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Toward Principled Eclecticism in Language Teaching: The Two-Dimensional Model and the Centring Principle

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Abstract

To achieve the goal of principled eclecticism (coherent, pluralistic language teaching), the paper proposes principles for categorizing, selecting, and sequencing teaching/learning activities. Activities are categorized in relation to the Two-Dimensional Model, four quadrants that result from the intersection of the dimensions of language and learning. Language is categorized as form or function. Learning is categorized as *construction* or *growth*. The centre of the quadrant is characterized as *contextualized attention to signs*. The Centring Principle (CP) constrains selection and sequencing: Activities within a lesson should (i) maintain coherence by consistently focusing upon the same formal and/or functional units, and (ii) be sequenced so that, by the end of the lesson, learners have engaged in activities that require contextualized attention to signs. Revealing a fundamental similarity across different approaches, lessons consistent with the CP are illustrated. The paper provides directions for evaluating the CP in relation to teacher thinking and learning outcomes.

Introduction

Recently, both Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Mellow (2000) have used the term *principled eclecticism* to describe a desirable, coherent, pluralistic approach to language teaching. Eclecticism involves the use of a variety of language learning activities, each of which may have very different characteristics and may be motivated by different underlying assumptions. Within a variety of educational areas (e.g., art education, counseling, curriculum theory, as well as language education) the principled combination of different activities has also been called:

- effective or successful eclecticism (i.e., based on specific outcomes) (Olagoke, 1982),
- enlightened eclecticism (H. D. Brown, 1994, p. 74; Hammerly, 1985, p. 9),
- informed or well-informed eclecticism (J. D. Brown, 1995, pp. 12-14, 17; Hubbard, Jones, Thornton, & Wheeler, 1983; Yonglin, 1995),
- integrative eclecticism (Gilliland, James & Bowman, 1994, p. 552),
- new eclecticism (Boswell, 1972),
- planned eclecticism (Dorn, 1978, p. 6),
- systematic eclecticism (Gilliland, James & Bowman, 1994, p. 552),
- technical eclecticism (Lazarus & Beutler, 1993), as well as
- the complex methods of the arts of eclectic, including deliberation (Eisner, 1984, p. 207; Schwab, 1969, p. 20; 1971, pp. 495, 503, 506).

The justifications provided for these many different types of eclecticism provide insight into a number of important strengths and weaknesses of pluralistic approaches to teaching. Principled eclecticism has often been proposed in contrast to (i) single-theory reliance or absolutism; (ii) relativism; and/or (iii) unconstrained pluralism (cf. Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Reliance upon a single theory of teaching (or a single *Method* that is informed by one relatively narrow set of theoretical principles) has been criticized because adherence to the use of a delimited number of procedures can become mechanistic and inflexible (Gilliland, James & Bowman, 1994, p. 552; Lazarus & Beutler, 1993, p. 382), and may potentially imply that materials need to be *teacher-proof* (Eisner, 1984, pp. 203, 209). Schwab (1969, 1971) has discussed two additional weaknesses of single-theory reliance: the incompleteness of theories and the coexistence of competing theories. Relativism is a position that emphasizes the uniqueness of each educational situation and consequently maintains that pedagogical choices must depend upon the complexities of contextual factors. Relativism has been criticized because it focuses on the dissimilarities, rather than the similarities, between teaching contexts (Eisner, 1984, p. 209; Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 182; Prabhu, 1990, p. 166).

