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Are the forms targeted in the enriched input noticed by learners

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Abstract: This work is an attempt in order to clarify whether the forms targeted in the enriched input are noticed by learners or not. Whiles taking Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis and the frequency Hypothesis into consideration all through the study. It also describes how enriched input works for the acquisition provided that learners actually focus on the target structure, which by itself is a demonstration of how important noticing is. While taking the results of several related and partly-related works, it tries to prove the efficacy of enriched input as an FFI option.

Keywords: Enriched, Input, Noticing

1. Introduction

Schmidt (1995) states that for a better development of second language, learners should pay attention to the linguistic features in the input1. Noticing means an awareness of the target language features and this awareness after a time makes the acquisition of these features easier.

The issue of noticing is greatly disputed according to the amount and depth of noticing which should happen and its subsequent influence on acquisition. Schmidt states that for the acquisition of language input alone is not enough, what is of great importance is the learners' intake out of the provided input, noticing and awareness of linguistic features induce higher amounts of intake out of the presented input[1].

Before the presence of Form focused instruction language teaching experts were busy focusing indirect, implicit treatment of form within a message focused, content-based, meaning- centered and communicative language teaching framework 2. Direct explicit attention to linguistic and grammatical form was considered unnecessary and sometimes destructive to learners' mushrooming inter-language systems, however, in the last 20 years, grammar has been rehabilitated, it is considered as a vital, inseparable and integral part of language teaching, quite integrated into the instruction of a foreign or a second language.[1, 2]

2. Theory and Terminology

Jourdenais, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson and Doughty (1995) understood that English speaking learners of L2 Spanish were more likely to make explicit reference to preterit and imperfect verb forms if they had previously read texts where the forms were typologically highlighted when thinking aloud during a narrative writing task3, 4,5,6,7. They also found that the learners who are exposed to the enhanced text use past tense forms more than the learners who read the non-enhanced text though both texts had been enriched[3, 4, 5, 6].

Yoshimura (2006) asked groups of Japanese learners of English to read a text under three conditions-to memorize it, to retell it, and to draw a picture based on it. It was not the input per se that was manipulated but rather the learners' orientation to the input – a different way of viewing "enrichment"[8].

He also hypothesized that more noticing would occur in this condition. Studies that have investigated the effects of enriched input on L2 acquisition have produced mixed

results[8]. Trashy and White(1993) examined whether enriched input(viewed as positive input) was sufficient to enable franco phone learners of L2 English to learn that English permits adverb placement between the subject and the verb(French does not) but does not permit placement between the verb and object(French does)[8].Exposure occurred one hour a day for ten days. The learners succeeded in learning the SAV position but failed to "unlearn" the ungrammatical SVAO position. The same pattern of results in a follow up test administered one year after the treatment was found by Trashey (1996).Leeman, Arteagoitia, Fridman, and Doughty (1995) examined the effects of input enhancement on the acquisition of preterite and imperfect verbs forms that were highlighted in written input[7,9].

The learners were ask to pay exact attention to how temporal relations were expressed in Spanish and received appropriate feedback from the teacher. Post-tests revealed that learners could outperform a comparison group who did not get the enhanced input. However, because of the instruction they received that involved several options, it is not possible to conclude that the results was just due to the enriched input[9]. Over the past two decades, researchers in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) have become increasingly interested in the concepts traditionally associated with cognitive psychology such as memory, learnability, and connectionism [9, 10, 11].

Ellis (2002) points out, "we are now at a stage at which there are important connections between SLA theory and the neuroscience of learning and memory" (p.299). The concept of attention has recently become important because of its significant function in so many aspects of SLA theory such as input, processing, development, variation, and instruction[11].

3. Awareness Dimensions

For the concept of consciousness Schmidt (1994a) identifies four dimensions1. The first is intention that refers to deliberateness on the part of the learner to attend the stimulus. Intention is often related to intentional versus incidental learning[1,2]. Chomsky (1975), for example, states that children's acquisition of their first language is always incidental since children never really choose to learn their mother tongue[2].

The second dimension of consciousness is attention, which means detection of a stimulus and basically refers to the learners[1]. The third dimension which refers to the learner's knowledge or subjective experience is awareness; it means a learner (he/she) is detecting a stimulus[1].

Awareness is often associated with explicit versus implicit learning, because learners may or may not be aware that a new structure is acquired by them. The fourth dimension of consciousness is control, which refers to the extent to which the language learner's output is controlled; this dimension requires considerable mental processing effort, or spontaneous, requiring little mental processing effort[12].

