught her proper waiting etiquette and service and encouraged Ms. Sanchez to open her own restaurant.

Husband and wife opened La Calle Doce in September 1981. Oscar wore the chef's hat while Ms. Sanchez wore many hats during its beginning: hostess, manager, bookkeeper, accountant, mother and wife. There were times when Ms. Sanchez had to ask her mother for money to buy food and to babysit for her children, but she still always kept her family first, making family dinner a requirement. After La Calle Doce popularized, the couple opened El Ranchito, a Northern Mexican restaurant featuring cabrito, guiso and steaks, in 1983. Working endless hours every day started to pay off.

Ten years later, Oscar returned to Mexico and left Ms. Sanchez to run the show. Her ambition and determination were challenged, but she did not quit. "It was hard, but thankfully I had my family to help me. My brothers and sisters, Alma, Tala, Jesse and Juan, are still here today. Even my son, Oscar, has graduated from college and returned to help our business grow."

Since opening, La Calle Doce has received "Best Margarita" (D Magazine), "Best Ceviche" (Dallas Observer) and was included in "Seven Wonders of the World" by Dallas Morning News.

Known as the first Mexican seafood restaurant in Dallas, the extensive and affordable menu focuses on excellent fish dishes.

Oscar and Laura Sanchez, an example for the Hispanic Community in the US.

1. Laura Sanchez and her husband started their success story as bartenders. _____ (1)

2. The Sanchezes spent most of their savings in their very first Dallas restaurant. _____ (2)

3. Today, the Sanchezes own two restaurants in Oak Cliff and one in Lakewood. _____ (3)

4. Two years into college in North Caroline, Laura's father passed away and she was forced to return to Mexico. _____ (4)

5. When Laura first met Oscar, she was impressed by the enthusiasm he showed when serving her at "Opporto". _____ (5)

6. While working as "Opporto", she was motivated to open her own restaurant. _____ (6)

7. Once "La Calle Doce" was opened, both husband and wife found themselves doing all types of work, ranging from cooking to book-keeping. _____ (7)

8. Laura's siblings, and even her son, have all helped the business to develop at some point. _____ (8)

9. It is actually very sad that the Sanchezes' cuisine has not received the recognition it deserves. _____ (9)

10. According to the text, food is not expensive at "La Calle Doce." _____ (10)

V. ✉ Oscar and Laura Sánchez recently posted this advertisement in the employment sections of several newspapers in Latin America. Write a letter as if you were applying for the post.

"CALLE DOCE" IN EXPANSION
US-based fast-expanding Latin Restaurant chain is currently seeking hard-working innovative people who would like to work in a temporary basis in our new restaurant. Candidates must be fluent both in Spanish and English. CVs and letters **must** be written in English for consideration.
Please write to PO Box 1898-1873, Dallas, TX199823

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Appendix 4:
SPEAKING
An advertising campaign

1 Work in groups of six. Your teacher will give you roles.

Students **A, B, C,** and **D** work for a company called *StayWell*.
Student **E** works for a market research company.
Student **F** works for an advertising agency.

StayWell
FEELING GREAT SINCE 1989

StayWell is having financial difficulties. Its most profitable product is a health drink called *Sogood*. Sales of this vitamin drink have been declining steadily for several years. You need to develop a strategy for the relaunch of the drink.

First look at the chart. It shows how you could structure your answer. It just shows *some* of the reasons for *one* potential strategy. It is not necessarily the right one.

	Who will you target?	What package?	What method of distribution?	Price of drink
	Over 65s	New bottle	Stay with pharmacies	Increase
Reason 1	They already like *Sogood* so it will be easier to get them to like it.	It will be noticed more easily on the shelf.	It is proven that *Sogood* sells in pharmacies.	Research has shown they will pay.
Reason 2	The advertising needed to reach them is cheaper.	It will show that it is a new formula.	We have existing relationships with pharmacies.	The new formula justifies the increase.
Reason 3	It is less risky.		It shows that it is a true health drink, not a gimmick.	

Look at your role cards. Discuss what you know, and use your own ideas to plan a campaign.

2 Present your proposals to the rest of the class.

What do you think?

- What is the role of advertising in our lives? Does it inform us of what is available, or does it try to make us buy things we don't need?
- Does the enormous cost of advertising make goods more expensive?
- Think of an advertisement that you like or don't like. Tell the others about it. Why does/doesn't it achieve its aim?

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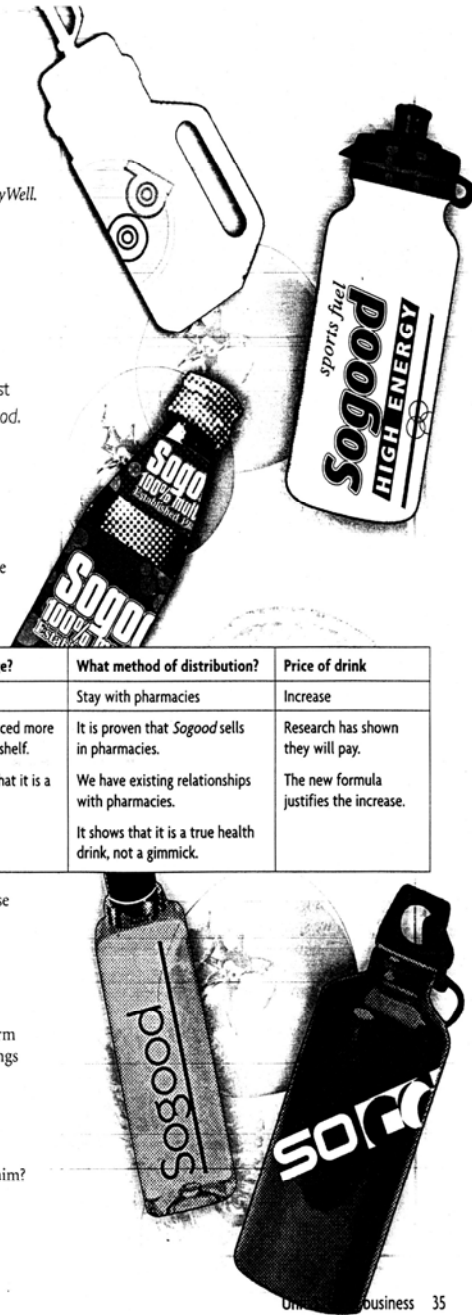
Select the strategies that you use with more frequency, being 1 the most
frequent and 6 the least frequent

Reduction strategies   _____
Approximation   _____
Word coinage   _____
Transfer   _____
Ask for help   _____
Mime   _____
Paraphrase   _____