

Perceptions on the Role of Comprehensible Input in Students' Speaking Development from the
Last Semesters of the English and French Program.

Julián A. Peña

Diana C. Chaves

University of Nariño

Department of Linguistics and languages

Human Sciences School

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Julián A. Peña

Diana C. Chaves

Advisor:

Cristian Tovar Klinger. Ph. D

University of Nariño

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Las ideas y conclusiones aportadas en el siguiente trabajo son responsabilidad exclusiva del autor.

Artículo 1ro del acuerdo N°.324 de octubre 11 de 1966 emanado del Honorable Consejo Directivo de Nariño.

NOTA DE ACEPTACIÓN

Firma del Presidente de Jurado

Vicente Araujo Quintero

Mario Rodrigo Guerrero

San Juan de Pasto, 23 de marzo de 2021

SUMMARY

Languages are constantly evolving, and with that all methodologies used to teach it. From the past time, the most common methods in order to make students learn a new language revolved around mastering grammar rules and constantly repeating what the teacher said. However, and with the constant evolution of languages, the methodologies applied inside the classroom now are focused on the communicative part of the language rather than the structural part making of language a matter of mastering accuracy and not memorization. Even though the communicative methods have proven to be successful when it comes to acquisition, most of the classes given still apply obsolete methods making of language a mechanical process.

RESUMEN

El lenguaje evoluciona constantemente, y con él todas las metodologías utilizadas para enseñarlo. Desde el pasado, los métodos más comunes para hacer que los estudiantes aprendan un nuevo idioma giraban en torno a dominar las reglas gramaticales y repetir constantemente lo que decía el maestro. Sin embargo, y con la constante evolución de los idiomas, las metodologías aplicadas dentro del aula ahora se centran en la parte comunicativa del lenguaje en lugar de la parte estructural, haciendo del lenguaje una cuestión de precisión y no de memorización. A pesar de que los métodos comunicativos han demostrado ser exitosos cuando se trata de adquisición, la mayoría de las clases dadas todavía aplican métodos obsoletos que hacen del lenguaje un proceso mecánico.

ABSTRACT

The field of learning-acquisition has been the basis to design learning and teaching strategies so that learners and teachers can get the best out of their language abilities. Among the different approaches to improve the language proficiency, the input and output ones have been the most relevant. As the strategies, put into practice by learners and teachers, are based on the perceptions people may have about how language acquisition works and the discoveries found by researchers, this study focuses on trying to understand the prevailing practices among students from the last semesters of the English and French program of the University of Nariño, specially from the 7th and 9th semesters where it was found that students prefer to practice and improve their skills by getting involved in production activities going against the theories and data outlined in the literature review. The study also analyses the possible implications that the information gathered may have for students and teachers to implement.

Key words: language acquisition, input, output, language proficiency, teaching, learning.

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GLOSSARY

Input.

Conceptual definition:

“Input refers to the exposure learners have to authentic language in use. This can be from various sources, including the teacher, other learners, and the environment around the learners. Input can be compared to intake, which is input then taken in and internalized by the learner so it can be applied.” (British Council, 2020). Likewise, (Zhang, 2019) states that everything learners are surrounded by is introduced when listening or reading, that is what Input means.

Operational definition:

Inside this research paper, Input is related to all language introduced to learners by means of listening and speaking considering the context they are in and the habits they frequent. All input they receive are the bases that when being acquired serve as mean of production.

Output.

Conceptual definition:

“Output is the language a learner produces,” (Zhang 2019). Supporting this, Swain in 1985 said that “there is no better way to test the extent of one’s knowledge (linguistic or otherwise) than to have to use that knowledge in some productive way—whether it is explaining a concept to someone (i.e., teaching) or in the case of language learning, getting even a simple idea across, and in doing so, he might modify a previous utterance or he might try out form that he had not used before.”

Operational definition:

In this study, Output refers to everything that is produced after being exposed to input in certain context. Output is all information that has been processed and acquired for then to be used through productive skills such as writing or speaking.

Comprehensible Input.

Conceptual definition:

“Comprehensible input is language input that can be understood by listeners despite them not understanding all the words and structures in it. It is described as one level above that of the learners if it can only just be understood. According to Krashen's theory of language acquisition, giving learners this kind of input helps them acquire language naturally, rather than learn it consciously.” (British Council, 2020).

Operational Definition:

Comprehensible input is defined as unknown but understandable language learners are exposed to inside this research paper. The impossibility of understanding a totality of language when listening or reading, makes of comprehensible input an alternative to acquire language in context in terms of functions and forms of the language mentioned. So that, learners force their linguistic knowledge in order to acquire new one.

Learning.

Conceptual Definition:

“Learning is a phenomenon which is natural to all organisms including both humans and animals. Learning affects a child’s development. A child learns new habits only through the

process of learning and through imitated traditions and customs. Intellectual skills are also developed through learning,” ((Physicscatalyst, 2019).

Operational Definition:

Learning is consciously changing behaviors as a result of experiences learners face when they are exposed to new knowledge. Being aware of the knowledge learners are introduced makes of learning a mechanic process by which they understand, change, and apply all that is new for them. In this paper, learning works hand by hand with relating previous concepts to the new ones in order to make the prior knowledge evolve and move forward to critical thinking.

