

Teachers' intention and learners' attention in an EFL class.

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Abstract:

This article reports on a study which investigated the issue of a possible mismatch between teaching and learning languages through investigating whether there is compatibility between what is intended to be taught and what is attended to. Attention is seen as a mediating variable between input and intake with a special interest in the aspects of lexis (the phonological, morpho-graphological, and semantic aspects) defined as pronunciation, spelling and meaning. Moreover, two possible explanatory variables were considered: the *frequency of occurrence* of lexical items in classroom discourse and the *order of occurrence* of lexical items in classroom discourse.

ملخص

تلعب مكونات البيئة الصفية وشروطها دورا أساسيا في نجاح العملية التعليمية/التعلمية ، وخلافا للمفهوم التقليدي الذي ينظر للتعلم كنتيجة متوقعة للتعليم ، تأخذنا هذه الدراسة في مقارنة مقترحة للمكونات الأساسية للتدريس الناجح للغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في الصفوف الأولى من التعليم ، مبرزة عوامل وشروط التكامل بين قصد المعلم وانتباه المتعلم بالشكل الذي يفترض فيه أن يحقق انسجاما كليا يساعد المتعلم في بناء خبرته بالموضوع وانتظام المعلومات بشكل سليم في بنيته المعرفية .

Rationale and aims of the study :

The purpose of this article is to report on a study whose major thrust was to investigate the issue of a possible mismatch between teaching and learning languages through investigating whether there is a compatibility between what is intended to be taught, and what is attended to and therefore likely to be intaken.

The rationale for this is that researchers have cast doubt as to whether there is a direct relationship between teaching and learning. Until the seventies learning was thought to be the obverse of learning. It is often heard in teachers' room exclamations such as 'but I taught them this point last week!' This shows that it is often assumed that whatever has been present in the input has been attended to and intaken. That is, learning was

assumed to be a direct result of teaching and that it depended mainly on external factors such as 'method'. Therefore, researchers endeavoured to find out the 'best' method which could best lead to the mastery of the target language. However, method as a single influential variable was rejected by The Colorado (Scherer and Wertheimer, 1964) and Pennsylvania (Smith, 1970) projects. The result was a redirection of research towards another variable 'technique'. Again, it was inconclusive. Subsequently, a de-emphasis on the teaching process was witnessed in favour of the learning process. Description took over prescription and led to a focus on the learner and the classroom and to the study of learner and classroom variables. Within such an orientation 'teacher talk', 'error treatment' and 'communication strategies' came to be considered. Some studies attempted to account for the phenomenon of classroom language learning. These helped to raise doubt about the possible mismatch between teaching and learning. They formulated some hypotheses which might explain the lack of understanding between teaching and learning.

The study started then from a general question:

is there any relationship between teaching and learning languages ?

which is tantamount to investigating whether there is any relationship between what teachers teach and what learners learn. Hence, the question:

do learners learn what teachers teach?

What teachers teach is known as input and what learners learn is grossly referred to as intake. Since input is already planned in the syllabus, it is then something *intended* to be taught. On the other hand, intake is generally defined, totake Corders' (1967:165) definition, as 'what goes in' or as van Patten (1989 :409) defined it as : 'that subset of the input which the learner actually perceives and processes'. Psychology contends that in order learn the input we must attend to it. Hence, the foregoing question can be translated into :

do learners attend to what teachers want them to attend to?

In language teaching, ideally teachers want their learners to approximate the native speakers' knowledge of the language. This remains an ideal and syllabus designers have constrained themselves to a less ambitious and more achievable aim: helping learners to acquire communicative competence which includes knowledge of the grammar and *vocabulary* of the target language. Knowledge of vocabulary and structures constitutes the cornerstone of language courses. The introduction of lexis precedes that of structures, as a teaching unit in a communicatively oriented textbook usually starts with the introduction of the topic of the unit and the

relevant lexical items to pave the way for comprehension of the subsequent input. This study focuses on the teaching and learning of vocabulary.

