THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR

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In Spain, during the 1980s, the communicative approach was adopted in most educational institutions related to the teaching of English as a foreign language. Today, nobody would dare to say she does not teach in a communicative way. Nevertheless, reality is somewhat different and the real sense of Communicative Language Teaching is often misunderstood. Furthermore, different critical positions have frequently been adopted by applied linguists and teachers.

The purpose of this paper is to examine a number of theoretical principles concerning the teaching of English grammar in EFL contexts. Section One begins with an examination of the strengths and drawbacks of product and process approaches. I will argue that there is no single right methodology for the teaching of grammar and will advocate a variable balance between product and process perspectives. Section Two will give recognition to the role of individual differences in learning style. In Section Three, I will focus on the relationship between instruction and second language learning. I will suggest that learners require formal instruction and informal exposure and that the two together work better than either on its own. Finally, Section Four considers the role of consciousness-raising in the acquisition of grammatical structure. It examines the question of whether second language learning is conscious or unconscious. I do not intend to ignore the relevance of uncon-

scious processes, but I will argue for a serious reassessment of the notion of consciousness and its role in language learning.

1. PRODUCT AND PROCESS APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR

Among the various ways of exploiting grammar in the classroom, product and process approaches have been enormously influential in language teaching.

Whether the focus is form, function or skills, product approaches segment the target language into discrete linguistic items for presentation one at a time. The assumption behind such approaches seems to be that language is analysable into a finite set of rules which can be combined in various ways to make meaning. Moreover, these approaches rely "on learners' assumed ability to learn a language in parts . . . which are independent of one another, and also to integrate, or synthesize, the pieces when the time comes to use them for communicative purposes" (Crookes and Long 1992: 28). Rutherford (1987: 4) calls this the "accumulated entities" view of language learning. Product approaches focus on what is to be learned (i.e. L2), on the knowledge and skills which learners should gain as a result of instruction.

However, product approaches have been the object of the following criticisms:

a. Samples of the target language lack authenticity. It is also difficult to isolate and present one discrete item at a time, especially if teachers want to provide some sort of context for the language.

b. SLA research offers little evidence to support the model of language acquisition that product approaches assume. Learning does not occur in simple additive fashion. Nor could immediate targetlike mastery of the linguistic form be attained. However, progress in one area depends on progress in the others. Studies of language acquisition demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that learning is an active process of gradually working things out. The L2 learner progresses along the interlanguage continuum, which consists of formulation and reformulation of hypotheses about how language works. Learners do not jump from one stage to the next. Rather, learning grammatical forms involves a gradual revision and re-structuring of the interim hypotheses to accommodate new systems about the target language. Furthermore, "progress is often not even unidirectional. SLA frequently involves temporary 'deterioration' in learner performance (so-called

backsliding), giving rise to U-shaped and zigzag developmental curves" (Crookes and Long 1992: 31).

c. The previous analysis of the target language seems to have priority over considerations about the psychological processes involved in learning. As Crookes and Long argue, "language learning is a psycholinguistic process, not a linguistic one"; however, product approaches "consistently leave the learner out of the equation" (1992: 34).

But product approaches to grammar teaching also have their strengths. They can provide the learner with a strong sense of direction, since she is presented with target language which is pre-selected and already systematized within a clear framework. This fact can contribute positively to the learner's feeling of security and purpose. Such an approach, it is argued, facilitates the processes of noticing and structuring grammar. Specific grammatical structures are made as salient and noticeable as possible. This perspective can also provide the learner with repeated opportunities to structure and re-structure target forms.

In traditional models of language teaching, considerations of syllabus design (what to teach) have tended to be kept separate from methodology (how to teach). White's (1988) Type A or Crookes and Long's (1992) Synthetic syllabuses will see the syllabus as primary, since the syllabus designer or teacher intervenes in the language learning process through the selection, ordering and presentation of the discrete linguistic items. Methodology is put to the service of syllabus, "directed at facilitating this internalization process" (Widdowson 1990: 119). Nevertheless, one can argue that the syllabus itself is an abstraction, a framework, a resource, a guide. Consequently, it can only give you ideas; the syllabus cannot prescribe the methodology. Teachers can always find some room for manoeuvre, even in cases when syllabus and methodology seem to be incompatible. As Widdowson puts it,

> the syllabus itself is an inert abstract object . . . , a set of bearings for teacher action and not a set of instructions for learner activity. What learners do is not directly determined by the syllabus but is a consequence of how the syllabus is methodologically mediated by the teacher. (1990: 129)

Product syllabuses provide teachers and learners with a clear outline of what should be taught. But they need not determine the methodology. Consider, for example, a case where the syllabus is structural; however, a teacher can

exploit it in an interactive fashion and the syllabus may be as "communicative" as a notional/functional or a task-based one.