Acquisition.

Conceptual Definition:

“Language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language natural communication--in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding,” (Krashen.1981).

Operational Definition:

Acquisition is a natural unconscious process by which learners internalize a second language in the same way they acquired their first language. Acquisition is understanding and using language naturally by using structures, meaning, and forms in a state of unawareness. In other words, acquisition is working with new language incomes after having related them with previous language knowledge that has been correctly internalized.

Linguistic Competence.

Conceptual Definition:

“Linguistic competences are related to the use of language through the expression and interpretation of concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts, and opinions in order to perform oral and written discussions. Such interactions may take place in diverse social and cultural contexts, which will determine the characteristics of the language written or spoken, such as the grammar, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic characteristics,” (Tarango & Machin-Mastromatteo, 2017).

Operational Definition:

Linguistic competence refers to all linguistic forms used in order to express meaning and thought. Languages are a set of oral and written symbols that being joined become words, sentences, and then paragraphs to finally turn out as a tool for communicating. In that order of ideas, linguistic competence is being enough knowledgeable to use all the elements that shape the language with the purpose of producing and understanding language itself.

Introduction

Each language is composed of four skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are interconnected making that being proficient on speaking involve understanding the comprehensible input given through listening. Many studies have shown that the comprehensible input hypothesis is crucial and necessary for second language acquisition. Vanpattern and Wong (2003) noted that “acquisition of a linguistic system is input dependent.” It shows that despite some criticisms and limitations, the theory has provided sufficient evidence to consider it as the foundation for language development.

It is well known that one can tell the level of proficiency any given person has in a given language by testing the four principal skills. However, different levels of relevance have been given to each skill especially listening and speaking, which are the ones needed for interaction and communication. Speaking has been portrayed as the determining skill to know if a person dominates one language very well under the perception of its complexity and tangibility, whereas the role of listening has been released to a simple matter of understanding.

According to the University of Nariño mission statement, teachers must have a C1 level when graduating from the English and French Program. Reaching this level implies developing the four skills above mentioned near a mastery way, so that, English teachers will be efficient to accomplish their role in the real world; nevertheless, applicants at this degree still struggle with expressing their ideas clearly.

As an answer to this problem, this study aims to investigate teachers’ and students’ perceptions about their speaking skill development by addressing the concept of predominance of speaking over listening, which has led students and teachers to pay more attention to output activities than input ones in the class. Moreover, this study is conducted for the University to

implement input as a tool for developing production skills such as speaking, and for students to reach the level asked for graduation.

Problem Statement

Language teaching and learning in the University of Nariño have been tight to the master of the four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, making of language learning a matter of learning about the language instead of learning to use the language. For more than a century, language has been a matter of concern among researchers who tried to explain, by their theories, the importance around the most efficient methods to accomplish such a hard task; however, the methodologies inside the classroom still revolve around structural language learning. In other words, students are taught to master grammatical structures, lists of vocabulary, rules for writing, and for speaking in order to correctly produce. These approaches had guided students to limit their knowledge to grammar and hundreds of rules causing difficulties when expressing ideas clearly, pronouncing, and facing new vocabulary.

In the University of Nariño, students improve their skills in the language by taking two subject matters which are called Listening & Speaking and Reading & Writing. The problematic lies in both subjects focusing totally on output activities and correcting students' mistakes, that is, providing feedback, which is a very important aspect, but it only represents a small portion of language acquisition. In this matter, it is fundamental to highlight the relevance of input activities over output ones since the acquisition of a language mostly takes place when people understand messages, it means, when people understand what they listen and read, (Krashen, 2003).

According to Krashen (1984), the development of the speaking abilities has nothing to do with speaking since speaking is the result of acquisition, not its cause; therefore, the attempt of improving language production by means of language production is fundamentally wrong.

The importance of understanding the limitations SLA learners face today inside the university is relevant to introduce another perspective of language learning. All this in order to make teachers and students see language as the development of a holistic ability in which all the important details, such as input, are taken into account to get the best results.

Nevertheless, the importance people see in learning a foreign language has portrayed speaking over listening. This has led SLA inside the university as a simple matter of learning how to speak by following a set of beliefs that have forged on what the most important aspects when learning a language are; therefore, they are acted out ignoring key aspects and principles of language acquisition leading to an ineffective, slow and poor language development.

It cannot be ignored that the students' assumptions and perceptions about how language is acquired could play a determining role in their progress resulting in different practices and methods applied when learning by themselves which could leave behind the development of some key skills for a high level of proficiency.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the perceptions on the role of comprehensible input in speaking performance in students from the last semesters of the English and French program of the University of Nariño with the purpose of deepening more into the language development they carry out by themselves getting a wider sense of how learners perceive the improvement of their language abilities.

Research Question

What are the students' and teachers' perceptions about the role of comprehensible input in students' speaking skill development in the 7th and 9th semesters of the English and French Licenciatura Program?

Objectives.

General Objective.