Regarding this issue, if "our ambition is to approximate native speakers' knowledge of the language", then, when introducing lexical items, teachers want their pupils to approximate their (the teachers') own knowledge of the items introduced (i.e., the target lexis) as the teacher is the only linguistic model available. Put more explicitly, teachers want their pupils to learn the semantic, phonological, morpho-graphological, and pragmatic aspects of the target lexis. The question *do learners attend to what teachers want them to attend to?* is translated into :

What aspect(s) of lexis (phonological, morpho-graphological, semantic and pragmatic aspects) do learners attend to mostly in order to convert input into intake?

Attention is then seen as a mediating variable between teaching and learning.

This can be represented as follows:

Input —————> **Attention** —————> **Intake**

The question above constitutes the ultimate objective of this project. However, attention is a complex phenomenon which can be influenced by a plethora of factors. The research design developed in this study permits to investigate two possible explanatory factors which are typically classroom variables and which are pedagogic rather than social, psychological or otherwise. These variables are:

a- The frequency of occurrence of lexical items in classroom discourse (i.e. the number of times an item occurs in classroom discourse).

b- The order of occurrence of lexical items in classroom discourse (at what period of the lesson the items have occurred).

Regarding these issues personal experience shows that it is commonly assumed among teachers that the more a lexical item is repeated in class the more it has a chance to be intaken by learners. Similarly, it is taken for granted that things mentioned last are more liable to be retained. This research seeks to investigate whether it is so. Having exposed the rationale and the research question, we now turn to the research design.

Methodology :

Given the nature of the research question (what aspects of lexis do learners attend to mostly?) some considerations were to be kept in mind for the choice of a methodological orientation. These were:

- Attention being an unobservable phenomenon data were to be gathered from the learners' own perspective.
- This required the use of some elicitation procedures to gather 'mentalistic data' in order to investigate what goes on in the learners' minds.
- The learner was the focus of the study.
- The data were to be gathered in the learners' natural environment: the classroom, as unobtrusively as possible.

These considerations comply with the attributes of classroom research. The selection of instruments had then to be done among those recommended by proponents of classroom research such as Allwright (1988), Gaies (1983) and van Lier (1988).

Before considering the research method, let's examine how the terms used in the research question have been defined. These terms are: *aspects of lexis, attend, input, and, intake.*

a) - Aspects of lexis

Aspects of lexis include the semantic/pragmatic aspect, the phonological aspect, and the morpho-graphological aspect. The semantic/pragmatic aspect is equated with meaning, the phonological aspect is equated with pronunciation, and the morpho-graphological aspect is equated with spelling.

b) - Attend / attention

Attention being a mental process and an unobservable aspect of a learning situation, one has to find a way to circumvent the apparent problem of getting access to whether someone has or has not attended to something. One possible way of getting to know whether a subject has 'fixed the mind on' something or not (i.e., attended or not) is by relying on Schmidt's (1990) notion of noticeability. That is, what becomes intake is what a learner consciously notices. If a lexical item (with all or part of its aspects) has been intaken, then it must have been attended to.

c) - Input

The term 'input' is used to refer to the lexical items which are part of the target lexis (i.e., intended to be taught by the teacher) and those which occur in classroom discourse and are believed by the learners to be new (never encountered before).

d- Intake

In the absence of a satisfactory means of getting at intake (what a learner has actually learnt), the notion of **uptake** (Allwright, 1984) provides an operational way of getting at what has attracted learners' attention. Uptake refers to what learners claim to have learnt from a learning situation that has just preceded.

Data collection: methods and procedures.

The study took place in a secondary school in Setif (East of Algeria). The attitude of learners towards the study and the instruments especially video-recording was of utmost importance. A negative attitude could undermine the whole project. Standard methods of subject selection such as random sampling could not be applied. One had to select among learners those who were willing to take part in the study and who would not mind the use of video and audio-recordings. Due to cultural considerations¹, apprehension was felt for the acceptance of the camera by the learners.

The subjects were clearly informed that if ever they would be filmed, the film and whatever reports and comments they made would be entirely confidential. The film and any reports were not in any case to be shown to any person especially the teacher, nor would they have any bearing on their grades. It was also stated that they should look upon the researcher as an outsider rather than as a teacher. Hence, 264 learners were then asked to fill in a preliminary 'permission questionnaire' in which they had to answer the following questions:

Question 1: would you like to take part in a study?

