1. Background theories for teaching English as a foreign language: Outline

1.1. Psychological framework: the learner and its learning process
   1.1.1. The process of learning
   1.1.2. The process of language learning
   1.1.3. Teenage learners: psychological features

1.2. Linguistic framework: the language to be taught
   1.2.1. Universal accounts and structuralist views of language
   1.2.2. From linguistic competence to communicative competence
   1.2.3. Narrowing the scope of communicative competence

1.3. Socio-cultural framework: foreign language learning in Europe and Spain
   1.3.1. Contextual background: first language, second language and foreign language
   1.3.2. Historical background
   1.3.3. Educational policies: the LOGSE/LOCE/? documents

1.4. Pedagogical framework: how to teach or trigger the learning process
   1.4.1. The four skills: listening, reading, speaking & writing
   1.4.2. “Productive” vs “receptive-interpretative”
   1.4.3. Receptive-interpretative skills
      1.4.3.1. Basic features
      1.4.3.2. Some methodological issues
      1.2.3. A possible model for comprehension tasks
   1.4.4. Productive skills.
      1.4.4.1. The nature of communication
      1.4.4.2. Oral and written communication
      1.4.4.3. The “information gap”

2. References

SET READINGS

READINGS FOR COMPULSORY TASKS
1. Background theories for teaching English as a foreign language: Outline

1.1. Psychological framework: the learner and its learning process
   1.1.1. The process of learning
   1.1.2. The process of language learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy as...</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theoretical framework...</th>
<th>Methodological approach...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning algorithm</td>
<td>Years 20-25</td>
<td>Behaviourist</td>
<td>Repetition, memorization, reinforcement, stimuli-response chains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A general learning procedure</td>
<td>Years 50-70</td>
<td>Cognitivist (computer simulations)</td>
<td>Training of mental operations (strategies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A specific learning procedure</td>
<td>Years 70-80</td>
<td>Cognitivist (expert vs novice learners)</td>
<td>Expert models (good learners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mental action carried out with the use of tools</td>
<td>Years 80</td>
<td>Constructivist</td>
<td>Self-regulation processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tabla 4.1.1.: Evolution of learning and methodological implications

1.1.3. Teenage learners: psychological features

- Physiological changes
- Social changes
- Cognitive changes

1.2. Linguistic framework: the language to be taught
   1.2.1. Universal accounts and structuralist views of language
   1.2.2. From linguistic competence to communicative competence

Canale (1983)
Bachman’s notion (1990): linguistic competence

1.2.3. Narrowing the scope of communicative competence
   1.2.3.1. Corpus-based approaches and their contribution to the notion of language
   1.2.3.2. Discourse analysis approaches and their contribution to language notions

1.3. Socio-cultural framework: foreign language learning in Europe and Spain
   1.3.1. Contextual background: first language, second language and foreign language
   1.3.2. Historical background
   1.3.3. Educational policies: the LOGSE/LOCE/ documents

1.4. Pedagogical framework: how to teach or trigger the learning process
   1.4.1. Educational theory and its connections with dominant modes of thinking: psychology, sociology and linguistics
      1.4.1.1. Methods, their designs and ascribed techniques
         1.4.1.1.1. A theory of the nature of language
         1.4.1.1.2. A theory of the nature of learning
         1.4.1.1.3. A theory of educational philosophy
         1.4.1.1.4. A conception of classroom interaction and activities
      1.4.1.2. Four major problems
         1.4.1.2.1. The L1-L2 connection
         1.4.1.2.2. The explicit-implicit connection
         1.4.1.2.3. The code-communication dilemma
         1.4.1.2.4. The design of methods for learning
1.4.2. Our teaching model

- **Skills:**
  - **Linguistic components:**
    - **Comprehension:**
      - Oral language: Listening
      - Written language: Reading
    - **Production:**
      - Oral language: Speaking
      - Written language: Writing

- **Channel:**
  - **Direction of Communication**
    - Grammar: the starting point
    - Vocabulary
    - Pronunciation

- **1.4.2.1. The four skills: listening, reading, speaking & writing**
- **1.4.2.2. “Productive” vs “receptive-interpretative”**
- **1.4.2.3. Receptive-interpretative skills**
  - **1.4.2.3.1. Basic features**
  - **1.4.2.3.2. Some methodological issues**
- **1.4.2.4. A possible model for comprehension tasks**
- **1.4.2.5. Productive skills**
  - **1.4.2.5.1. The nature of communication**
  - **1.4.2.5.2. Oral and written communication**
  - **1.4.2.5.3. The “information gap”**
1.4.2.1. The four skills: listening, reading, speaking & writing.

Outline

"Productive" vs "receptive-interpretative"

Traditionally skills were classified into "active" (speaking and writing) and "passive" (listening and speaking). This terminology is clearly misleading, since we cannot say listeners and readers do not do anything at all when they try to understand an oral or a written text. This is the reason why "productive" (in the sense that you "produce" something when you speak or when you write) and "receptive-interpretative" (you receive an oral or a written message and interpret it) seem to be more appropriate terms.

On the one hand, the oral register is shared by speaking and listening, whereas the written one is common to writing and reading. On the other hand, speaking and writing are affected by similar methodological issues because of their being "productive", while the same can be said about listening and reading on the grounds of their "receptive" character.

Receptive-interpretative skills

Basic features

Since the material is presented or given to the listener and reader, special care must be taken about issues such as content, purpose, expectations and motivation because of their methodological implications.

In addition, among the subskills that are implied in the receptive-interpretative process we have to mention the following: predicting, extracting specific information ("scanning"), getting the general picture ("skimming"), extracting detailed information, recognising function and discourse patterns and deducing meaning from context.

Some methodological issues

Special care must be taken at the time of selecting the "input" which is provided, distinguishing between authentic and non-authentic material. As stated above, some general principles can be established which are valid both for listening and reading. In both cases it is crucial to create a sense of achievement or success, for which the learners' needs and wants, their desires and expectations, are paramount. Moreover, we should not expect our students simply to listen or read and understand. It is essential for them to do something with the information they have received and understood. We are speaking about text-related activities or tasks, which provide an excellent opportunity for integrating the other skills.

A possible model for comprehension tasks

A lead-in stage is always necessary. Then the text should be listened to/read two or three times; activities may be given at the end or intermingled among the different listenings/readings. A follow-up (text-related) task should be provided.

Productive skills

The nature of communication

When speakers or writers use the language for communication, they are doing so because of the following reasons:

- They want to say something.
- They have some communicative purpose.
- They select from their language store.
In the same way, when listeners or readers try to understand what speakers or writers say or write, they do the following:

. They want to listen to /read something.
. They are interested in the communicative purpose of what is being said.
. They process a variety of language.

Communicative activities are characterized by:

. A desire to communicate
. A communicative purpose
. Priority of content, not form
. Variety of language
. No/little teacher intervention
. No materials control

(For the "communication continuum" see Harmer 1991: 49-50).

Oral and written communication

Communication is not only oral. More often than not, people communicate with each other through writing. Teaching how to speak and to write fluently means "communicative" teaching. Anyway, there are clear differences between speaking and writing which must be taken into account. These differences affect the way in which we teach and practise them.

The "information gap"

In principle, you speak or write to somebody when you have information the other person lacks. This makes people want to speak/write. The same situation should be recreated in the classroom.