To describe the students' and teachers' perceptions towards the role of the comprehensible input hypothesis in students' speaking skill development.

Specific Objectives.

- To identify the students' speaking difficulties in terms of lack of input in their process of learning.
- To explore the input suitability as an extra aid to be applied for future studies rising the speaking level.

Justification.

Taking into account the set of abilities that a teacher needs to develop in order to have the necessary tools for an optimal and successful teaching process, the linguistic competence cannot be neglected as a crucial part of it; hence, it is of paramount importance to determine the most convenient strategies to achieve and accomplish such end. This paper is not to portray one strategy as the best and only one to develop the language proficiency in students, but it is to make students and teachers mostly be aware of some principles of language acquisition that are often forgotten and can enhance the expected results in students.

The present study emerges from the necessity of knowing the impact of more language exposure in students' speaking performance in order to test if this is a reliable and effective practice to implement in the teaching and learning process to overcome the challenges presented when trying to develop the language interaction dimension. This will be addressed from the information and theories presented in the literature review of this paper that states the phenomena happening for the development of some skills needed for achieving a quite high level of linguistic competence for students to be able to use the language properly to ensure a better teaching process in their future careers as teachers.

Looking at the history of research about the role of listening in the process of language and learning, it has been noted that most of them regard it as just a means for a comprehension neglecting the underlying benefits and impacts it has in the development of the other skills specially speaking which can result in better performance on behalf of students providing them with more tools for the use of language in different contexts and transmitting this knowledge and abilities with confidence in their future teaching environment.

Literature Review.

As this paper deals with language acquisition, the literature review explores two of the most important theories of SLA in order to gather information and evidence that can support the objectives of this research and also give the theoretical foundations for analyzing and understanding the phenomenon studied in this paper. This literature will state the most important aspects of the comprehensible input hypothesis and the comprehensible output hypothesis as well as the distinction between language and acquisition and some evidence supporting the principles of both theories. The purpose of this literature is to present brief information about the research being conducted to discover how language acquisition works from two major perspectives which are the input and output and how these two dimensions of language function and benefit the learner in their language development.

Comprehensible Input Hypothesis.

Over 40 years of research have demonstrated that the ideas and characteristics of the comprehensible input hypothesis have an important effect on students' language development. This comes from certain principles that need to be taken into account for students to make progress.

According to (Krashen, 1984) people acquire language when they understand messages, it means, when they make sense of everything they hear and listen. This principle is linked to the concept of $I+1$ where the letter represents the student's current level and the number represents the material containing the perfect level of comprehension and incomprehension in order that the acquisition happens. This means that if the learner understands around 70 to 80% of the material used in class, the 30 or 20% of incomprehension will eventually result in new elements of language acquired

Apart from this, not only these principles are related to the understanding of the language for the acquisition of it, but also it implies some effects on the ability to develop a quite high level of proficiency in oral production. The input hypothesis states that the process of acquisition gives the speaking fluency needed to perform well in communicative situations since the speaking fluency is something that cannot be taught directly, the only way to address it according to this theory is by providing students with a great deal of comprehensible input, and the ability to speak will develop over time.

Many studies have shown that the comprehensible input hypothesis is crucial and necessary for language acquisition. VanPatten and Wong (2003) note that “Acquisition of a linguistic system is input dependent.” showing that despite some criticisms and limitations the theory has provided sufficient evidence to consider it as the foundations for language development. The evidence will be presented in the next section.

The Output Hypothesis.

The output hypothesis was advanced by Swain (1985), after having conducted a study in a French immersion program in Canada. The evidence of this study suggests that students who take content-based courses can develop a native like performance in the receptive skills; that is; listening and reading whereas their skills corresponding to production were relatively lower. This implies that even though input activities play a big role in the language learning process, they were not sufficient for attaining high levels of proficiency resulting in the need for investigating on the application of output as reinforcement for the input received in class. Swain (1985) points out that the reason why this happens is because of the few opportunities that students have for producing language in meaningful situations. This prevents students from focusing on syntactic details which is something that can enhance their productive skills since input does not seem to

pay attention to this aspect because when students receive input, they understand it using semantic processing, their knowledge of the world and extra linguistic elements.

On the other hand, Swain (1985) asserts that when students are pushed to produce the language, they push themselves to the delivery of a syntactically and semantically coherent, precise and appropriate message even if they struggle with communication. This means that input by itself is not enough when approaching speaking development and output can work as a necessary complement for input. This is confirmed by some other researchers that discover that output can help students in the areas of vocabulary and grammar. (Ellis and He 1999; de la Fuente 2002; Izumi 2003; McDonugh, 2005).

Nevertheless, Krashen has criticized the positive effects of output on language acquisition stating that there are not many opportunities for students to speak in a teaching class environment, so the role of this output is questionable for language improvement. These conclusions were drawn after revising a study conducted by Pica (1988) where only 87 instances of comprehensible output were found. 44 of those instances implied output modifications and only 13 of them corresponded to grammar form modifications. Therefore, as the presence of the output hypothesis seems to be rare, the positive effects on SLA might be insignificant during the formal language learning process Krashen (1994, 1998).