Question 2: Would you agree on the use of an audio recorder?

Question 3: Would you agree on the use of a video camera?

In the light of the results of this questionnaire one class with the most positive attitude and their teacher were retained. It was a 1st year class. It consisted of 39 learners, 20 of them were girls and 19 were boys aged between 16 and 17. At the same time, another class was retained for trying out the instruments.

Instrumentation:

Taking the diagram above, it appears that we need to collect 2 bodies of data:

¹ In the region where the study was carried out, female students are always unwilling to be filmed or taken in photo by a stranger, for fear that the film or the photo may be used for an ill-intentioned purpose.

- an account of input and
- an account of intake.

The next step would be to devise means of answering the question 'attention to what?' Methodologically speaking, one has to answer the following questions before any attempt to gather data:

- How can we get an account of input?
- How can we get an account of intake, or rather uptake?
- How can the question 'attention to what' be answered?

Because a word can occur in both the written and the spoken modes and this study is concerned with pronunciation, spelling and meaning one needs verbal and non-verbal accounts. The ideal procedure to collect input was to videotape the learning situation.

Uptake was collected by simply asking the learners to try to report the words and phrases that had occurred in the lesson they had just attended. The instrument used was a one-question questionnaire called The Uptake Recall Questionnaire. The questions were: what words and phrases have occurred in today's lesson? This was followed two hours later by another questionnaire (the Uptake Probe Questionnaire) consisting in two questions:

- 1- *Of all the words and expressions you wrote in your Uptake Recall Chart which were completely new to you? Mark them with N.*
- 2- *Of all the words and expressions you wrote which do you think the teacher **most** wanted you to learn? Mark them with a T.*

The purpose of the question of the URC (what words and phrases have occurred in today's lesson?) was three-fold. First, it served to find out whether the target lexis (items intended to be taught by the teacher) had attracted learners' attention to the extent of being reported. Second, it served to investigate attention to the spelling of the target lexis. Third, it helped in the design of the Target Lexis Chart (see. below). Concerning the Uptake Identification Probe, the question (which items were completely new to you?) was meant to find out whether what the teacher believed to be new was also believed to be new or not by learners. The idea behind the second question (which items do you think the teacher most wanted you to learn?) was to find out whether the informants were sensitive to the teachers' intention and plan. The Uptake Identification Probe also gave an

opportunity to the learners to add any items that came to memory and to correct the spelling of the items reported.

Teacher's interview:

After the lesson the teacher was interviewed about those items. He was first asked to annotate the list indicating what items he believed were completely new to the learners. The teacher was further asked to dissociate between items he had planned to teach (intended lexis) from those he did not plan to teach (unintended lexis). The teacher's interview and the uptake identification questionnaires (Uptake Recall Chart and Uptake Identification Probe) were to serve for the next stage of the research project.

Target Lexis Chart:

Immediately after the collection of the teacher's interview and the uptake identification questionnaires, the latter were scanned for making a list of all the items claimed by learners to have occurred in classroom discourse and entering them into a table. For each item, the different spellings produced by learners were picked up. The items annotated by the teacher as new served for the design of the 'Target Lexis Chart' (TLC) which was to serve as a basis for another questionnaire bearing the same name.

The Target Lexis Chart consisted then in a list of words which occurred in the lesson and which the teacher annotated as new to which were added some words that did not occur at all in the lesson. The latter were meant as distracters in order to prod learners into calling upon their memory, to have them really make an effort to try to remember and answer the questions of the questionnaire. Learners were first asked to say which item in the list occurred in the lesson they had attended the same day and which did not. They were informed about the presence of the distracters. They were then told that some words were spelt correctly and that some were not. They were asked to correct the mis-spelt items in the space provided under each item. Again this was meant to have them make an effort to pay specific attention to spelling. The other questions were related to the teacher's intention, pronunciation and meaning. For each item learners had then to answer four questions:

1. *Did it occur in today's lesson?*
2. *Did the teacher want you to learn it?*
3. *Do you think that it is spelt correctly? If not, correct it.*

4. *Do you think that you learnt its meaning? If yes, what does it mean? (Explain it in Arabic, in French or by any other means).*