Unconstrained pluralism describes the eclectic use of activities, presumably without the use of a single-theory or contextual considerations. This type of eclecticism has often been criticized because it may be arbitrary, atheoretical, incoherent, naïve, uncritical, unsystematic, and lacking in philosophical direction (e.g., Glascott & Crews, 1998, p. 233; Lazarus & Beutler, 1993, p. 382; Schwab, 1971, p. 507). In a relevant critique of communicative language teaching, Allen (1983, p. 24) has argued that "[i]n the absence of a well-defined theory, there is a danger that the development of communicative language teaching materials will be guided not so much by principle but by expedience, rule-of-thumb, and the uncoordinated efforts of individual writers." In relation to counseling, an even stronger critique of unconstrained pluralism has been provided by Lazarus and Beutler:

This smorgasbord conception of eclecticism, in which one selects concepts and procedures according to an unstated and largely unreplicable process, is both regrettable and misguided The haphazard mishmash of divergent bits and pieces, and the syncretistic muddle of idiosyncratic and ineffable clinical creations, are the antithesis of what effective and efficient counseling represents. (1993, p. 381)

Most proponents of eclecticism do not advocate unconstrained pluralism and instead propose principles that will lead to coherent choices of learning activities (cf. the principles proposed by H. D. Brown, 1994; Celce-Murcia, 1991, among others). The use of a principled eclecticism overcomes many of the above-mentioned weaknesses of unconstrained pluralism. However, the principles must still be made explicit and subjected to critical evaluation. Otherwise, principles could be found to be contradictory and irreconcilable (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, pp. 180-81; Lazarus & Beutler, 1993, p. 383). In addition, the principles of curriculum design must include valid psychological principles of learning (i.e., selecting items that are learnable), rather than principles that only categorize aspects of language as being simpler or more basic according to logical or linguistic criteria (e.g., Long & Crookes, 1993; Nunan, 1988; Sharwood Smith, 1976, pp. 46-47; cf. Dorn, 1984; Tyler, 1949). Finally, if the effectiveness of principles is to be assessed, then they must be made explicit in a manner that can be evaluated. Following such assessment, principles may be confirmed, rejected, or modified. In sum, evaluations of eclecticism should involve an examination of the guiding principles that are proposed. [-2-]

In order to promote the development of principled eclecticism, this paper proposes a set of specific principles that can be subjected to theoretical and empirical evaluation. The paper discusses two types of principles that may be used for pedagogical decision-making. The first type of principle is one that categorizes learning activities according to their properties. In this paper, principles of this type are used to create the *Two-Dimensional Model*. The second type of principle is one that determines the selection and sequencing of learning activities. This paper will discuss one such principle, the *Centring Principle*. These specific principles correspond to only a subset of the decisions that are made by teachers and curriculum developers. These principles are motivated by an integration of (i) linguistic and psycholinguistic research, and (ii) previous pedagogical principles and research.

The Two-Dimensional Model

The Two Axes of the Two-Dimensional Model: Language and Learning

Different types of teaching activities can be categorized in terms of the quadrant to which they correspond in the Two-Dimensional Model. An earlier version of the model was presented in Mellow (2000). The principles underlying the model are stated in (1) below.

(1) The Two-Dimensional Model of Linguistic and Psycholinguistic Assumptions.

Specific learning activities can be characterized in terms of their underlying assumptions, with language characterized as either form or function, and learning characterized as either construction or growth. When these two dimensions of assumptions intersect to create four quadrants, learning activities can be categorized in terms of their placement within these two dimensions.

The dimensions of the Model correspond to two basic theoretical commitments that underlie teaching activities (for additional discussions of the linguistic and psycholinguistic assumptions of language teaching approaches, see Allen, 1983; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; and Richards & Rogers, 1986, among others).

The first dimension indicates the assumption that underlies an activity with respect to the nature of language, indicated as a dichotomy between *form* and *function*. Some activities largely focus on language as a structural system composed of forms such as phonemes (sounds), intonation patterns, morphemes (including inflectional suffixes), words, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and turns (within a conversation). In contrast, other activities largely focus on language as a system for expressing meanings, including past time, plurality, definiteness, reference (e.g., to entities such as books and teachers, and to actions such as speaking and eating), requests, commands, apologies, questions, politeness, respect, argumentation, and narration, among many others.