Nonetheless, there are risks in taking the product perspective to extremes. We will now turn to the concept of language use as a process. In process approaches, there is a shift in emphasis from the outcomes of instruction to the learning experiences themselves. Therefore, the concern is with the learning process and pedagogical procedure rather than with the content. Accordingly, in such an approach, "there is little or no attempt to intervene in the language learning process through the selection, ordering and presentation of content by the syllabus designer or teacher" (White 1988: 47). Instead of thinking in terms of grammar for the learner (as in product-oriented approaches), we can now think of grammar by the learner. Grammar, then, can be seen as a device which language users call upon when motivated by a communicative need to make their meanings clear. In this sense, as Widdowson concludes, "grammar is not a constraining imposition but a liberating force: it frees us from a dependency on context and the limitations of a purely lexical categorization of reality" (1990: 86).

The focus will be on communication and the aim is to have learners communicate effectively. Learners will be given the opportunity for productive and creative language and the negotiation of meaning in the classroom. In normal language use, competent speakers deploy a highly complex number of skills and subskills simultaneously. The learners' language has to be appropriate, relevant to the occasion, sensitive to the other discourse participants; they may have to turn-take, ask, check, re-formulate, handle misunderstandings etc. when under pressure. Learners do not generally attain the same kind of competence as native language speakers, but they too manage to operate the systems of communication as a whole and develop the skills and strategies of the discourse process. Teachers will have to shift their learners to a situation where they use the various skills they have already learnt automatically. They have to learn to be able to engage, assemble and have access to their knowledge of the system, so that they can free their resources and perform automatically when focusing on meaning.

Process approaches, therefore, provide opportunities for learners to exploit strategies for negotiation and interaction in language use. It is argued that grammatical forms are unlikely to become internalized unless proceduralization can take place. Noticing and structuring grammar are not enough. This is where the third dimension of language learning comes in. Following Ellis (1985), a distinction can be drawn between two types of L2 knowledge: declarative and procedural. The former refers to what the learner

knows about the language, i.e. internalized L2 rules and memorized chunks of speech. The latter is "how to" knowledge; that is, it comprises "the strategies and procedures employed by the learner to process L2 data for acquisition and for use" (Ellis 1985: 164). Proceduralizing refers to the mental organization of knowledge, so that accessing is made easy. Competent language users' knowledge of the language seems to be stored in the mind ready for use, already assembled for immediate access. This prefabricated speech has both the advantage of more efficient retrieval from memory and of permitting speakers to devote their attention to the larger structure of the discourse (see Bolinger 1976, Pawley and Syder 1983). In short, the mechanism of proceduralization "refers to the embedding of factual knowledge into productions so that the products of frequently executed productions can be retrieved directly from memory and declarative knowledge need not be activated in working memory for their execution" (Schmidt 1992: 363).

However, there is a second dimension which is sometimes referred to as "procedural skill" (Batstone 1994; Schmidt, 1992). If proceduralized knowledge is concerned with the formation and storage of knowledge, procedural skill relates to the accessing and efficient performance in language use (e.g. being economical and avoiding undue repetition or excessive pausing, controlling pace, engaging strategies to be fluent). So learners need plenty of practice to proceduralize grammar in real-world language use. Without regular opportunities to put their grammar into action more or less automatically when negotiating meanings, much of the grammar learners may have noticed and structured through product work will gradually disappear. Furthermore, learners are likely to revert to a more lexical language system, which predisposes to fossilization and lack of intellectual development.

There is evidence, therefore, that process teaching encourages both the proceduralization of knowledge and procedural skill. However, as Batstone (1994) points out, process work may be more effective in developing procedural skill than in promoting proceduralized knowledge. In a similar vein, Skehan suggests that "there is the possibility that communicating meaning predominates as an aim, and that learners achieve this aim by using strategies which by-pass the underlying language system, so that they may not be driven to develop their interlanguage systems" (1992: 185).

We see, then, that there are dangers with both product and process approaches. As Skehan clearly puts it,

excessive priority given to analysis will compromise the process of synthesis and the acquisition of a memory-based fluency in performance. Too much emphasis on synthesis may well detract from the learner's ability to be accurate and restructure. (1992:193)

It would appear that not too strict an adherence to either product or process perspectives will prove satisfactory. We need to reconcile these opposites and admit there is no single effective methodology for the learning of grammar. Consequently, in the day-to-day world of teaching, an eclectic position will probably emerge. My position, as I hope will become clear, would be in favour of a mixed methodology, with a variable balance between product and process. Both approaches may be combined in different ways according to varying circumstances. In view of this, product and process should best be thought of as points on a pedagogic continuum, rather than extremes. Once again the issue is how to achieve a balance between a controlled approach to language development and the learners' direct involvement in the discourse process.