The idea behind the first question was to see whether the respondents had paid attention at all to the occurrence of the items in classroom discourse. The second question was the same as the second question of the URC (i.e., it was meant to search attention to the teacher's intention) and served to crosscheck the findings. The third question served to investigate attention to spelling and again the answers were to be crosschecked with those of question 1 of the URC, the fourth question was obviously meant to search attention to meaning. The items in the Target Lexis Chart were :

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1- <i>Underground</i> | 6- <i>Store</i> | 11- <i>Capacity</i> |
| 2- <i>Meals</i> | 7- <i>Space</i> | 12- <i>Ability</i> |
| 3- <i>Inhuman</i> | 8- <i>Feel</i> | 13- <i>Pilot</i> |
| 4- <i>Human</i> | 9- <i>Capable</i> | 14- <i>War</i> |
| 5- <i>Accurate</i> | 10- <i>Manufacture</i> | |

The next stage of the research project was concerned with attention to pronunciation.

Pronunciation Chart:

Learners were invited to see the film of the lesson recorded in the morning. This session was meant to serve as a memory jogger. Immediately afterwards, they were presented each one separately with the list of the Target Lexis and were invited to read it out in front of the microphone of an audiocassette recorder.

The data collection sequence as it really occurred in time is summarized in the table below. It appears from this table that attention to spelling, teacher's intention, new/not new was searched with the use of both the Uptake Recall Chart and the Target Lexis Chart. Attention to meaning and pronunciation was searched with the Target Lexis Chart, and attention to pronunciation was searched with the Pronunciation Chart.

Results of the findings:

After the collection of the various bodies of data, the first operation consisted in transcribing the lesson. The identification of any speaker was rather easy due to the use of video recording.

In analysing the data, the purposes of each instrument were considered separately and the questions that each instrument attempted to answer were investigated.

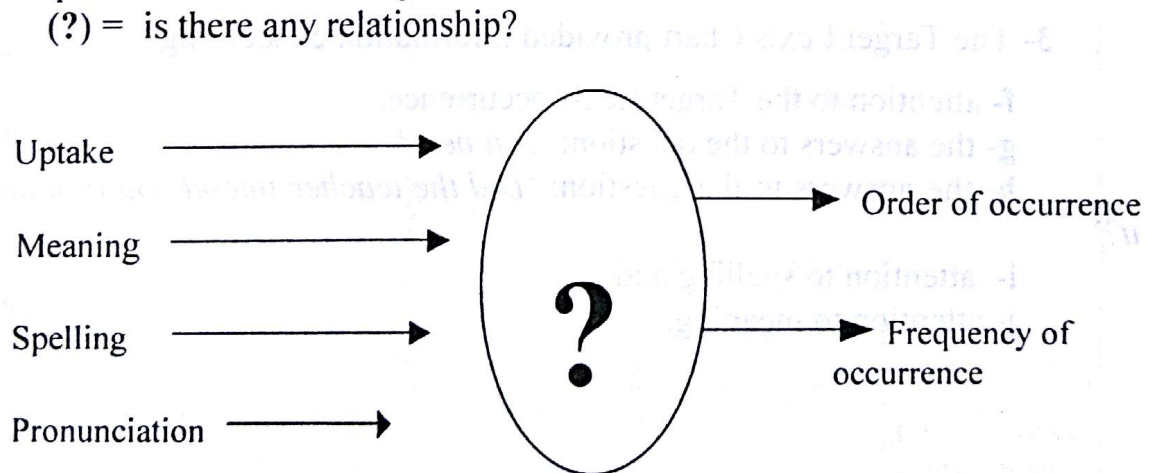
Hence, three distinct issues were considered:

i) the issue of attention to aspects of lexis (spelling, meaning, pronunciation) from the Uptake Recall Chart, the Target Lexis Chart and the Pronunciation Chart.

ii) the issue of attention to teacher's intention from the Uptake Recall Chart and Target Lexis Chart

iii) the issue of the possible effect of the order of occurrence and frequency of occurrence on learners' attention from the lesson transcript and the other instruments.