However, De Bot (1996) argues that the number of opportunities is not important rather the quality of the information produced is what matters for students to pay attention to the smallest units of grammar that are needed for fluency, speed of delivery, and language acquisition, it means that even few opportunities for producing language can be effective.

This leads to the question if there is a direct connection between language acquisition and output. Swain tries to answer that by stating the existence of three main functions of the output hypothesis. These three functions are presented as follows.

Noticing/Triggering Function.

This function states that when students attempt to produce language, they can notice gaps between what they know and what they do not know resulting in conscious recognition of their linguistic problems drawing their attention to correct and fill those gaps in their L2. Swain (1985). Although not many studies have been conducted for testing this function, the few ones that have been carried out show that forcing students to produce language that is comprehensible not only makes students notice about their gaps but also encourages the acquisition process by activating mental processes needed for the development of language proficiency.

On the other hand, the noticing function of output make possible for students to focus on different linguistic aspects. Some studies on this function show that it has a great impact on realizing the grammar and vocabulary gaps being the latter one the most frequent. For example, in a study conducted by William (2001) it is observed that around 80% of the language episodes were focused on lexis whereas (Kowal and Swain, 1994) indicate that 70 % of the episodes were aimed at accuracy. Another study demonstrated that the growth of vocabulary knowledge is better when the presence of output reinforces input tasks it means when interaction is promoted since the production of language allows students to activate the noticing function way more than input does. (Mahmoudabadi, Soleimani, Jafarigohar, & Iravani, 2015).

To sum up, this function seems to give many insights about what happens when language is produced. Some evidence has been shown but it is not totally clear to what extent the noticing function is beneficial for language acquisition.

Hypothesis-Testing Function.

This function revolves around the idea of modification of speech or utterances by testing hypotheses. Students often make assumptions about how the target language works resulting in wrong statements which are modified eventually to get and acquire the correct form. This process should be done by producing language because the modification of mistaken utterances could not be possible otherwise. It is important to note that all these changes are done in the presence of the negotiations of meaning and clarification requests. Some research has shown that students do modify their output in the need for getting messages across successfully. For example, in a research conducted by Pica (1989) is seen that in the presence of negotiation of meaning and clarification requests one third of the utterances were modified either semantically or morpho-semantically.

Although it is not clear if the modified output is internalized in students' brains, the mere fact of modifying and testing hypotheses related to the functioning of the target language may cause a lot of positive effects on language acquisition making students take advantage of their interlanguage to differentiate between their L1 and L2 achieving native like forms. (Pica, 1989).

Metalinguistic Function

This function originates from the sociocultural theory proposed by Vygotsky which states that people operate with mediating tools. This is related to the output hypothesis since speaking is a mediating tool in society (Wertsch, 1985).

In this matter, Stetsenko and Arieviditch (1997) also state that “psychological processes emerge first in collective behavior in co-operation with other people, and only subsequently become internalized as the individual's own possessions.” This implies that every interaction that

students involve in is beneficial for learning purposes because they observe linguistic operations that come from others and become part of them eventually.

This function states that students not only learn by analyzing their own language but also the language produced by others. Consequently, it is important for learning that students work in groups to enhance their reflection on how language works. This is known as collaborative dialogue and it is proposed by Swain which consists of students engaging in problem solving tasks which promote the collaborative dialogue for making guesses about language forms which allow students modify their target language utterances, so collaborative dialogue becomes a great source of learning because some studies show that students engage in this type of activities presented maintenance of these linguistic forms worked in groups in the posttests.

Learning/Acquisition Distinction

The distinction between language learning and language acquisition is one of the five hypotheses stated by Krashen (1982). He also stated that there are two ways in which students can advance in a language. Those ways are known as learning and acquisition where the former refers to conscious learning of the grammatical structures of the language by formal instruction. On the other hand, acquisition is a process that works similarly to that of children learning their first language in which language competence is an accidental result of the exposure to the language it means it happens subconsciously. In addition, Krashen stated that learning cannot become acquisition.

As a consequence of this, it is noted that the most important way of becoming proficient in a language is by means of acquisition which, according to Krashen, has a more relevant role in language development as Lightbown & Spada (1999) noted.

As a counterpart for this distinction, there is not any way to test empirically if the distinction between learning and acquisition does really exist since it is been observed that some students under formal instruction, it means learning, get to speak the language fluently going against the claim that learning cannot become acquisition. Furthermore, there is not much research to know if the distinction between these two concepts is necessary.

Evidence for the Input Hypothesis.

The evidence for the comprehension hypothesis has shown that students can improve many aspects of their linguistic competence since this hypothesis has effects in different skills especially speaking production, acquisition of vocabulary and literacy development.