2. INDIVIDUAL LEARNER DIFFERENCES

We need now to consider briefly the question of the relationship between individual learner variables and second language acquisition (SLA). The results of individual difference research are not entirely satisfactory, since the study of individual factors is not an easy task and has often been neglected. Nevertheless, there is well-sustained evidence that individual differences have a considerable effect on language learning success in general (Skehan 1989: 136-50). This is not, of course, a new discovery. As Ellis observes, "to claim that individuals vary in the rate at which they learn or the level of competence they eventually attain is not controversial. Indeed, it is part of most language learners' and teachers' experience" (1985: 99). A separate issue, however, is whether the route of SLA is significantly affected by individual learner factors (personal and general ones, the latter including differences in age, aptitude, cognitive style, motivation and personality). In this respect, it has been shown that the natural sequence for the development of grammatical knowledge in SLA is not influenced by these variables.

Therefore, overall, it can be said that individual learner differences are major factors in determining the rate of SLA and the ultimate level of proficiency achieved. Moreover, as Skehan (1989, 1992) notes, the available evi-

dence indicates that there are learner types, who have systematic preferences in information processing. Two types of learner can be identified: the memory-driven and the analysis-driven. This distinction corresponds to the kind of orientation the learner has towards the internal mechanisms, i.e. memory and analysis, which are present in all effective learning. All learners must have access to both systems, though the balance may vary. However, some will tend to emphasize the analytic view of language, while others will rely more on memory. The ideal learning environment for the analytic learners would be an informal one; memory-oriented learners, by contrast, might benefit from a more analytic learning situation. But Ellis points out some problems:

> An experiential learner, whose natural learning style predisposes her to focus on communication, may be held back if she is faced with an input that is predominantly form-focused. Likewise, a studial learner who is required to participate extensively in meaning-focused instruction may be inhibited. In addition, learners who find that their learning style is incompatible with the instructional style may develop anxiety and so lose confidence and motivation, perhaps even to the point of abandoning instruction. (1990: 188)

What would seem desirable, I believe, is a degree of balance between the learner's affective and cognitive orientation to learning on the one hand and the instructional style on the other. To summarize, then,

> the ideal would be a methodology which adapted to the predispositions of each learner to provide appropriate instruction in each case. But where this is not possible, it is important to include learner predisposition when one is assessing what sort of balance is likely to be found between fluency, accuracy, and restructuring. (Skehan 1992: 194)

3. THE ROLE OF INTERACTION AND FORMAL INSTRUCTION IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The principal goal of this section will be to explore a number of theoretical positions concerning the relationship between interaction, formal instruction and SLA.

With the advent of Communicative Language Teaching and its emphasis on learning to communicate rather than on the language as a structured system of grammatical patterns, it would seem that teachers should focus on promoting communicative language use and should give priority to creating an environment in the classroom which approximates to the real-life communicative use of language. Materials should reflect the real world, since the stress will be on helping learners to rehearse in class what they will need to do outside**.** Authenticity is an all-pervasive feature in materials currently proposed. Authentic materials include language-based realia (e.g. newspapers, magazines, advertisements, signs) and visuals or graphic sources which can trigger off communicative activities (e.g. maps, pictures, symbols, graphs, charts). Consequently, teachers have been encouraged for some time to discard commercial materials which draw attention to the grammatical forms of the target language because of their lack of authenticity.

Teaching can be considered in two different ways: as interaction and as formal instruction. However, they should not be treated as mutually exclusive alternatives, assuming that all teaching is one or the other. Such a contrast, it seems to me, is misleading. As Ellis clearly explains,

> the instructional input in many lessons will be mixed, affording the learner the opportunity to attend to both meaning and form.... Teachers shift the focus as the lesson unravels —at one moment engaging the learners in meaningful communication and at another directing their attention to the linguistic code. (1990: 188)

Now that the roles of interaction and formal instruction have come into the discussion, we need to examine them more closely. There is no question that interaction is a key facilitating factor for learning to take place. Learners need the opportunity to communicate in order to develop fluency. The interactional hypothesis states that SLA occurs most efficiently when learners engage in a meaning-negotiation exchange whenever there is some kind of communication difficulty. Grammar, it is said, grows out of active negotiation in discourse. As Hatch puts it, "one learns how to do conversations, one learns how to interact verbally, and out of this interaction, syntactic structures are developed" (1978: 409). In conversation, vertical structures supply the framework within which grammar emerges out of turn-taking, clarification of meaning and all other strategies of the discourse process. In first language acquisition, evidence of vertical constructions has also been found in

caretaker speech: children are constantly helped in their language acquisition by typical interactions with other language-users, characterized by simplified models, a lot of repetition and two-party conversational structures. Therefore, collaborative discourse in the guise of scaffolding (i.e. learner utterances which are constructed over several turns through interaction with another speaker) constitutes one of the principal means by which learners acquire new linguistic structures. Interaction enables L1 and L2 learners to notice and renotice lexis, morphology, structures, etc., as they become salient in language use; at the same time, learners automatize their existing knowledge. This natural process of negotiation of meaning in interaction helps to make input containing new linguistic material comprehensible and so facilitates its acquisition. Thus, the very mechanisms of interaction can convert the conditions for input so that it becomes intake and, consequently, the actual L2 data can be assimilated into the learner's interlanguage system.

