

## **An article review**

**Article's title : Acquisition through comprehension**

**Three procedures**

### **Reference**

Prabhu, N.S. (2019). Acquisition through comprehension : Three procedures. In N. S. Prabhu, *Perceptions of Language Pedagogy*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.

### **Abstract**

This article was first published by Prabhu in 1989, and then republished in Prabhu's book *Perceptions of Language Pedagogy* in 2019. This book gathers all Prabhu's thoughts about learning and teaching over decades.

### **Article' review**

The author's main purpose is conveying a message that it is necessary for language pedagogy that language acquisition be based on three criteria: maximal effort worked out by the learners, varied adequacy levels and a composite of structure and cognitive context for communication. He underscores that these criteria can be achieved if a suitable classroom procedure is implemented.

From the very beginning, Prabhu set his article's purpose, which is analyzing input comprehension & comparing and assessing three general classroom procedures for promoting input comprehension. He also distinguished between learning, which is conscious and does not need much effort on the side of the learner and acquisition, which is unconscious and needs much effort on the side of the learner.

The author, then, highlighted that motivation together with exposure can make learning. He focused on exposure since motivation can't be measured. This exposure can be interpreted as follows:

- teaching language as a language, which focuses on teaching grammar as a means for teaching language.
- teaching structures as a habit, in which structures are practiced.
- meaning comprehension, which was the basis of approaches like Direct Approach", 'Conversation Method", "Natural Approach" .

After that, he explained Krashen's input hypothesis, which is closely related to comprehension as the basis for language acquisition, in which language is acquired through message understanding and comprehensible input, and consequently speaking is achieved.

The researcher also talked about some historical approaches like Grammar Translation method, which focuses on the written mode of language, and Audio-lingual method, which focuses on the spoken mode of language.

He also talked about the oral language skills: speaking and listening vs. the written skills: reading and writing. Also, talked about comprehension skills: reading and listening vs. production skills: speaking and writing.

Then , the author moved to the focal point of his article: comprehension as the basis of acquisition. He explained language is acquired through comprehending the input. That is, introducing language using comprehensible input or through translation make the learner understand and comprehend the input ,but language is not acquired. To

acquire language, learners must exert some effort. Consequently, acquisition can be achieved in terms of:

- Any comprehension activity should be designed to make the learner spend maximal effort . The teachers role is to support the learners' efforts not to substitute them.
- Comprehension activities should have immediate purposes with certain level of adequacy. Perfection is not the first stage purpose. Learners might comprehend things at low level in the beginning and then they improve.

He also confirmed that classroom activities should be designed to promote acquisition through comprehension and therefore should fulfill the following:

- The teachers' assistance should be to promote the learners efforts.
- There should be a certain level of adequacy to be achieved.
- The activity should be a composite of structure and cognitive meaning.

According to these three criteria, the author assessed and compared three classroom procedures and came up with the most suitable class procedure:

- The situational Presentation, in which language is presented in situations. Its main purpose is full comprehension. The teacher chooses everything beforehand. There is no immediate purpose or adequacy. Therefore, it doesn't promote acquisition through comprehension.
- Grammar translation method, in which comprehension not production is promoted. In this method, the learners spend much effort in translating to the mother tongue. They have to work hard to comprehend what they read

and refer to different sources to get the intended meaning. However, the purpose and the level of adequacy are not clear. Although the learners spent much effort, the material is fully prepared by the teacher, who just wants the learners to work and comprehend no matter of their level or their states or changes.

- Problem solving approach, which presents an activity with a problem to solve. This requires the learners to look for information related to the problem, "work out" their minds and test their solutions. During problem solving, the teachers' assistance is responsive to the students' success or failure. Moreover, problems need some purposes to achieve and involve different levels of complexity.

The author assesses the problem solving approach is the best of the three procedures since it fulfills the three criteria of acquisition, namely, effort, level of adequacy and sustaining structure and cognitive meaning for communication.

### **Researcher's opinion**

In my opinion, the article adds a lot to the reader's knowledge. I learned a lot of how to write an article and how to deal with pedagogical issues. The writer was successful in preparing the reader for the big topic : Acquisition through comprehension. He gradually moved from the purpose of the topic to the distinguish between learning and acquisition and surveyed the teaching approaches supported by his assessment, and finally he discussed and analyzed the main topic and came up with intended procedure to achieve acquisition through comprehension.

What I liked most about the author's way of writing is that the writer wanted the reader to exert more effort to comprehend the article and so achieve acquisition. That is, he wanted the reader to advance in his

development. For example, he did not explain the 'Direct Method" or 'Conversation Method". He wanted the material to be more effective and make the reader spend more effort and retrieve what he/she had already learned.