ІННОВАЦІЇ У НАВЧАННІ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ В УМОВАХ ІНТЕРНАЦІОНАЛІЗАЦІЇ ОСВІТНЬОГО ПРОСТОРУ

A FUNCTIONALIST VIEW OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING

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У статті розглянуто сучасні підходи до викладання іноземної мови. На основі аналізу наукової літератури визначено сутність, основи, принципи, засоби і методи реалізації функціонального та комунікативного підходів до навчання мови, які допомагають засвоїти мову як засіб спілкування на основі практичного використання мовного матеріалу. Автор пропонує лінгвістичне обґрунтування викладання другої мови за допомогою чітко окреслених завдань. Увага акцентується на навчанні вибору із системи мовних засобів функціонально взаємозалежних форм та використанні їх у конкретній ситуації спілкування.

Ключові слова: функціональний підхід, носій мови, учень, теорія взаємодії, система вправ.

1. Introduction

A single linguistic form can express a number of functions, and a single communicative function can be expressed by a number of linguistic forms (Littlewood 1981: 89). According to the formalist view of language, language is a system of grammatical rules in which linguistic elements are combined, which is not sufficient on its own to account for how language is actually used in daily communication (Littlewood 1981: 88). According to the functionalist view of language, language is regarded as a tool of expressing meaning, that is to say, the meaning and communication are more emphasized than the grammatical features of language, which is also not sufficient on its own to account for how specific meanings are expressed through the particular forms of language (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 21). From this point of view, both of the two linguistic views of language have their own limitations, therefore, it is much better to take them as complementary rather than separated (Whong 2011), and both of the two linguistic views of language have implications on language teaching methodology (Richards Rodgers 2001: 20).

Specifically, the goal of language teaching from the formalist view is seen to be the mastery of items of this system, which are generally defined in terms of phonological units (e.g., phonemes), grammatical units (e.g., morphemes, clauses, phrases, sentences), grammatical operations (e.g., adding, shifting, joining, or

transforming elements), and lexical items (e.g., function words and structure words), while the functionalist view leads to a specification and organization of language teaching by meaning and function rather than by elements of structure and grammar (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 21).

In addition, for functionalists, the primary purpose of language is to facilitate interaction and communication, from this point of view, 'communicative competence' lies at the centre of the functionalist approach to language. 'Communicative competence' means the ability to effectively communicate in oral or face-to-face interaction, that is, understanding what is said to you and being able to make yourself understood, as Hymes (1971) said, «communicative competence also refers to the appropriacy that when to speak, when not, … what to talk about with whom, when, where and in what manner» (cited in Thornbury 2006: 37), which is a broader conception different from the narrower term 'linguistic competence' by Chomsky (1957). Thus, communicative competence as the object fuels the development of communicative language teaching (Mitchell 1988; Whong 2013). And there are two versions of communicative language teaching, one is the weak version that people learn a language and then put it into communication use, and the other one is the strong version that communication comes first and people learn a language by using it for functional purposes (Thornbury 2006: 36), which is also regarded as the underlying rationale of task-based language teaching.

In a word, from the functionalist view of language, task-based language teaching places communication and functional use of language as the core of teaching procedures by making the task as the basic unit for language planning and teaching (Burns and Richards 2012: 133), furthermore, the communicative task is the activity focusing on meaning and real-life language use (Skehan 1996), in which learners comprehending, manipulating, producing and interacting the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form (Nunan 1989: 10).

2. Input, Output and Interaction

The interaction hypothesis (Gass 1997; 2003; Long 1981, 1983; Pica 1992; 1994; 1996), one of second language acquisition theories, includes some aspects of the input hypothesis (Krashen 1985) together with the output hypothesis (Swain 1985, 1995, 2000, 2005), and accounts for second language learning through the coaction of comprehensible input, production of language (i.e., modified output), and negotiation of meaning (e.g., negative and positive feedback, recasts) facilitated by the interaction between learners and other native or nonnative speakers (Sanz 2005: 207).

As one of the first second language acquisition studies to investigate the role of input, Krashen (1985) has proposed the formula 'i+1' to suggest that second language acquisition will automatically occur when the input of the target language is comprehensible on the basis of learners' current language level. The relative effectiveness of interactional modified input on second language comprehension and acquisition have been examined by a number of studies (e.g., Ellis and He 1999; Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki 1994; Gass and Varonis 1994). For example, Pica, Young and Doughty (1987) have compared the comprehension of 16 learners of English as a second language during an object placement task under two conditions. In the first