Another way in which interaction might influence SLA is by providing learners with pre-assembled chunks of speech associated with certain contexts, which can be efficiently retrieved from memory from a very early stage in learning a foreign language. Later on the learner can pick them apart analytically as the need arises. Ellis observes that "formulaic speech, therefore, contributes indirectly to the route of SLA by providing raw materials for the learner's internal mechanisms to work on" (1985: 155).

There have been a number of studies which have sought to investigate the importance of "comprehensible output," suggesting that comprehensible input may not be sufficient in interlanguage development. So meaning-focused instruction is said to facilitate learner output, which contributes to the acquisition of implicit knowledge. As Swain (1983, cited in Ellis 1985: 158-9) notes, output is relevant to learning on several grounds: (a) learners need to be pushed to their ultimate repertoire in order to develop a full grammatical competence; (b) to force learners to move from semantic processing into a more syntactic processing mode; (c) to enable learners to test out hypotheses about the L2; (d) to develop fluency and automaticity; (e) to enable learners to acquire discourse skills ; (f) to develop a personal voice. It can be argued that efforts should be made to present a more balanced view of the dichotomy of comprehension and production. Teachers should give learners opportunity to acquire and combine both listening and speaking skills.

In view of all this, strong claims have been advanced that SLA is essentially aided by interaction. The question now is, does formal instruction work? Does second language instruction promote second language acquisition? Some research findings conclude that instruction does not help or even

that it is counter-productive; others find it beneficial. I will now consider briefly whether formal L2 instruction has positive effects on SLA processes, on the rate of acquisition and on the learners' level of ultimate L2 attainment. Some studies of the last-mentioned point even suggest that learners may need more than interaction in order to reach full native speaker competence. Ellis points out that "studies of naturalistic acquisition (e.g. Schmidt, 1983) have shown that learners sometimes do not develop high levels of linguistic accuracy even though they do become communicatively effective" (1990: 165). This would suggest, I believe, that some degree of focus on form may help the acquisition of linguistic competence.

a) The Effect of Instruction on SLA Processes

I will review research that has examined a number of process features. The first concerns L2 errors, since they are the external manifestation of the hypothesis-testing process and provide information about language acquisition. Several studies indicate that instruction does not prevent developmental errors. However, as Skehan (1991: 17-18) notes, classroom learners usually make errors of commission (i.e. they over-apply the forms which are the current focus of instruction), whereas naturalistic learners tend to make errors of omission (i.e. they do not use specific forms). The former tendency is more likely to decrease over time, while errors of omission will probably persist.

Similarly, with regard to the morphology of a language, Pica (1985) found that instruction has some effects on acquisition by triggering over-supply of grammatical morphemes and inhibiting the use of ungrammatical forms. As Long explains,

> naturalistic acquirers . . . may be less likely to begin supplying what are often, after all, communicatively redundant and probably still nonsalient forms, especially after prolonged periods of communicatively successful TL use of their grammatically reduced codes. (1988: 123)

To shift our focus from morphemes to syntax, the results of several studies show that the effects of formal L2 instruction are extremely limited and not sufficiently powerful to disrupt the sequence of acquisition. Pienemann's study (1985) supports the above-mentioned findings and puts forward the learnability / teachability hypotheses, which claim that "instruction can only promote language acquisition if the interlanguage is close to the point when the structure to be taught is acquired in the natural setting (so that

sufficient processing prerequisites are developed)" (1985: 37). The teachability hypothesis rules out the possibility of instruction enabling the learners to skip a stage in an acquisition sequence if they are not psycholinguistically ready. Direct instruction aimed at structures which are more than one step ahead of the learner's current interlanguage may even interfere with the acquisitional process. However, according to Pienemann, instruction for which learners are ready can improve acquisition in three different ways: (a) by increasing the speed of acquisition, (b) by increasing the frequency of rule application and (c) by making available the application of the rule in a wider range of linguistic contexts. There is also evidence that instruction has a positive influence on the acquisition of variational features (i.e. those that can be acquired at different stages of development, such as the insertion of the copula). As Ellis puts it, "instruction may serve a particularly important function here as it may help communicative-oriented learners to avoid early fossilization" (1990: 158). Similarly, the results of Ellis' study (1984) of the effects of three hours of teaching on the acquisition of *WH* interrogatives by a group of thirteen ESL children show no influence on the developmental route. This study argues that ESL children follow a uniform route of development and that formal instruction will affect only the rate of acquisition under certain conditions. Ellis finally claims that "language teaching involves both 'formal instruction' and 'exposure', and that for ESL children of the type investigated in this study, it is 'exposure' rather than 'instruction' that facilitates the development of *WH* questions" (1984: 150). Taking into account much of the SLA research findings in this area, one may conclude that instruction has no major impact on the acquisition of linguistic rules. Considerations about the possible delayed effect of instruction are dealt with below.