[-3-]

The second dimension indicates the assumption that underlies an activity with respect to the nature of language learning, indicated as a dichotomy between *construction* and *growth*. Some activities primarily assume that language learning is a process of active construction by the learner. In other words, language learning is thought to result from the cognitive processing involved in attending to and comprehending extensive amounts of input (both written and spoken) and in attending to and producing extensive amounts of output (both in writing and speech), in the form of practice, drills, exercises, and other guided, negotiated, or corrected activities. These exercises may be either deductive or inductive, and may involve the metalinguistic discussion of pre-selected language forms, elements, and patterns. In particular, the construction view assumes that new elements can be added to a learner's internal language system as a result of extensive attention and processing: Input and output practice will result, over time, in the automatization or internalization of sounds, words, and form-meaning patterns. The construction assumption, with the emphasis on attention, practice, and automatization, is informed by theoretical positions such as those discussed in N. Ellis (1999), McLaughlin (1990), and Schmidt (1990). The term construction is used to evoke the idea of a house being constructed through a variety of deliberate building processes.

In contrast to the assumption of construction, other teaching activities primarily assume that language learning is a process of growth. The growth assumption maintains that the natural processing of meaningful language facilitates acquisition: Language is thought to emerge best in response to the normal language use that occurs in contexts in which interlocutors are exchanging meaning. Within these activities, essential aspects of language learning are thought to result from innate cognitive abilities that only rely upon a subset of the input that a learner receives. As defined here, the growth assumption includes three important hypotheses. First, language is hypothesized to emerge in a learner according to the learner's own internal syllabus, largely as a result of innate, biological, language-specific predispositions. Following the influential work of Noam Chomsky, in the 1960s and 1970s these innate abilities were often referred to as the Language Acquisition Device (or LAD). Since about 1980, Chomsky and his colleagues have used the term Universal Grammar (or UG) to refer to the hypothesized innate abilities. Although originally proposed to account for first language acquisition, many researchers have explored or argued for the role of these innate abilities in SLA (e.g., Krashen, 1982, 1985; Pienemann & Johnston, 1987; cf. Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). Second, language development is hypothesized to result only partially from the learner's general cognitive operations. For example, it is claimed that syntactic patterns are not learned with processes such as generalization, deduction, and automatization.

Consequently, deliberate, deductive practice and exercises are thought to contribute only minimally to development. Third, language development is hypothesized to rely only partially on the linguistic environment (e.g., the environment does not provide sufficient information for a learner to construct a knowledge of language) or responds only to certain types of linguistic environments (e.g., deductive instruction and correction of forms do *not* contribute to development). In sum, the growth assumption de-emphasizes practice and automatization. Instead, it emphasizes innate abilities and learning as a consequence of exchanging meanings in communicative contexts. The growth assumption is informed by theoretical positions such as those discussed in Chomsky (1986), Goodman et al. (1987), Krashen (1982, 1985), and Prabhu (1990, p. 170). The term growth is used to evoke the idea of a plant growing as a result of natural processes. [-4-]

The terms construction and growth need to be distinguished from a number of related terms and dichotomies previously proposed in applied linguistic research. In an earlier version of the Two-Dimensional Model (Mellow, 2000), the term *emergence* was used rather than growth. Growth is used here because of the recent use of the term *emergentist* to describe connectionist approaches to acquisition (N. Ellis, 1998; MacWhinney, 1999). Connectionist models are consistent with construction in the Two-Dimensional Model. In addition, the term construction, as used here, is different from the term *constructivism*, as used by McGroarty (1998), and from the term *creative construction*, as used by Dulay and Burt (1975).