Referring back to attention, Tomlin and villa (1994) suggest that there exist four conceptions of attention in SLA[13]. The first is that of attention as a limited capacity system. The idea is that the brain may be presented (through the sensory system) with a plethora of stimuli at any given period of time, and it seems impossible to process all[13]. The limitations of attention refer not only to the amount (or duration) of attention that may be given to a single stimulus but also to the number of stimuli that may be attended to simultaneously.

This results a second conception of attention, mostly that it makes a process of selection. The great amounts of incoming stimuli force the attentional system to be selective.

The third conception of attention involves controlled rather than automatic processing of information, it is already touched on under consciousness. The underlying assumption in this regard is that some tasks require more processing effort, and so a higher degree of attention, than others.

A person may therefore perform two tasks simultaneously, especially if one requires automatic processing (low attention). By the same token, it is more difficult to perform two tasks if both require controlled processing (high attention)[13].

Posner and Petersen (1990) describe attention in terms of three networks: Alertness, Orientation, and Detection. Alertness refers to a general state of readiness to receive input19. The higher the level of Alertness, the faster the speed of selecting information for processing will be. However the quality of processing may suffer, provided that selection is too quick. Orientation refers to the alignment of attentional resources to a particular stimulus from among a host of stimuli. Orienting attention to a stimulus facilitates the processing of that stimulus. Posner, Walker, Friedrich, and Rafal (1987) propose that Orientation is made up of three mechanisms: Disengaging from a stimulus, Shifting to a new one, and reengaging with a new stimulus.

Orientation differs from Alertness in that a learner might for example be ready to learn (Alertness) but not know whether to focus on form or meaning (Orientation). Detection is probably the most important network in attention; it refers to the cognitive registration of a stimulus[11]. Once a stimulus is detected, it becomes available for further processing.

Although Detection does not necessarily imply awareness, Schmidt (2001) suggests using the term registration to refer to stimuli that are detected without awareness. Awareness as indicated earlier refers to an individual's subjective experience of a stimulus or cognitive content. Allport (1988) suggests that three conditions must be met in order for a person to be aware of a given experience. First the person must show a behavioral or cognitive change as a result of the experience. Second, the person must report that he/she was aware of the

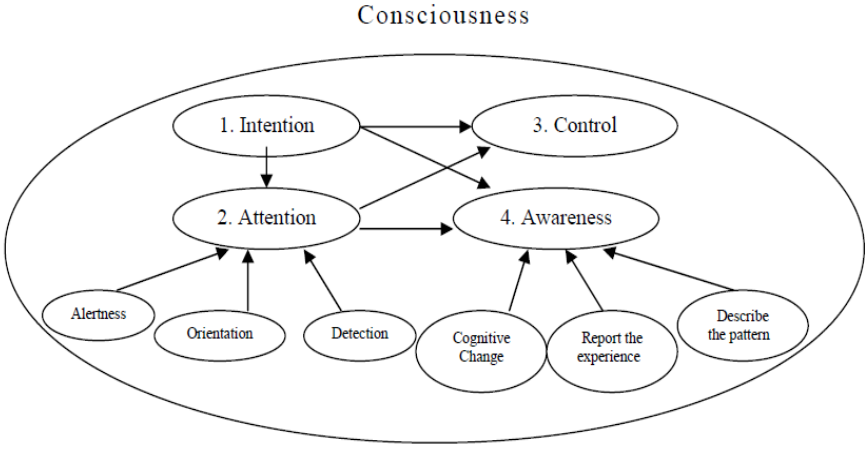
experience at the time it took place. Finally, the person must be able to describe the experience[1,2]. Leow (2000) presents a less strict definition of awareness that requires only the first two conditions to be met and names it as Low Awareness and that High Awareness is achieved when all three conditions are met[14].

So how does noticing fit into all of this? Schmidt defines noticing as the" registration [detection] of the occurrence of a stimulus event in conscious awareness and subsequent storage in long term memory…. " (p.179) In terms of the dimensions discussed earlier, we might put forward his definition as follows: Noticing = Detection + Awareness

However, since it is impossible to be aware of something without detecting it, we might as well simplify the equation to Noticing=Awareness. Schmidt differentiates between noticing and understanding, which he defines as recognition of a general principle, rule or pattern(1995,p.29) Understanding represents a deeper level of awareness than noticing which is limited to elements of the surface structure of utterances in the input rather than underlying rules(Schmidt, 2001, p.5)[2].