Thus, the research available shows that SLA involves certain natural processes that can not be bypassed. As a result, there are constraints on the effects that instruction can have on the sequence of development. Formal L2 instruction, as Long explains, "does not . . . seem able to alter acquisition sequences, except temporarily, and in trivial ways which may even hinder subsequent development" (1988: 135). This fact is due, it seems to me, to the universality of the interlanguage continuum and the failure of instruction to take into consideration learnability / teachability issues.

b) The Effect of Instruction on Rate of Acquisition
Long (1983) reviewed a total of twelve studies exploring the effects of instruction. Six of these studies showed that instruction helped; two reported

results which were ambiguous but were arguably in the same direction; three indicated that instruction did not help and an additional study found that exposure helped. The studies used designs addressing the issue of the absolute effect of instruction or its relative utility, with the alternatives being simple exposure to the second language in use, or a combination of instruction plus exposure. Long interprets the above results claiming that "there is considerable evidence to indicate that L2 instruction does make a difference" (1983: 374). Further, he concludes that instruction is beneficial (a) for children as well as adults, (b) for beginning, intermediate and advanced students, (c) on integrative as well as discrete-point tests, and (d) in acquisition-rich as well as acquisition-poor environments.

Instruction seems to be especially useful, however, in the early stages of SLA and/or in acquisition-poor environments. Formal instruction also contributes to L2 acquisition more effectively than exposure. As Ellis puts it, "in general, classroom learners learn more rapidly and progress further than naturalistic learners" (1990: 165). However, many of the studies fail to consider other variables which might be responsible for the advantage, such as the learners' motivation (which may be stronger on the part of the instructed learners) and classroom input (classroom learners may obtain more comprehensible input. They may also benefit from their exposure to planned discourse, which contains a higher degree of grammaticalization, including more marked linguistic forms). Furthermore, as I have already indicated, "formal instruction may work best when there are also opportunities for informal language use" (Ellis 1990:133).

c) The Effect of Instruction on the Level of Ultimate L2 Attainment
This area is concerned with the long-term effects of instruction on L2 proficiency. A number of studies lend support to the claim that instruction can have an immediate effect, providing that certain conditions are met. Thus, linguistic structures need to comply with the following criteria in order to be teachable:

(a) They must not require complex processing operations.
(b) There must be a one-to-one relationship between form and function.

As Ellis observes, instruction directed at structures that are not learnable can produce various results:

> the instruction may be simply ignored with the result that the learner falls back on developmentally easier rules. . . . (It) can interfere with

> acquisition —by encouraging the learner to avoid what she finds psycholinguistically difficult. . . . (It) can also result in the learner abandoning a transitional construction which serves as a necessary stepping-stone to the acquisition of the target structure because she is made aware of its incorrectness. In this way, instruction may actually impede acquisition. (1990: 167)

We may say, then, that the immediate effect of instruction must be considered to be limited, since very few features are amenable to instruction and they also have to be taught at the right time. Moreover, the effects may only be temporary and wear off over time. It follows from this that instruction can have a delayed effect. In this way, it facilitates acquisition of new linguistic material when the learner is at the right stage of development. As Ellis puts it, "(instruction) speeds up learning in the long term and helps to prevent the kind of grammatical fossilization found in adult naturalistic learners" (1990: 169). According to this interpretation, by focusing on some specific property of the target language at a time (e.g. third person singular -*s* or progressive -*ing*), instruction raises the learner's consciousness about the existence of that linguistic feature. The increased saliency of that form in the input may cause instructed learners to notice and use it earlier, and so acquire it procedurally. Following Long,

> increased awareness of and attempts to use what are often . . . communicatively redundant grammatical elements may also lead to faster rates of acquisition and/or to higher levels of ultimate L2 attainment. In addition, instructed learners may ultimately become more nativelike in the sense of exhibiting greater grammatical accuracy. (1988: 120)

Ellis (1990: 170) also suggests that instruction is likely to contribute to declarative rather than procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge, however, serves as a facilitator of subsequent procedural knowledge by drawing the learners' attention to forms which they would otherwise ignore. So one of the main functions of instruction is to facilitate initial change.

It is also proposed (Skehan 1992: 195) that explicit teaching motivates learners to persist at a difficult task, since it signals to learners that they have failed in mastering the interlanguage system of the target language and that further restructuring is required.