condition, the learners received pre-modified input which contained more frequent vocabulary items and less complex sentence structures, while in the second condition, the learners were given the opportunity to interact with the native speaker when they experienced difficulties in comprehension, which is considered as interactional modified input. And the findings have revealed that interactional modified input leads to significantly greater comprehension. Loschky (1994) has conducted a similar study of 41 beginning-level learners of Japanese as a second language in order to investigate the effect of interactional modified input on facilitating the com-prehension or acquisition of Japanese vocabulary and locative constructions. The learners were assigned to three groups according to the three types of input, that is, the unmodified input, the pre-modified input, and the interactional modified input. By comparing the scores of pretest and posttest on a vocabulary test and a sentence verification section, the results have showed that the interactional modified input group receive significantly higher scores on the vocabulary test than both the other two unmodified and pre-modified input groups, although there were no significant differences between groups on the sentence verification test, which leads to the conclusion that interaction facilitates the comprehension of vocabularies but not the acquisition of the grammatical structure. Therefore, the interactional modified input is needed in second language acquisition, which can facilitate learners' comprehension of the target language and cater to learners' real-time communication (Sanz 2005: 209-210).

However, the comprehensible input is necessary but not sufficient for second language acquisition, producing output is also crucial in second language acquisition (Gass and Mackey 2012), that is to say, if learners do not have regular opportunities to speak or write the target language as output, their production of language would be considerably behind their comprehension of language, which proposes the output hypothesis (e.g., Swain 2005; White 1991). A number of studies (e.g., Gass and Mackey 2002; McDonough 2005) have also been done to investigate the relationship between output and second language acquisition, and several functions of output have been found. Specifically, giving learners opportunities to practice the target language (e.g., Swain 2005), promoting fluency or automatization of the target language (e.g., de Bot 1996), leading learners' attention to their linguistic problems in the target language which means noticing the gap between what learners want to say and what learners can say (e.g., Swain 1995), encouraging the processing of the target language syntactically besides semantically (e.g., Swain and Lapkin 1995; Shehadeh 2003; Swain 2000) (cited in Sanz 2005: 215-218).

With equal importance on input and output, the final component of the interaction hypothesis is the idea that breakdown in communication will lead to an enhancement of negotiation (Whong 2013: 119). Learners work to achieve comprehensibility of what is said by clarifying misunderstandings result from insufficient or faulty linguistic knowledge during the process of negotiation of meaning (Dekeyser 2007: 89-90). Many studies have worked on exploring how interaction in negotiation of meaning promotes learners' comprehensible input and output during second language acquisition (e.g., Gass and Varonis 1985, 1989; Doughty and Varela 1998; Pica 1996; Gass, Mackey and Pica 1998; Shehadeh 1999). For example, Pica (1994, 1996)

has described the contribution of negotiation of meaning to second language learning, and concluded that negotiation of meaning not only facilitates comprehension of second language input but also serves to draw learners' attention to second language meaning-form relationship. Gass (1997) has also described how negotiation of meaning facilitates second language learning by triggering clarification and elaboration of the input, which claims that negotiation of meaning provides learners with enhanced and salient input, and draws learners' attention to linguistic problems. In the study of van den Branden (1997), the effects of various types of negotiation such as negotiation of meaning and negotiation of forms on second language learners output has been examined, and the results has indicated that negotiations push learners to modify their output semantically and, in particular, lexically. Since in the interaction between learners and native speakers, learner-initiated negotiation often leads to the provision of modified input by the interlocutor, while native speaker-initiated negotiation often leads to the production of modified output by the learner, «negotiation triggering interaction between learners and native speakers facilitates second language acquisition because comprehensible input and output in productive ways are connected in the process of negotiation» (Long 1996: 451-452).

To sum up, learners and native speakers provide and interpret their comprehensible input and output by interaction in negotiation of meaning with an effort to successful communication (Long 1996: 418) according to the interaction hypothesis. And the short-term and long-term effects of interaction on second language acquisition have been supported by numerous empirical studies (e.g., Gass and Mackey 2007; Mackey 2007a, 2007b; Mackey and Gass 2006; Keck et al 2006; Mackey and Goo 2007; Russell and Spada 2006). Since for the functionalists, language will develop through interaction and meaningful communication (Halliday 2004; Butler 2003; cited in Whong 2011: 129), in other words, learners acquire a second language through the process of interacting, negotiating and conveying meanings in the language in purposeful situations, the interaction hypothesis attempting to account for second language acquisition through learner's exposure to language, production of language, and negotiation on that production also has pedagogical implications on task-based second language teaching in which meaningful interaction and negotiation between two or more speakers can take place.