The construction/growth (C/G) dichotomy is similar to the rote/meaningful learning dichotomy proposed by Ausubel (1968, p. 24) and discussed by Sharwood-Smith (1976). The C/G dichotomy is also similar to the distinctions between learning and acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985), explicit and implicit learning (N. Ellis, 1994), and learning activities that focus on form . . . and those that focus on meaning (Long, 1998). In addition, the C/G dichotomy is similar to the synthetic/analytic syllabus dichotomy proposed by Wilkins (1972, esp. p. 14), with synthesis and analysis referring to the processes undertaken by learners in order to develop their interlanguage. Some terminological confusion is associated with Wilkins' dichotomy. For example, Wilkins (1972, p. 19) proposes that a notional syllabus is analytic, whereas Long and Crookes (1993, pp. 12, 15-18, 45) argue that a notional syllabus is synthetic. In addition, Allen (1983) categorizes syllabi as either analytic or non-analytic/experiential, but with analysis referring to the process undertaken by the teacher or curriculum developer in order to present the learner with specific formal or functional features of language. Thus, a grammar drill is synthetic in relation to Wilkins' categories, but analytic according to Allen's categories. Although the C/G dichotomy is similar to these many dichotomies, it is beyond the scope of this paper to compare and contrast the many details of each distinction.

The two dimensions proposed here can be combined to create a model of different types of language teaching activities. If the first dimension corresponds to a horizontal axis and the second dimension corresponds to a vertical axis, then the intersection of the two dimensions creates the four quadrants represented in Figure 1. As indicated in Figure 1, the four quadrants of this framework are: (i) formal-construction, (ii) functional-construction, (iii) formal-growth, and (iv) functional-growth. Several language-teaching activities have been placed into the four quadrants, based on the degree to which each adopts specific assumptions regarding language and learning. Mellow (2000) provides a more detailed discussion of how specific activities and methods may be categorized using the Two-Dimensional Model. As discussed in detail in Mellow (2000), Krashen and Terrell's (1983) Natural Approach is one of the few teaching approaches that adopts formal-growth assumptions. Although adopting different assumptions, the language learning activities proposed within the Natural Approach are similar to those proposed by communicative and immersion approaches. This similarity is indicated in Figure 1 by the dashed arrow that extends from the Natural Approach to the activities in the functional-growth quadrant. In addition to approaches that primarily adopt one of these four perspectives, a fifth type of language teaching approach is one that is *eclectic*, using activities from more than one quadrant of the framework. [-5-]

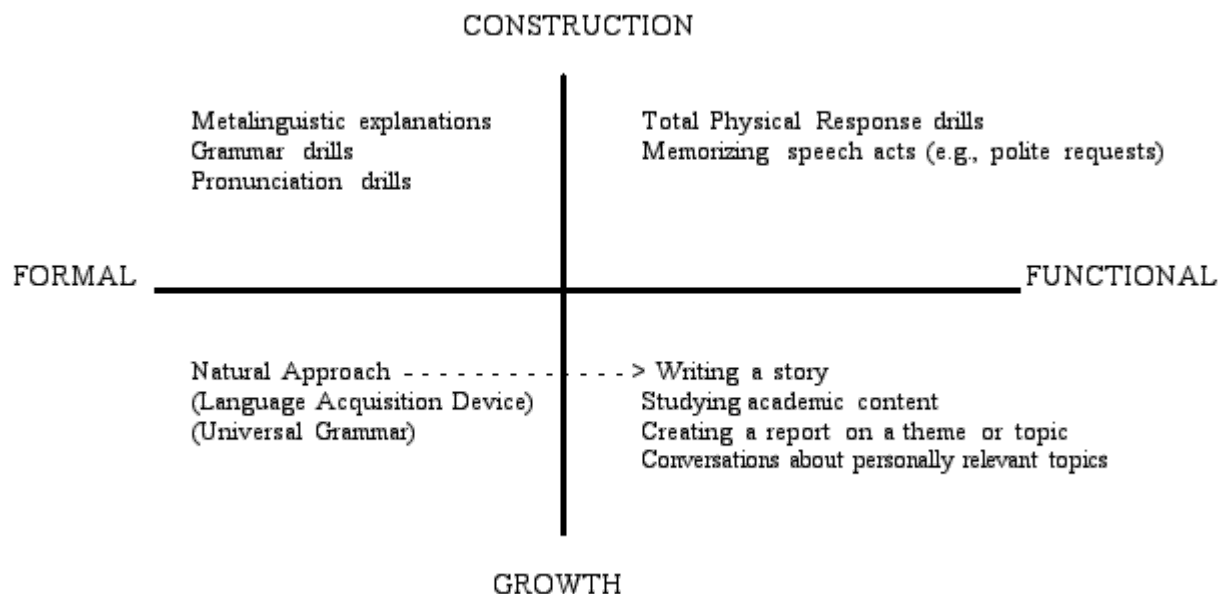


Figure 1.