My purpose in this section has been to examine the effect of instruction on both the rate/success and on the process/sequence of acquisition. The evi-

dence available shows that instruction may be associated with faster progress
and higher ultimate attainment in language learning. I would claim that a fo-
cus on form is probably essential in L2 instruction. Skehan suggests that
formal instruction exerts a strong influence on the balance between analysis
and synthesis, and it is a way to combat unbalanced memory-driven develop-
ment. As he explains,

> learners are not easily allowed . . . to forget about structure, when
> their tendency might be to concentrate on communication and
> meaning. In this way, instruction pre-emptively reduces the likelihood
> of inflexibility and fossilization in language development. (1992: 195-
> 96)

This argument for the beneficial effects of instruction does not imply,
however, a return to traditional grammar teaching. Form-focused instruction,
I believe, should be considered as a means to the attainment of grammatical
competence, not as an end itself. In this sense, Ellis (1990: 170) finds
evidence that supports an instructional approach involving consciousness-
raising, an issue which is taken up in the next section. However, as I have al-
ready indicated, there needs to be a principled basis for how form-focused
and meaning-focused instruction can be combined in the classroom,
something which is crucial for ESL/EFL and language teaching in general.

4.   CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING   IN   SECOND   LANGUAGE LEARNING

The principal goal of this section is to examine the role of consciousness-
raising (CR) in the development of L2 linguistic competence. CR provides a
link to the study of individual learner differences, as well as to consideration
of the role of instruction in making aspects of language organization more
salient for learners and facilitating restructuring, both of which I referred to
earlier (see particularly Sections 2 and 3). To begin with, I will briefly con-
sider three theoretical positions which have been advanced to explain the ef-
fects of formal instruction on SLA reported in the preceding section. Finally,
I will dwell on the issue of the implications of CR for language pedagogy. As
I have already pointed out, the current assumption in many EFL contexts,
including Spain, is that formal instruction has a minimal or even non-existent

role to play in language learning. I intend to sketch out what the nature of such a contribution might be.

The above-mentioned explanations are as follows: (a) The interface position, (b) the non-interface position, and (c) the variability position.

a) The interface position.
The interface position postulates two types of linguistic knowledge in SLA, but argues that they are not entirely separate and unrelated. A distinction is often drawn between a weak and a strong interface position.

The weak position, as proposed by Seliger (1979) states that "learnt" knowledge (or pedagogical rules) does not so much turn into "acquired" (or internalized) knowledge as facilitate it, when the learner is ready. Seliger argues that the conscious rules learners construct are typically anomalous reflections of the pedagogical rules. The latter act as "acquisition facilitators" by focusing the learner's attention on "critical attributes of the real language concept that must be induced" (Seliger 1979: 368, cited in Ellis 1985: 234). In this way, pedagogical rules facilitate the internalization of the salient features of the rule and also the retrieval of features which are rarely used by the learner. Instruction, therefore, may ease the way for later acquisition.

As I stated earlier, formal instruction does not, in general terms, affect the natural route of SLA; however, it facilitates the rate/success of development. The weak position provides arguments to account for both effects. As Ellis puts it, this position

> acknowledges that pedagogical rules will not alter the sequence in which L2 rules are naturally 'acquired', as their effect will be felt only when the learner is 'ready' to acquire the rules. However, pedagogical rules will enhance the speed of development, because they make the 'acquisitional' process shorter. (1985: 236)

The strong position has been advanced by Stevick, Bialystok, McLaughlin and Sharwood-Smith. Stevick's model of SLA (1980) allows for the possibility that the materials held in secondary (short-time) memory may transfer to tertiary (long-time) memory, so that learning can become acquisition. This transformation is achieved via "use." Bialystok (1979) also posits two types of knowledge which can interact. These are called "implicit" ("acquired") and "explicit" ("learnt"). It is through practice that "explicit" knowledge, which is non-automatic, turns into "implicit" knowledge, which is automatic. McLaughlin (1978), in a critical review of Krashen's model,

develops this view of automaticity and claims that SLA involves going from controlled (which requires active attention) to automatic (without reflection) processing. The process whereby the transformation takes place is called "routinization."