Many studies have been conducted showing the benefits of this theory in the growth of vocabulary in students especially by doing free voluntary reading (FVR). Research shows that around 75% of adults' vocabulary comes from reading. (Lehman, 2007). In another study, Rodrigo V. (2009) the amount of vocabulary between native speakers who are not used to read was compared to that of nonnative speakers who were used to read in the target language. The results showed that nonnative speakers who had a reading habit outperformed the native speakers who are not used to read. The L2 + reading habit students had a vocabulary of 40,900 words whereas the L1- reading habit students had a vocabulary of 25,500 being FVR the strongest predictor of vocabulary growth. In addition, as Van Patten noted *“for maximum vocabulary development, learners need to read all along the way, since most vocabulary development in both L1 and L2 is incidental, meaning that vocabulary is learned as a by-product of some other intention (normally reading)”*. This provides strong arguments and implications in the teaching of vocabulary in second language classrooms. Apart from this, not only does FVR have an effect on vocabulary growth, but also the benefits on unconscious grammar acquisition are stated to be

possible since when reading students not only encounter different words families and meanings but also aspects of grammar like complex structures, use of prepositions, collocations and many other characteristics of grammar which become second nature after encounter them multiple times. Song and Sardegna (2014) provide evidence that extensive reading supplemented by oral activities can contribute to incidental acquisition of English prepositions. This is important because prepositions are a very important and challenging grammar aspect for learners of any foreign language.

On the other hand, the discussion about speaking improving acquisition is very controversial. Although there are not many studies investigating the effects of output on speaking acquisition, there is no a strong one according to Krashen. In a study conducted by Kirk (2013) English students learning Spanish were taught some grammatical aspects that correspond to the subjunctive in three different combinations. The first one was input only, the second one was input and limited output and the third one was focused output with limited input. The results showed that the students who only got input did better than the other two and the ones who got more output than input presented the lowest results.

Similarly, Van Patten (2003) points out that acquisition depends totally on input; therefore, speaking as a way of practicing has little effect since production does not represent input for students, and they need to be involved in comprehension in order to create a linguistic system, and that input has to come from others.

As a conclusion, it is observed that the role of input in the acquisition process is of paramount importance and studies related to this have shown that to be the case, providing teachers and students with principles to bear in mind when teaching and learning.

Extra Studies on Comprehension-Production Relationship

There has been an interest to understand the relation existing between these two dimensions of language acquisition as they seem to be strongly connected one another, but the main purpose of those investigations relies on the capability to determine what takes more prevalence when it comes to developing overall language proficiency.

For this matter, it is important to note that listening comprehension is one of the most common language skills to be developed as well as the most used one in our daily lives. According to Hedge (2000), in any communicative interaction people are involved in, 45 percent of it will be focused on listening, meaning comprehension, whereas 30 percent is dedicated to speaking, meaning, and production. This indicates the importance and prevalence of comprehension over production. Furthermore, some research has demonstrated that children can understand complex forms without them necessarily having the ability to produce them properly since a lot of exposure and time is needed in order for them to have full control over those forms in a complex communicative context Clark and Hecht (1982).

According to this information, we can say that the process of language acquisition depends more on the learner's ability to understand and decode the information received in order to arrange language clusters that can have different combinations resulting in different manners of expressing ideas. In addition to this, language production can be improved by the exposure and therefore comprehension of phonetic unities. According to Bouach (2010), students who have more contact with spoken English are more likely to get accustomed to the pitch, accent, stress and intonation resulting in a more clear and good pronunciation for speaking.

It is important, though, that more research be done in order to establish the implications for teachers as to the teaching strategies to apply these principles into the class so that students can tell the two skills apart and recognize what could be the most beneficial practices to get the best out of the learning process of a foreign language.

Methodology

This chapter aims to describe the procedure in which the present study is going to be conducted. It contains a brief description of every step that composes this study giving an idea of how the methodology will be applied. This chapter also contains the design, method, population, and sample that are required for data gathering than then is going to be analyzed to present the results in this study.

Design

Qualitative research emerges from the idea of getting a better understanding of human perceptions, assumptions, beliefs or others situations in which people can infer meaning. (Creswell, 2014) so that, the research design applied in this paper is qualitative due to the need of understanding if the teachers' and students' points of view about speaking development are preventing students from getting them to develop an adequate speaking performance. On the other hand, the need to make students and teachers understand the importance of input as the foundations for language acquisition is fundamental for their process of language development.

Method

The research method implemented in this study is the phenomenological method. In a recent study (Bliss, 2016) found that a phenomenological study seeks the meaning people may

have about their own lived experiences, so the research will be focused on thoughts and ways of thinking in order to make qualitative research more interpretative rather than experimental.

Everything mentioned above leads us to aim our study to the analysis of teachers' and students' beliefs and lived-experiences related to listening and speaking. As a result, different attitudes have been forged to address difficulties in these abilities, especially the latter one.

Population

The population chosen for the development of this study is going to be 60 students at the advanced English level and 13 teachers of the Department of Linguistics of the University of Nariño since it is important that they have experience with the language especially in the speaking part so that we can have access to a broader knowledge of their views about how they perceive the development of this specific skill. .

Sample

As previously mentioned, the students of High English level and teachers of the English and French Licenciatura program of the University of Nariño are going to be chosen. The sample will be aimed at 11 students of 7th and 9th semester and 4 teachers who have a wide experience teaching listening and speaking, or advanced conversation I and II.