The above mentioned definitions are identifiable in the following figure:

The Four Dimensions of Consciousness and the Factors affecting them Based on Schmidt (1994a) and Allport (1988)



4. The Noticing Hypothesis

Schmidt's work mostly connects findings from cognitive psychology into SLA theory[1]. As N. Ellis points out, "Schmidt is one of the few linguists who have adopted the conceptual and experimental strong-points of experimental psychology in answering questions concerning the role of consciousness in L2 acquisition"[11] (1994,p.10) referring back to the psychological literature on consciousness has led Schmidt to suggest The Noticing Hypothesis[1], which states that" noticing is the vital and sufficient condition for changing input into intake"(1990,p.129)[1,2].

Since then, a considerable amount of research has considered the issue of noticing SLA. The noticing Hypothesis seems to have been motivated by a study by Schmidt and Frota (1986)[2], which documents the role of noticing for a beginner learning Portuguese in Portugal over a period of 22 weeks[1,2]. Extensive diary entries by the learner (Schmidt) were compared to tape-recorded interactions with native speakers to compare what had been noticed with what had been learned[1,2]. Their findings question the assumption that language acquisition is a purely subconscious process (Krashen, 1982)[15] , since the learner clearly noticed some of the grammatical structures he seemed to have acquired. Different results were obtained in a similar study by Altman (1990), as cited in Schmidt, 1990), who monitored her own acquisition of Hebrew over a period of five years[13]. One of the most influential attentional studies in SLA was conducted by Van Patten (1990), who investigated the notion of attention as a limited resource (Broadbent, 1958, as cited in Robinson, 1995; Wickens, 1980). More specifically, the study examined whether learners were able to consciously attend to both form and meaning when processing input. Two hundred and two participants in university Spanish classes (levels1-3) were divided into four groups. All groups were presented with an audio recording of a 3-minute text and asked to listen for content. The control group did nothing else (content only). The other groups performed one of three additional tasks:1) listening for the content word (lexical);2) listening for the definite article(form);3)listening for the verb morpheme(morphology)[14].

Performance was assessed using a free written recall in English. Results showed that the content only and lexical groups significantly outperformed the form and morphology groups. This led Vanpatten to conclude that it was difficult, especially for beginners, to notice content and form at the same time. Besides, he postulated that learners would notice meaning before form, since their primary objective is to understand the propositional content of utterances. His findings have led SLA researchers to try and find ways to help learners focus on both form and meaning. One such way is input enhancement, which refers to the

manipulation of certain aspects of the input (e.g., form) to make them more salient and thereby more noticeable to learners (Sharwood Smith, 1993)[2]

5. Frequency Hypothesis

Schmidt claims that items used more frequently are more likely to be noticed. If a language feature appears more frequently in the input, because of repeating instruction, the item will be more likely to be noticed and integrated into the inter-language system1, 2. As Skehan (1998) suggests, a form may not be noticed at times when learners' intentional resources are stretched16. Therefore, the more frequent an item is repeated, the more learners notice it.

6. Typographical Input Enhancement

Typographical input enhancement usually entails italicizing, using boldface, or underlining in order to highlight the target structure. Alenen (1995) examined the role of Typographical input enhancement and explicit rule representation on the acquisition of locatives suffixes and consonant alternation in semi-artificial Finish. The input consisted of two passages with a picture and a Finish-English glossary of relevant words and forms. Participants were 36 university-level students with no prior knowledge of Finish. These were divided into a control group and three treatment groups according to different types of input, as follows: 1) italicizing the target structure (enhanced); 2) explicit rule presentation (rule); 3) italicizing and explicit rule presentation (rule+ enhanced). Performance was assessed with a pretest and a posttest, and think aloud protocols were provided by participants as they read the passage. In terms of their performance on these tests, it was hypothesized that the treatment groups would fall into the following order<enhanced<rule<rule<+ enhanced. This pattern was only partially realized in the results as the quantitative analysis showed no significant difference between the enhanced and unenhanced input groups. However think-aloud protocols revealed that learners who noticed the target forms learned more than those who did not.

A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL study by White (1998) investigated the effects of typographical input enhancement and explicit instruction on sixth grade ESL students in a French elementary school. The study compared the performance of three treatment groups: 1) input enhancement + explicit instruction (n=27); 2) input enhancement (n=30); and 3) unenhanced input (n=29).the target structure was possessive determiners. Learning was assessed using an immediate and a delayed posttest after five weeks. In terms of performance, it was hypothesized that treatment groups would fall into the following order: group (1)>group (2)>group (3). Although the accuracy ratio seemed to confirm this hypothesis, within-group variance cancelled out the expected between-group differences, suggesting that noticing did not have a significant effect. However, without introspective measures, there was no way of verifying if and what learners had actually noticed. The noticing hypothesis states that both attention and awareness are necessary for SLA. There appear to be several problems with this claim. One problem relates to Schmidt's definition of attention.)[1,2]. Truscott(1998) point out that the definition of attention as alertness, orientation, and detection makes the claim that attention is necessary for learning seem rather obvious. He argues that since learning cannot possibly take place without detection, the claim that learning requires attention (if attention= detection) has" no empirical content"(p.106) One of the most popular ways of making learners notice the target language forms is through textual enhancement (TE) in which the target language form is enhanced through bolding, italics, under-lining, coloring or an amalgamation of the above techniques.