In this last instance while analysing the informants' Uptake Recall Charts I attempted to find any relationship between two sets of parameters. On the one hand we have uptake (of each lexical item), spelling, pronunciation and meaning. On the other hand we have frequency of occurrence of the items in the lesson and the order of occurrence of the items in the lesson. The relationship which might exist between the two sets is represented schematically as follows:



This yields the following questions:

Is there any relationship between:

- 1) a- uptake and frequency of occurrence?
b- uptake and order of occurrence?
- 2) a- spelling and frequency of occurrence?
b- spelling and order of occurrence?

- 3) a- pronunciation and frequency of occurrence?
b- pronunciation and order of occurrence?
- 4) a- Meaning and frequency of occurrence?
b- Meaning and order of occurrence?

The results obtained from the instruments used are displayed together in Table 1 below. This table represents the issues investigated in rows and the instruments used in columns.

From this table it appears that:

1- The Uptake Recall Chart provided information concerning:

- a- attention to the occurrence of the Total Input,
- b- attention to the occurrence of the Target Lexis and
- c- attention to the spelling of the Target Lexis.

2- The Uptake Probe Chart provided information concerning:

- d- the answers to the question: '*is it new?*' and
- e- the answers to the question: '*Did the teacher intend you to learn it?*'

It also gave an opportunity to the learners to add any items that came to memory and to correct the spelling.

3- The Target Lexis Chart provided information concerning:

- f- attention to the Target Lexis occurrence,
- g- the answers to the question: '*is it new?*'
- h- the answers to the question: '*Did the teacher intend you to learn it?*'
- i- attention to spelling and
- j- attention to meaning.

The Pronunciation Chart provided information concerning attention to pronunciation.

| Instruments Issues investigated | Uptake Recall Chart | Uptake Probe Chart | Target Lexis Chart | Pronunciation Chart |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Total Input occurrence | 21.49 items/learner = 21.70% | | | |
| Target Lexis occurrence | 6.69 items / learner = 47.78 % | | 8.7 items / learner = 62.79% | |
| New? | | 45.68 % of learners | 11.28 items/learner = 80.57 % | |
| Intended? | | 30.33 % of learners | 10.25 items/learner = 75% | |
| Spelling | 58.96% of TL correct | | 7.58 correct items/14 = 54.14% | |
| Meaning | | | 12.48 correct items/14 = 89.14% | |
| Pronunciation | | | | 6.87 correct items/learner = 50 % |

Table 1. Overall results of the study

There seems to be a discrepancy between the results obtained from the Uptake Recall Chart and the Uptake Probe Chart on the one hand and the Target Lexis Chart on the other hand as regards the issues they were meant to investigate in common: Target Lexis occurrence, 'is it new?', 'Did the teacher intend you to learn it', and attention to spelling.

In this regard, except for the difference of spelling which can be considered as not significant, the difference of results from the Uptake Recall Chart and Uptake Probe Chart and from the Target Lexis Chart is noticeable. These instruments failed then to confirm each other's results. As already mentioned, this may be explained by the fact that, with the Uptake Recall Chart and The Uptake Probe Chart, learners were engaged in a recognition task. But this is of no great concern since the Uptake Recall Chart and the Uptake Probe Chart served primarily to the design of the Target Lexis Chart. The results of the latter are therefore more reliable.

Looking at the fourth column of the above table, we can see that there is a measure of agreement between the issues of Target Lexis occurrence, new, and intended. This may be interpreted as evidence that learners were sensitive enough to the teacher's plan. That is, they attended to the occurrence in classroom discourse of 62.79% of the items present in classroom input. Learners think that 80.57% of it was new; and that 75% of the Target Lexis was intended by the teacher. It is interesting to note that concerning spelling, the results from the Uptake Recall Chart and the Target Lexis Chart are close to each other. This means that learners tended to reproduce the spelling of the Target Lexis in the Target Lexis Chart in the same way as they had produced it in the Uptake Recall Chart, except for 4.82% (58.96 minus 54.14) of them. It may also mean that, though required to pay close attention to the spelling of the items presented in the Target Lexis Chart, most subjects did not change their mind. They confirmed the spelling as they attended to it when they first encountered it.