Collection of Data

The study will be developed by applying two semi-structured interviews. One is going to be designed for teachers, and another one designed for students (See appendix 1), since the terminologies change. All these in order to get a better understanding on the two sides of the problematic taking into account that teachers have more experience on the topic than students, but the students are the ones who are facing the issue itself.

Analysis of Data

Barney (2008) found that the constant comparative method helps researchers to analyze data in a more organized way by coding, and also to get a better understanding of the opinions of the sample by using the analytic procedure of comparing data in order to find differences and similarities between cases and therefore create categories from the information collected being easier to draw conclusions and present results. As Watling and Lingard (2012) stated: “as the data are examined, incidents are compared with other incidents and with the emerging characteristics and properties of the category,” meaning that this data analysis procedure is flexible since it allows to compare data as they are collected being possible to change coding and data collection protocols for better exploring the emerging categories and having a more organized and detailed information.

Pilot Study

Since the purpose of this interview is to get a better understanding of the assumptions and beliefs that faculty and students have about the role of input in students’ speaking performance, and also to get a broader knowledge of their assumptions about the methodology applied in the University of teaching speaking through speaking, this pilot study was conducted in four simple steps. First of all, we established contact with the students who were going to be interviewed. In that order of ideas, for making this pilot study 2 students from 7th and 2 students from 9th semester were asked to answer the designed interviews. Similarly, 2 teachers from the English and French Program were invited to be interviewed. According to the sample, these teachers needed to have experience in Listening & Speaking or Advanced Conversation subject matters, so this parameter was taken into account as a requirement for the chosen teachers.

After having approval from the candidates, and highlighting the pandemic situation, all interviews were made online using the platform Zoom, as an interactive tool that let the interviewer record the meeting and had contact with the interviewed. In terms of time, all interviews took 30 minutes to be done and completed in its totality.

All interviews started by welcoming and thanking their help. Then all the protocol of the interview was read to them, so they got a broader knowledge of what the study was about. The format of the interview was sent to them in that moment, so they could clearly see the mechanic of the interviews. Both are divided in two sections, one from background information and the other one from the questions that needed to be answered. When the students and teachers were ready to answer, we started by filling the information in the gaps. For the second part of the interview, and as it is a semi – structured interview there were more questions that needed to be added in order to clarify what they were trying to say. For example, in questions number 3 and 5 asking for a reason was necessary in order to get a complete answer. In question 9, it was necessary to add an extra question “Do you think that the University is focusing on listening more than on speaking?” All this in order to get a clearer idea of what the interviewed wanted to say.

It was notorious that some of the interviewed tended to deviate from the topic, so it was important to restate the question in order to get back to the point. For instance, Student A, in question number 7 was talking about strategies for improving the lack of motivation in students as a direct cause of low levels in speaking performances. “I think that thinking in Spanish, and then translating it to English is the factor that demotivates them to speak because they consider they are slow, so it is important for them and also for the teacher that the activities encourage

them to think faster.” (Student A). Indeed, it was important for the interviewer to pay attention and to emphasize on the question again, so the answer was related to the topic

Analysis of the Pilot Study

As stated in the analysis of data, procedures such as coding and comparing were used in order to get a better understanding on students’ and teachers’ answers. Through these processed, it was possible to reach the key point that supports this study and to correct some mistakes found in the questionnaires applied.

Analysis of the Pilot Study Applied in Students

Although this pilot study was conducted only with 2 students and 2 teachers from the University of Nariño, we got enough information to compare both questionnaires. By doing this pilot study, we could find that the information we tried to collect is useful and it fills all the requirements for further and broader investigation. All the questions provided to the teachers and to the students were successfully answered. As a result, we concluded that the questionnaires are ready to be applied if wanted.

These questions dropped interesting results. For instance, in questions 3, 4, and 7 there is an inconformity from the part of the students in terms of the management the university is applying when learning a second language. Students manifested that there is a lack of attention to listening on the part of the curriculum the university follows. As a direct consequence of this, the lack of opportunities they have to get in contact with these listening activities is affecting their skills development. It is also the reason why there is a low level in the highest semesters, making the way in which they communicate harder and more challenging as they get ahead. All this, leaded us to strengthen the Krashen’s theory on “the more you listen, the better you speak”.

Similarly, the level of proficiency in English is shown from the students as low since they do not accomplish the requirements for accuracy in communication. They shared in question 9 that there is a system's fault when it comes to pay more attention to the listening part, so that is a cause of the lack of interest students pay to this skill. Also, they showed that they are afraid of speaking because they think that the methods by which the university teaches do not help them to avoid the mistakes in oral communication. This clearly shows that students agree on the fact that speaking is highly dependent on listening, and that listening should be paid more attention, as well. The necessities students require to supply are on their own part, but also on the part of the university as highlighted in question 9. From this, both students agreed on the fact that it is not enough to pay attention only to productive skills, but to receptive skills since they are the key for the production desired from the part of the state.