3. Pedagogical Implications on Task-based Language Teaching

In light of research on the role of interaction in second language learning (e.g., Pica, Kanagy and Falodun 1993; Lightbown 2000; Ellis 1997, 2003), researchers have increasingly come to the conclusion that interactional modified input, output and negotiation of meaning can be incorporated into the task-based second language teaching (Sanz 2005: 218-220), that is to say, learners will have to work through the gaps in their comprehension and production by engaging in actual, communicative, and meaningful tasks (Whong 2011: 130). For instance, in the study of Mackey (1999, cited in Ritchie and Bhatia 2009: 450) involving three tasks (i.e., a picture-drawing task, a story-completion task, and a story-sequencing task), students who actively participated in conversational interaction not only performed better in acquiring English question formation than students who had no interaction, but also

maintained their advantages on delayed posttests. Muranoi (2000) has reported that a problem-solving task has positive effect on guiding learners to modify and restructure their output by providing interactional modifications.Task-based language teaching involves essential real communication for language learning, in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks in order to promote learning (Willis and Willis 2007), and tasks have been defined in various ways, ranging from «a piece of work that must be completed (Gass 1997: 152) to more elaborate operationalizations that include mentions of objectives, outcomes, and connections to authentic activities» (Bygate, Skehan and Swain 2001). Generally speaking, a task in the pedagogical context refers to a work plan involving information that learners are required to process and use, and some instructions relating to what outcome the learners need to achieve (Ellis 2003), however, more specifically, tasks can be regarded as «bounded classroom activities in which learners learn a language by using the language communicatively to achieve an outcome» (Bygate 1999: 186).

A number of studies with both children and adults (e.g., Gass and Varonis 1994; Polio and Gass 1998; Silver 2000; Mackey 1999), both in classroom (e.g., Doughty and Varela 1998; Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki 1994; Mackey 2000, 2006; Oliver 2000; Storch 2002), and in laboratory settings (e.g., Ayoun 2001; Braidi 2002; Gass and Varonis 1994; Han 2002; Iwashita 2003; Leeman 2003; Long, Inagaki and Ortega 1998; Mackey 1999; Mackey and Oliver 2002; Mackey, Oliver and Leeman 2003; Mackey and Philp 1998; Oliver 1998; Philp 2003) have been conducted to define how interaction in task-based language teaching impacts second language production and learning. Keck et al. (2006) has used a meta-analysis to synthesize the previous findings of all experimental, task-based interaction studies published between 1980 and 2003 with the aim to investigate the link between task-based interaction and the acquisition of specific linguistic features, and the results have showed that the experimental groups receiving tasked interaction substantially perform better than control and comparison groups in both lexical and grammar on immediate and delayed posttests (Norris and Ortega 2006: 92). Furthermore, there are also some new findings on the relationship of task-based interaction and second language learning. For example, the study of Marzban and Mojgan (2013) has investigated the effect of the opinion gap task on the speaking ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners using a quasi-experimental design in which the participants in the experimental group received the treatment while the students in the control group received the conventional method. An oral interview was used both as the pretest and posttest, and the results have indicated that the opinion gap task enhances Iranian intermediate EFL learners speaking ability. Kitajima (2013) has done a study investigating the sequential environments where repair negotiations occur between native speakers and nonnative speakers on two types of tasks, one is the information gap task and the other one is personal information exchange task, in order to understand the interactional features of repair negotiation entailed with both those task types and their potential influence on learners interlanguage development. Shegar, Zhang and Low (2013) have conducted a study to examine the effects of an input-output mapping practice task on EFL learners acquisition of two grammatical structures (i.e., the 3rd person singular «s» morpheme and do/auxiliary

wh-questions) in unplanned language use among 34 English learners of Asian backgrounds. The input-output mapping practice task comprised a series of language activities involving consciousness-raising (C-R), production practice, and recasts to facilitate the acquisition of the target structures. And the results have revealed that the input-output mapping practice task has a significant and long-term impact on the acquisition of the two structures, in addition, the meaning-focused activities and exposure with the control group have a significant and lasting impact only on the acquisition of the do/auxiliary wh-questions structure.

In short, by integrating both theoretical and empirical foundations of second language acquisition and learning, as whether learners are able to do with the language or not is the core of task-based language teaching, task-based language teaching has benefits in promoting language acquisition by providing learners with opportunities to receive input in the target language, produce and modify their output, shift their attention to notice the problem in comprehension or production, and receive negotiation on their communicative efforts and in communicative meaningful tasks.

4. Conclusion

The functionalist view of language and the interaction hypothesis provide not only a linguistic rationale, but also some empirical evidences for task-based language teaching which focuses on the interaction process and emphasizes communication and learning. In other words, second language learners learn the active use of language depending on comprehensible input, output and negotiation of meaning by engaging in a lot of naturalistic and meaningful communication activities and tasks through task-based language teaching (Gass 2003).

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