If we were to find out which aspect was given priority by the learners we would that notice the latter seem to be best concerned with meaning since they attended to 12.48/14 items (89.14% of the Target Lexis). Next comes spelling with 7.58/14 items (54.14%) and last comes pronunciation with 6.87/14 items (50%). This is so despite the fact that the study of the effect of the frequency of occurrence revealed that though there is a weak

correlation, it seems that it is pronunciation which is more affected by this variable than the other aspects.

Concerning the effect of the order of occurrence, I found out that the aspects of lexis which were better attended to were those which occurred last. However, I am aware that such a finding is to be looked at suspiciously because other variables which are beyond the scope of this study may have intervened. To give but one example of such variables, I can say that the nature of the very items which constitute the Target Lexis could invalidate the finding. By 'nature of the items' I mean that some words can be considered as 'easy' whereas others can be 'difficult'. The degree of 'easiness' or difficulty can be constituted by the number of word syllables, the consonant clusters (for pronunciation), the consistency between spelling and pronunciation (for spelling), the closeness to French and possibly others.

Put differently, and in answer to the research question stated in the introduction: 'What aspect(s) of lexis (phonological, morpho-graphological, semantic and pragmatic aspects) do learners attend to mostly in order to convert input into intake?', we could rank attention to these aspects as follows:

1- Attention to the semantic aspect (meaning): learners attended to the meaning of 89.14% of the Target Lexis.

2- Attention to the morpho-graphological aspect (spelling): learners attended to the spelling of 54.14% of the Target Lexis.

3- Attention to the phonological aspect (pronunciation): learners attended to the pronunciation of 50% of the Target lexis.

It is worth noting that the finding that learners prioritise the semantic aspect is consistent with Krashen's claim (1981, 1985) that learners go to meaning first. As there was no strong correlation between the aspects of lexis studied and the variables (frequency of occurrence and order of occurrence), one may conclude with van Lier (1996: 136) that: '*... quality of exposure is more important than quantity of exposure*' (italics added).

Pedagogical implications:

The fact that learners allocate less attention to spelling and pronunciation and much more to meaning suggests that we are in need of making them aware of the importance of the two aspects neglected somehow. Indeed, questions such as 'What does it mean?' are far more frequent in our language classrooms than 'How do you spell it?' or 'How do you pronounce it?' The primacy given by our learners to meaning is not, in my opinion, surprising since in official examinations such as the 'B.E.F.' or the Baccalauréat and in term papers learners' proficiency in spelling and pronunciation is never assessed². Notwithstanding this, our task as language teachers is to try to achieve our ambition consisting in getting learners' intake all the aspects of lexis. This could be achieved by gaining learners' co-operation. One possible way of getting their efficient co-operation is by educating attention, by helping them develop attentional strategies in the same way as we do things to help learners learn and manage their learning. To do so, this study has revealed that it is not a matter of repeating or having learners repeat an item that makes them attend to its meaning, spelling or pronunciation. The correlation between these and the frequency of occurrence was low. Similarly, a common belief that the most important things are introduced first to ensure attention to them is denied. The very notion of input presentation is questioned then. In addition to the usual techniques (writing the items on the chalkboard, using colours, etc.), it would be advisable to draw learners' attention explicitly to the spelling and pronunciation of the items. Some researchers (e.g., Allwright, 1984) pointed out to the negotiation of meaning. We could extend this idea to spelling and pronunciation and hence encourage learners to negotiate the spelling and pronunciation of lexical items. Despite the inconsistency of the spelling and pronunciation of the English language, we could still introduce the rules for these two aspects whenever they exist. For example, the teacher and learners in this project could have gained much if the latter were told that whenever a word ends in 'ture', this string of letters is pronounced [t♥] such as in 'fracture', 'vulture', 'adventure', or any other similar word, preferably familiar to learners. In this case the teacher would have drawn learners' attention to both spelling and pronunciation and would have, hopefully, solved the problem once for all. By doing so repeatedly, and whenever

² However, some written exercises aimed at testing pronunciation are being introduced in the syllabi and exams of the BEF and Baccalauréat.

possible, learners would surely develop the habit of 'scrutinizing' every word they meet in written form for the first time. Developing then what I would call the '*scrutinizing principle*' could be a first possible step towards educating attention.