On the other hand, students had acted on their own by developing their own activities to enhance their listening comprehension skills, but they evidenced that it is not enough to improve in the time asked. On question number 4, for instance, student A said: "if you are more in contact with language in real context, there will be easier for you to learn the real language you are going to use." Likewise, student B in the same question manifested: "it is not necessary to travel abroad to get in contact with languages, but it is necessary to create good strategies to get better on it," so that, students are aware of the procedures that we have to put in practice, but they need more space to do so, and what better place than in the subject matters given by the program. The suggestion they made to the curriculum is that on the lowest semesters, more attention should be paid to listening and to reading if they want to get a higher level and better results when finishing.

Analysis of the Pilot Study Applied in Teachers

After analyzing the answers provided by the teachers interviewed in the pilot study and comparing them with those of students, it has been noticed that the questions give us information about the different perspectives that students and teachers have about the acquisition of a foreign language. Teachers recognize more the importance of input through listening for language development as their answers have information that can be found in the literature of this study. On the other hand, students think that input is important but not as a key element for developing language proficiency. They tend to see listening skills just as what allows people to comprehend what they are told in order to put into practice their speaking abilities. This information provided us with some hints about the idea that the perceptions that students have about how language is acquired may prevent them from focusing more on key aspects of language acquisition that might increase their overall language proficiency.

Apart from the previous information, the fact of interviewing teachers in the pilot study helped us understand their position on this topic and the implications it may have for students. Both teacher's answers were similar regarding the role that comprehensible input plays in language learning and acquisition but provided a realistic outlook on this as to the possibility of implementing constant input in classrooms being very hard to apply since not all students have the same level of comprehension, attention, and interest in the same material, so the impact of input in students' proficiency may differ enormously. Therefore, it would be more realistic for students to understand that exposure to the language is extremely important and try to implement it individually according to their needs, interests and capabilities, and in this way constant contact with the language can be attained so that the effects of language input can take place.

Nevertheless, although there were similarities, there were also differences between their answers in relation to the existing difficulties and limitations of applying constant input in the

classroom. An example of this is that one of the teachers stated that input is important but very difficult to both apply it and test it as there are a lot of factors that can interfere in the comprehension results. Factors as the quality of the material, the speaker's accent, cultural background and the complexity of language used by the speaker, among others, can hinder the process of applying input as a fixed mechanism to improve language skill in the way described in the literature review. The other teacher instead stated that the problem is not only on the complexity of listening comprehension per se but it was on the students' interests in the material used, bringing up the concept of compelling comprehensible input which states that not only does the material have to be comprehensible but it has to be way too interesting for the individual since in this way its content will relate to the students' emotions. This represents a problem since it not obvious that a specific type of material is going to be compelling for the whole class resulting in totally different outcomes.

Another important difference relies on the ideal level of comprehension that students should have. This relates to the possible fears that students may have when attempting to do a listening practice in the classroom. Different types of challenges were identified by teachers stating that sometimes students want to comprehend word by word of what is said tending to point to the idea that a good comprehension level in a foreign language should be exactly as it is in their mother tongue when in fact the level of comprehension that can be developed in a non-native context is not that high. The other teacher stated that not only is the expectations that students set for listening comprehension what is problematic but also the amount of lexical knowledge students have as some of them state that the reason they do not comprehend is the lack of vocabulary and expressions used by a native speaker. This is interesting as this lexical problem can also be due

partly to the lack of input exposure on behalf of students so that more words and expressions can be acquired.

Regardless of the information collected from the pilot study, it would be necessary to apply the research tools and questionnaires to a broader range of students and teachers so that we can have more data to draw a more stable and richer conclusion on the topic. So far, the pilot study served the purpose of identifying possible outcomes, inconveniences and flaws in the research instruments chosen and designed for this research giving us satisfactory results since the questions seem to obtain specific information that relates to the literature allowing us to continue with the research.

Conclusions of the Pilot Study

After gathering the information from the literature review and the pilot study applied to teachers and students, we could draw the following conclusions regarding the direction this study could take when being applied in larger scale and population:

Teachers seem to be totally aware of the importance and the big role that comprehensible input plays in second language learning, but they also recognize the limitations it has to be implemented for it to cause a big impact in the whole class. On the other hand, students also tend to acknowledge that input activities are key for language development, but it is not obvious that they are implementing them in their daily lives; therefore, it turns out to be hard for them get huge benefits out of it.

According to the literature review, the problem some students face in their language learning is that they lack exposure to the language, since they concentrate more in output activities. The pilot study shows that even though students may recognize input as important,

they still want to improve their speaking abilities by getting involved in speaking activities only, leaving aside the idea that they need to get tons of exposure to the language every day to reach a more solid outcome, being this perspective the cause of possible limitations in their language proficiency.

The results of this research, according to the data provided by the pilot study, may point to some implications for teachers and students in language teaching. The teacher should be able to guide students with the concepts of language acquisition and how it would work, so that students can take and implement different practices for their own lives which could give them more tools to enhance and strengthen the progress made with teachers in the classroom.

It is important to highlight that the curriculum the program follows lacks from the importance that the skills such as writing and listening require, so that there is an impediment for students to get access to this type of approach. According to the results showed in the pilot study, students had no doubt that the technique of speaking through speaking is obsolete, and that having theories such as the ones presented in SLA, which show that the best way to learn a new language is by getting in touch with the language, that is through listening and reading, is the key to raise the level of proficiency in the highest semesters of the program.

