Grammar Instruction as Structured Input

Traditional Approaches to Grammar Instruction

The tenets are rooted in **behaviorism** and **historical inertia.** They are:

1. Textbooks should follow a particular grammatical sequence
2. Exercises for all grammatical features should be sequenced in a particular way

Therefore, sequence is:
- Mechanical practice
- Meaningful practice
- Communicative practice

Mechanical Drills

Mechanical drills:
- Learners don't have to attend to meaning.
- There is only one right answer.

Example:

Juan pone los vasos en la mesa. (las copas etc)

Juan los pone en la mesa.

Juan gaga los momos en la posa. (las dodas)

Juan las gaga en la posa.

Meaningful Drills

Meaningful Drills:
- Learners attend to meaning of stimuli and their own answers.
- There is still only one right answer.
- There is no new information. Everyone knows the right answer.

Communicative Drills

Communicative Drills:
- Learners must attend to meaning.
- Information in learner's answer is new and unknown to person asking question.
- There is more than one right answer.

What is the developing system?

An internal system or representation of the language the student is learning. Learners tap this system to create utterances or output.

What is input?

Input is the raw data that learners use to construct their systems. Using this raw material, learners make "form-meaning" connections that become part of the developing system.

What is intake?

Intake is the filtered input that the brain uses to create a linguistic system. It may not be what we think the learners are perceiving.

Traditional Grammar Practice

Teacher provides a grammar explanation and then students do output practice.

This kind of focused practice does not develop a language system.

Input Processing

Input Processing – psycholinguistic strategies that learners use to derive intake from input

or

how do learners get form from input while attending to meaning

Definition of Form

Form, the surface features of language:
- Vocabulary – the lexicon
- Morphemes - inflections, articles, particles (non-changing word – prepositions, Oh, well), pronouns, nouns
- Syntax – word order

Limited Capacity Models

- Humans have finite set of attentional resources at a given moment in time.
- Humans selectively attend to incoming stimuli.
- Selectivity helps brain to avoid informational overload.

Therefore, learners do what is most efficient in order to get meaning from input.

Morpheme Function	Form	Combined Form	Resulting Word
NOUNS			
Plural	-s	book + -s	books
Possessive	-s	Barbara + -s	Barbara's
VERBS			
Present tense (3rd person sing.)	-s	walk + -s	walks
Past tense	-ed	walk + -ed eat + vowel change	walked ate
Past participle	-en	walk + -ed eat + -en	walked eaten
Present participle	-ing	walk + ing	walking
ADJECTIVES			
Comparative	-er	big + -er	bigger
Superlative	-est	big + -est	biggest

SUMMARY

Examples of Inflectional Suffixes

Inflection	Frame
{-s1} noun plural	He has three *desserts*.
{-s2} noun possessive	This is *Betty's* dessert.
{-s3} verb present tense	Bill usually *eats* dessert.
{-ed} verb past tense	He *ate* the dessert yesterday.
{-en} verb past participle	He has always *eaten* dessert.
{-ing} verb present participle	He is *eating* the dessert now.
{-er} adjective comparative	His dessert is *larger* than mine.
{-est} adjective superlative	Her dessert is the *largest*.

Differences between Derivational & Inflectional Suffixes

Derivational	Inflectional
1. Always precede any inflectional suffixes. Ex: {-ize} in *authorizing* {author} + {-ize} + {-ing}	**1. Always follow any derivational suffixes.** Ex: {-s} in *statements* {state} + {ment} + {s}
2. Often change part of speech of base. Ex: *boy* (noun) *boyish* (adjective)	**2. Never change part of speech of base.** Ex: *boy* (noun singular) *boys* (noun plural)
3. Usually can combine with only a few subgroups of bases belonging to one or two parts of speech. Ex: *human > humanize, humanify, humanate*	**3. Combine with almost all members of single part of speech.** Ex: *human > humans* *pencil > pencils, car > cars*
4. Has some lexical (or dictionary) meaning Ex: {-ize} > *humanize* Create verbs meaning "to cause to become."	**4. Has grammatical meaning.** Ex: {-s} > *humans* Creates plural of a word that retains its original meaning.

Binding and Accessing

- **Binding – the cognitive and affective mental process of linking a meaning to a form. This process is necessary to build the developing system**

- **Accessing – the process of using language in the developing system. This process is necessary to build fluency and accuracy.**

Principles of L2 Input-Processing

P1: Learners process input for meaning before they process it for form.

P1a) content words first

P1b) lexical items before grammatical items (e.g., inflectional morphology)

P1d) more meaningful morphology before less or nonmeaningful morphology.

Lee & Van Patten, 2003

Examples for Hypothesis I

- <u>He</u> walk<u>s</u>
- <u>Yesterday</u> I <u>went</u> to the store.
- I bought <u>two</u> book<u>s</u>.

Lee & Van Patten, 1995

L2 Input-Processing (P1d) Example

P1d: For learners to process form that is not meaningful, they must be able to process informational or communicative content at no or little cost to attention.

Example: El sombrero es rojo.

Lee & Van Patten, 2003

L2 First Noun Principle 2

P2: Learners tend to process input strings as agent-action-object or subject-verb-object, assigning agent or subject status to the first noun phrase they encounter.

Lee & Van Patten, 2003

Example for Principle II

P2 learners interpret -

Lo saluda la mujer

As

He greets the woman

Instead of

The woman greets him.

Lee & Van Patten, 2003

Example for P2b – Event Probability

The horse was kicked by the cow

is interpreted as

The horse kicked the cow.

Lee & Van Patten, 1995

Hypotheses
L2 Input-Processing Strategies

H4: Learners may process phrases and recurring patterns as whole unanalyzed chunks, especially if phonological properties help to delimit these phrases.

Lee & VanPatten, 1995

Processing Instruction (PI)

Learners are:
- given information about a linguistic form.
- informed that certain processing strategies may negatively affect learning of forms.
- pushed to process forms with structured input activities.

Examples of Processing Instruction

- Verb Morphology
  - *Je ne crois pas que vous parliez de lui comme ça.*
- Adjective Agreement
  - *El sombrero es rojo.*
- Word Order
  - *Jean fait promener le chien à Marie.*
  - *Nos faltan varios libros.*

Guidelines for Structured Input

- Present one thing at a time.
- Keep meaning in focus
- Move from sentences to connected discourse
- Use Both oral and written input
- Learners do something with input
- Keep learner's processing strategies in mind

Types of Activities for Structured Input

- Binary Options
- Matching
- Supplying Information
- Selecting Alternatives
- Surveys
- Ordering and Ranking