If learners' native language is a Latin language, or if they know a Latin language such as is the case in Algeria, it could be useful to train learners to pay attention to the similarities and differences in spelling and pronunciation between the two languages. That means training learners to 'discriminate' between the items (the '*discrimination principle*').

Likewise, we could apply similar strategies to educate attention to pronunciation. '*The harking principle*' would be to train pupils to listen attentively to the teacher's pronunciation (the linguistic model) without relying too much on the spelling of the word. The '*discrimination principle*' could help if learners' attention is drawn to the differences in pronunciation, where appropriate, between English and another language. In our case many of the Target Lexis items have some similarity with French and yet differ in pronunciation. This could be well illustrated by the fact that 13 learners out of 39 (33.33%!) mispronounced the item 'pilot'. Had they been made aware that the letter 'i' is pronounced in this case differently from French, there would surely have been a lesser number of deviant mispronunciations.

The fact that learners tended to produce the spelling of the target lexis in the Target Lexis Chart in the same way as they had produced it in the Uptake Recall Chart calls for comments. Only 4.62% (58.96% minus 54.14%) of the respondents did not reproduce it in the same form. It may also mean that, though required to pay close attention to the spelling of the items presented in the Target Lexis Chart, most subjects did not 'change' their mind. They confirmed the spelling as they attended to it when they first encountered it. This would allow us to say that there seems to be a tendency towards intaking (or rather uptaking) the spelling of a lexical items in the first form attended to. To put this in a clearer way, we would say that when a learner sees an item in a written form for the first time, that moment is crucial for intake since even when asked to think over the spellings they produced, the learners tended to confirm their first productions. Consequently, it would be very helpful to learners if teachers cared about spelling at the very outset of the introduction of lexis by making them attend to spelling.

Limitations of the study:

The size of the subjects group was limited to one secondary school class consisting of thirty-nine learners. For this reason, and if we want more generalizable findings, we may need other studies with a larger number of subjects to confirm or disconfirm the tentative findings reported in this project.

The data analysed were those collected from a single lesson. We may need to carry out an investigation with a greater number of lessons. For the time being, the results remain restricted to this particular group of Algerian second year secondary school learners with the specificities of their setting. It should be pointed out that the complexity of the phenomena under investigation (learning, teaching, attention) does not allow our findings to pretend to attain any generalizability. In fact, this study was not set out with a 'representative' sample in order to apply the results to a wider population but as Dingwall and Mann (1982: 141) expressed it as:

... a descriptive account of a particular teaching situation with the eventual hope that the description will be generalised to other similar situations and in the conviction that the situation being investigated is not itself so rare as to be unrepresentative of anything but itself.

This study relied on the notion of 'uptake' as possible evidence of 'intake'. It may be worth thinking critically over this notion and find alternative ways of getting access to what learners have actually intaken.

The present study limited itself to the possible effect of two variables only: frequency of occurrence and order of occurrence. But a plethora of factors may have affected learners' attention to the Target Lexis. It would be interesting to find out what these factors and their effects are.

From a methodological point of view, the presence of the camera might be suspected to have disturbed the dynamics of the group which was studied in an authentic learning environment. However, the subjects were recorded for a fairly good number of sessions, though in many times the recording was dummy, in order to eliminate the effect of the camera. In fact, it is believed that this was achieved. It should be noted that at the beginning of the study learners wanted to show off by getting involved (or pretending to be involved) in the lessons filmed. This was temporary and the apparent

excess of enthusiasm soon decreased to normal (according to the teacher) as videotaping went on.

Directions for future research :

This project has brought to light some issues related to attention which should deserve the attention of future research. It would be interesting to find out what attentional strategies could be more beneficial (though learning is idiosyncratic!). This issue could be addressed by future research. Such research would need to develop appropriate methods and tools to find out the various ways whereby learners manage to pay attention and learn the various aspects of lexis. It should also be interesting to find out what word characteristics, such as the aforementioned, are problematic for learners. If we could identify them and manage to find appropriate ways of developing and educating attention, both teachers and learners could be made aware of them and consequently more benefit could be derived from a learning situation.

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