Conclusions

After researching a little more about the topic presented in this study there are some conclusions founded. For instance, the possible outcomes and implications this may have for both teachers and students, as well as a disadvantage on learning on the part of the students.

Although the idea that comprehensible input is a key factor in the process of learning a new language can be agreed upon by many language teachers and learners. The limitations this may present to be applied as an ongoing and persistent method in students' lives, both inside and outside the classroom, are yet to be investigated in order to find a more interactive and sustainable way to overcome them. Therefore, the information this study attempted to get was aimed at discovering if the perspectives teachers and especially students have about language learning can affect the overall results by making them ignore important practices to get optimal outcomes. This can have implications regarding the possibility of making students a little bit more conscious about the idea that language learning depends more on the student than the teacher. Teachers should be able to guide students with the concepts of language acquisition and how it would work, so that students can take and implement different practices for their own lives which could give them more tools to enhance and strengthen the progress made with teachers in the classroom.

Similarly, it is important to highlight that students need more contact with real language in order to gain a better understanding of the second language they acquire, so that, it is strongly necessary that the guidelines established in the program encourage students to get in touch with the language itself. The SLA theories establish that the more in contact the students are with the language, the more willing they are to acquire, so the program should establish more parameter in terms of techniques and methods to support this aim since second languages follow the process of first language acquisition.

APENDIX 1

TEACHERS' INTERVIEW

Dear participant, we will be conducting a research on the perceptions that teachers and students may have about the role of comprehensible input on students' speaking skill development in the English and French Licenciatura Program of the University of Nariño. In order to make this end happen, a qualitative semi-structured interview will be conducted and applied. The interview consists of two part; the first one is addressed to background information, and the second one will be focused on your perceptions about the problem statement planted before.

The purpose of this interview is to get a better understanding of the assumptions and beliefs that facultors have about the role of input in students' speaking performance, and also to get a broader knowledge of what do they think about the methodology applied in the University of teaching speaking through speaking.

The information collected from this research is going to be useful for changing the overarching though about getting better at speaking through speaking and not through listening. It is also important to highlight that every piece of information collected will be solely for this research study and won't be shared or transmitted with anyone.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Age: _____

Female: _____ **Male:** _____

1. How long have you been in your current position?
2. Do you have any experience in Listening & Speaking, or in Advanced Conversation I –II?

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR TEACHERS

1. Have you ever heard about comprehensible input? If so, what do you think the role of input is in students' speaking performance?
2. What do you think the importance of listening is?
3. For students, what are the advantages of practicing listening out of the activities given in the university?
4. Is there any relationship between Listening and Speaking? If so, what is the relationship between these skills?
5. What are the strategies you use for making your students practice Listening?
6. Why do you think students are afraid of participating of listening activities?
7. Do you agree with the fact "The more you listen, the more you speak"? If not, what do you think about this fact?
8. From your perspective is the university giving more importance to listening than the importance they give to speaking performance?
9. Do you think the speaking ability is improved by making your students speak or by making them to listen?
10. What skill do you think students should pay attention to get better results in language learning? Why?

STUDENTS' INTERVIEW

Dear participant, we will be conducting a research on the perceptions that teachers and students may have about the role of comprehensible input on students' speaking skill

development in the English and French Licenciatura Program of the University of Nariño. In order to make this end happen, a qualitative semi-structured interview will be conducted and applied. The interview consists of two parts; the first one is addressed to background information, and the second one will be focused on your perceptions about the problem statement planted before.

The purpose of this interview is to get a better understanding of the assumptions and beliefs that students have about the role of input in students' speaking performance, and also to get a broader knowledge of what do they think about the methodology applied in the University of teaching speaking through speaking.

The information collected from this research is going to be useful for changing the overarching thought about getting better at speaking through speaking and not through listening. It is also important to highlight that every piece of information collected will be solely for this research study and won't be shared or transmitted with anyone.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Age: _____

Female: _____ **Male:** _____

1. What is the subject you work more in?

Listening and speaking _____ or, Reading and writing _____.

2. Which is the skill you feel you practice more in the University?

Listening _____ Speaking _____ Reading _____ Writing _____

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

3. What do you think it is the most challenging skill to develop in language learning?
4. Do you think you have a good level of speaking? Why/why not?
5. What is your strategy or strategies to improve your oral production?
6. What is your perspective about the role of listening comprehension in the development of speaking? Is it important or not?
7. Do you consider that the level of speaking performance in your semester is low in general? If so, what do you think the cause of this problem is?
8. According to your experience as language learner, what should the most suitable way to develop a high level of speaking be? What do you do for developing your speaking skill?
9. What is your perspective about how speaking is addressed in the University of Nariño?
10. Are the teaching methods implied by the university focused on Listening, speaking, reading, or writing?
11. What do you think could be improved in the University to enhance the results in students' speaking performance?
12. What skill do you think students should pay attention to get better results in language learning? Why?

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