Drawing on Bialystok's and McLaughlin's positions, Sharwood-Smith proposes a full interface model. Formal instruction can contribute to development by encouraging CR and providing the learner with the opportunity and motivation to practise and so to automatize new rules. Instruction can both provide explicit knowledge and help to convert it into implicit knowledge. Learners, therefore, gain control over their L2 knowledge through practice. As Sharwood-Smith points out,

> whatever the view of the underlying processes in second language learning, it is quite clear and uncontroversial to say that most spontaneous performance is attained by dint of practice. In the course of actually performing in the target language, the learner gains the necessary control over its structures such that he or she can use them quickly without reflection. (1988: 57)

By practice Sharwood-Smith means "controlled practice." In other words, proceduralization takes place through conscious rehearsal of linguistic forms. The strong interface position can easily explain why learners who receive formal instruction outperform naturalistic learners through its claim that form-focused instruction facilitates development. Ellis notes that the former have two potential sources of implicit or acquired knowledge:

> (1) directly, by means of the 'intake environment' supplied by the classroom, and (2) indirectly, by automatizing explicit knowledge through practice. In contrast, naturalistic learners will be almost entirely reliant on (1). (1985: 237)

The strong position, however, does not provide a convincing explanation of why the natural order of development is hardly disturbed by formal instruction, despite the process of practice and subsequent automatization Sharwood-Smith's model advocates. It seems to me that one possible solution would be to include, as Larsen-Freeman and Long suggest, "the notion of processing constraints, . . . governing when and how instruction is effective" (1990: 325). Pienemann's Learnability / Teachability Hypothesis, which was reviewed in the preceding section, would be highly pertinent to this issue.

b) The non-interface position.

The main representative of the non-interface position is Krashen (1982). The two knowledge types, acquisition and learning, are stored separately and are entirely unrelated. Krashen claims that formal instruction results in learning (i.e. conscious knowledge of "easy" rules of a L2). This knowledge can be accessed by learners who are monitor-users when they focus on the formal properties of the L2, know the rule and when there is time. Acquisition (i.e. subconscious knowledge of L2 rules), which accounts for most of a L2, occurs automatically through the processing of comprehensible input when the learner is focused on meaning in authentic communication. The acquired system is primary in L2 use; the learnt system can be used only in highly restricted circumstances and acts as a monitor of the output generated by the acquired system. Krashen further claims that learnt knowledge cannot be converted into acquired knowledge. As Krashen argues, "language acquisition ... happens in one way, when the acquirer understands input containing a structure that the acquirer is 'due' to acquire, a structure at his or her 'i+1'" (1982:84). Sometimes a rule can be learnt before it is acquired. However, we cannot state that learnt knowledge has been transferred to acquired knowledge (i.e. learning is not a prerequisite of acquisition). So a distinction is made between rules which learners learn (consciously) and those which they acquire.

Another point raised by Krashen is that most of the grammatical rules of the L2 are too complex for the learners to follow. Thus, young children cannot profit from formal instruction because of their cognitive development. Similarly, instruction shows a greater effect on beginners than on intermediate or advanced learners, as Krashen claims that it is only possible to master easy grammatical rules. Learning, in this view, is limited to linguistic forms that are simple in structure and transparent in function.

Krashen concludes that the main function of formal instruction is to provide comprehensible input (for acquisition) to beginners, especially in foreign language teaching situations, where learners cannot obtain input data elsewhere. The role of teaching, as Krashen asserts, is to afford opportunities for communication, rather than to raise learners' consciousness about the formal properties of the L2. As Ellis comments, "in this interpretation, therefore, it is not consciousness-raising or practice that aids development, but simply exposure to input pitched at the appropriate level to facilitate acquisition" (1984: 139).

The non-interface position is able to explain why formal instruction does not affect the natural sequence of SLA by arguing that acquisition is respon-

sible for the sequence, and that the learning resulting from instruction cannot alter it. Krashen also develops arguments, which I think are less clear, to account for the positive effect that formal instruction has on the rate/success of SLA. Classrooms that provide comprehensible input will accelerate acquisition, since "they constitute 'intake environments', whereas for many learners, particularly adults, natural settings only afford 'exposure environments' and thus do not enable acquisition to take place" (Ellis 1985: 232). Therefore, it is comprehensible input, rather than formal instruction, that aids development.

c) The variability position.
This position is associated with Tarone (1983) and Bialystok (1982). It recognizes a number of different styles. Each style calls on knowledge types that vary in terms of analycity and automaticity. As Tarone (1983) explains, the style learners use will depend on the amount of attention they pay to their speech. The variability position sees acquisition and language use closely linked. Ellis points out that

> the kind of language use that the learner engages in determines the kind of knowledge that he acquires. Similarly, different kinds of knowledge are used in different types of language performance. Thus, acquiring the necessary linguistic knowledge to perform one kind of activity does not guarantee the ability to perform a different kind of activity. (1985: 237-8)

This position can comfortably account for the route finding. As the natural sequence of development is only a reflection of a particular kind of performance, it will never change. Formal instruction will enhance automatization of the analysed knowledge the learner has learnt through practice. It can also explain the rate/success finding if it is assumed that the access to different knowledge types enables the instructed learner to perform a wider range of linguistic tasks than the naturalistic learner, who is more reliant on a single kind of knowledge.