By doing TE the saliency of the target language form is enhanced and it is more probable to be noticed by the learner, and this noticing will finally lead to the acquisition of the form[2]. The majority of studies on TE have targeted a particular morpho-syntactic element such as semi-artificial form of Finnish (Allanen, 1995), English request forms (Takahashi, 2005), English relative clauses (Isumi, 2002), and so on and have made it more salient through bolding, underlining, capital letters, etc and have investigated the effects of these enhancement techniques on learners' noticing of the target forms[18]. Studies on noticing divulge that making linguistic forms more salient renders them more subject to noticing and the concomitant acquisition (Wong and Simard, 2000). Plenty of studies have shown that attention to form results in the acquisition of these forms (Schmidt and Frota, 1986., Huot, 1995). Researchers have come up with different results regarding the effectiveness of TE on acquisition (e.g., Lee and Huang, 2008). Leow (1997a) found no significant effect of TE on comprehension, in another study (Leow, 2001) conducted an experiment on the acquisition of Spanish imperative forms, however he could not find any effects of TE on the acquisition or comprehension of these forms. Kuiken and Vedder (2002) studied the effects of interaction on the noticing of passive in English. They formed two groups of one experimental (+interaction) and one control (-interaction), They applied input flooding technique by making the experimental group engage in abundant interactions using passive and found that numerous instances of interaction lead to the noticing of passive[14]. Varnosfadrani and Basturkmen (2009) investigated the effects of explicit and implicit correction of learners‟ oral productions on noticing. They asked the subjects to read and recite a written text during an interview, then they corrected one group explicitly and the other group implicitly by recasts. The results showed higher scores for explicitly corrected learners than implicitly corrected ones.

Krashen (1985) claimed that comprehensible input, that is, the input alittlebeyond the learners' present level of competence is enough for language acquisition to happen,

he believed that classroom activities should all be focused on content, meaning and message rather than form[15]. He later on stated that conscious linguistic knowledge functions only as a monitor controlling system for the learner to monitor his/her output and this explicit knowledge has no role in fluent language production, for example, in speaking. He believed that fluent language production is the concequence of acquired knowledge rather than learned knowledge which is conscious. Krashen's critics (e.g., see, Swain, 1985) claim that comprehensible input alone is by no means sufficient for language acquisition to take place[15].

They pronounce the indispensible role of consciousness raising and FOF activities to make learners cognizant of target forms and concomitantly induce the acquisition of those forms15. Long (1991) positing his interaction hypothesis, stresses the crucial role of interaction and negotiated input in acquisition17. Swain (1985) studied the case of immersion program in Canada and observed that non-native speakers resembled indigenous speakers in terms of receptive skills; however, they lagged far behind native children in productive skills.[17]

7. Conclusion

What seems to be clear is that noticing hypothesis can be a harbinger of success for language learners and the use of activities which incorporate it to make the target features more salient for learners to notice can facilitate learning of language forms[1]. The experts in the field recommend that curriculum and syllabus designers leave no stone unturned in embedding as much noticing activities as possible in language learning tasks. The majority of researchers (e.g., Lightbown & Spada, 1990. Nassaji, 1999 ., Williams, 1995., Fotos & Ellis, 1991., Spada & Lightbown, 1993) found a strong relationship between enhancing target forms and learners' noticing and acquisition of those forms[11.20]. What seems to be a more likely future trend in the field of language teaching and learning is the use of more extensive noticing activities in course syllabi and language tasks. As was mentioned earlier, think-aloud protocols revealed that learners who noticed the target forms learned more than those who did not[20,21].

The noticing hypothesis states that both attention and awareness are necessary for SLA. There appear to be several problems with this claim. One problem relates to Schmidt's definition of attention [1,2].Truscott (1998) point out that the definition of attention as alertness, orientation, and detection makes the claim that attention is necessary for learning seem rather obvious[6]. He argues that since learning cannot possibly take place without detection, the claim that learning requires attention(if attention= detection) has" no empirical content"(p.106) We may therefore conclude that attention is by definition necessary for SLA and that learners notice enriched input much more than that of non-enriched ones.

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