However, at the moment it is premature to make a clear choice between these positions. More research is needed, I believe, to substantiate these positions. It can also be argued, as Ellis (1985) seems to suggest, that the variability position is part of the interface perspective.

For the purposes of this section, I will now return to consider some of the implications of CR for grammar teaching. This is not to deny, as I pointed

out earlier, the role of unconscious processes in language use. Doubtless, both conscious and unconscious processes are involved in second language learning. The following is prompted, therefore, by an attempt to achieve a balance between these different positions.

To what extent should instruction be directed at drawing attention to the L2 code, as opposed to providing opportunities for interaction? Sharwood-Smith (1988) considers grammar teaching as a short cut to communicative ability. Adult learners, as Sharwood-Smith explains,

> can use conscious applications of rules to practice in and out of class and to communicate in the target language at a higher level of proficiency. . . . Fluency is assumed to come later and as a result of practising TL (target language) structures in formal and informal, naturalistic ways. (1988: 52)

Grammatical CR differs from conventional notions of grammar teaching in many major ways. Thus, Rutherford suggests that

> CR is the means to an end, not the end itself. That is, whatever it is that is raised to consciousness is not to be looked upon as an artifact or object of study to be committed to memory by the learner.... Rather, what is raised to consciousness is not the grammatical product but aspects of the grammatical process. . . . (1987: 104)

In this way, learners play an active role in the processes of the language and are not simply exposed to the final product.

There are many ways of drawing attention to form, not only the traditional articulation of rules. However, the key issue is that

> the discovery of regularities in the target language, whether blindly intuitive or conscious, or coming in between these two extremes, will always be self-discovery. The question is to what extent that discovery is guided by the teacher. The guidance, where consciousness-raising is involved, can take more or less time or space and it can be more or less direct and explicit. (Sharwood-Smith 1988: 53)

CR can have, then, degrees of explicitness and extent of elaboration. The former dimension comprises covert clues and standard pedagogical rules. The latter refers to whether the teaching is characterized only by simple formulations or by accurate, technically sophisticated explanations. As a

result of the combination of the above dimensions, Sharwood-Smith distinguishes four basic types of manifestation as far as language CR is concerned. It is also pointed out that learners are not required to have the metalinguistic ability of verbalizing rules.

As Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith put it, CR should not be understood "as an alternative to so-called communicative language teaching or as a substitute for the attainment of communicative skills" (1988: 114). It is claimed that conscious knowledge functions as an acquisition facilitator of linguistic competence, enabling the learner to notice L2 features which would otherwise be ignored. A diary study by Schmidt and Frota (1986) lends support to this view. The learner they describe (referred to as R), kept a journal throughout his five months of exposure to Portuguese in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The influence of instruction was clearly positive, since the learner obtained information about the structure of the L2 which could have been derived only with great difficulty from interaction with native speakers alone. The researchers also identify numerous aspects of the target language that R was taught but did not learn to produce accurately and spontaneously in interaction. In contrast, "R learnt and used what he was taught if he subsequently heard it and if he noticed it" (Schmidt and Frota 1986: 279). Several journal entries show that R, very commonly, noticed linguistic forms in input immediately after they were taught and that he considered CR a necessary step in the process of learning. As the diary study indicates, "R subjectively felt as he was going through the learning process that conscious awareness of what was present in the input was causal" (1986: 281). Schmidt and Frota also present evidence in support of a conscious notice-the-gap principle (i.e. learners come to notice the lack of correlation between their own interlanguage and the input as a result of the explicit knowledge they had acquired). They claim that this hypothesis provides a way to include a role for correction, and instruction in general, in an integrated theory of SLA.

Further, Schmidt (1990) supports the above-mentioned findings and concludes that conscious processing is a necessary condition for converting input into intake, and "paying attention to language form is hypothesized to be facilitative in all cases, and may be necessary for adult acquisition of redundant grammatical features" (1990: 149).

Not all language-teaching professionals allocate a significant role to CR in the classroom. Once more the answer may well lie somewhere between both extremes. The approach taken in this paper does not exclude pure acquisition, but it allows for a major role of explicit knowledge. That is, CR functions as a facilitator of acquisition by making the learner conscious of

specific linguistic features in the input. Nevertheless, noticing is not a sufficient condition for mastery of another language: the learner also has to be ready to incorporate those features into her interlanguage. In Ellis' words,

> in the main, it is the learner who is in charge of both what can be learnt and when it can be learnt, not the teacher. But the teacher has a definite role to play both by ensuring that there are adequate opportunities for meaning-focused communication to foster the acquisition of implicit knowledge and also by helping the learner to develop explicit knowledge. (1990: 196)

Consequently, it seems to me that CR is to be seen as one part of a larger pedagogical framework, where formal instruction should be conceived as a means of developing a knowledge of the target language rather than the object of such learning.a

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