The Two-Dimensional Model of types of language teaching activities, with example activities placed in the quadrants

The Centre of the Two-Dimensional Model: Contextualized Attention to Signs

The axes of the Model have been presented in a very simple way, as dichotomies. Consequently, the model could be enriched if it specified a possible overlap, confluence, or intersection of these dichotomies. Such intersections would acknowledge that language is both form and function, and that some active construction may occur during communicative language use. In order to partially overcome the simplistic nature of the Model, it is possible to identify the mid-point or confluence of each axis and then to identify the centre of the Model.

The confluence of form and function: Signs.

The mid-point of the linguistic axis is conceptualized as the pairing of form and function. Pairings or mappings of form and function have often been used as units of analysis in pedagogical and applied research (e.g., Andersen, 1990; MacWhinney, 1997; Mellow, 1996; Mellow & Cumming, 1994; Mellow & Stanley, 2001; Nunan, 1988, esp. pp. 87-91; Terrell, 1991; VanPatten, 1996). In the Two-Dimensional Model, relations between form and meaning have been conceived of as *signs*. Originally proposed by Saussure (1959/1915), signs have been developed considerably within Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG) (e.g., Pollard & Sag, 1987, 1994; Sag & Wasow, 1999). Building from Pollard and Sag (1994, p. 15), Krieger and Nerbonne (1993), and Krieger (1994), signs are conceptualized here as structured complexes of phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, discourse, and phrase-structural information. [-6-]

Examples of two signs, with a simplified set of features, are presented in Figure 2.

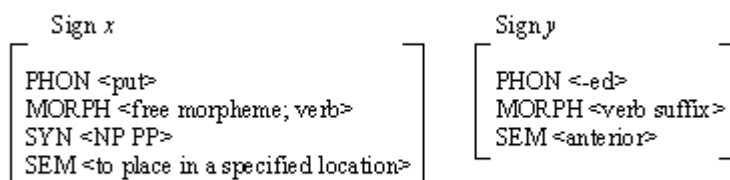


Figure 2.
Two examples of signs

Each sign includes a set of features, represented in capital letters, and the values of those features, specified between angle brackets. Sign *x* includes a linear string of phonological units (i.e., the PHON feature). For simplicity of representation, the value of this feature is presented here as an orthographic string: <put>. The morphological status and lexical category of the sign have been presented here as a MORPH feature that has two values: <free morpheme; verb>. In addition, the obligatory complements of this verb have been presented here as a syntactic property feature (SYN). The notation <NP PP> indicates that the verb requires both an object noun phrase and a locative prepositional phrase. The function or meaning of this sign is comprised of a semantic feature (SEM). The value of the feature is presented here in a simple way, as a definition: <to place in a specified location>. As indicated in sign *y*, signs can be bound morphemes as well as words and phrases. The value of the PHON feature of sign *y* is presented as an orthographic string: <-ed>. The value of the MORPH feature indicates that the sign is a suffix that attaches to verbs. The SEM feature is presented as the value <anterior>, indicating that an event or situation took place prior to the time of speaking.

Because signs such as these can be combined (or unified) in a systematic fashion, language is conceptualized as a very complex network of signs. From the perspective of the Two-Dimensional Model, the construct of a sign indicates a precise way in which language can be considered as both form and function. The form is represented by the PHON, MORPH, and SYN features. The function is represented by the SEM feature.

The confluence of construction and growth: Contextualized attention.

The mid-point of the learning axis is conceptualized as contextualized attention to language. This confluence or overlap suggests that a fundamental aspect of construction, the processing that occurs when learners attend to language, can co-occur with a fundamental aspect of growth, the use of language in contexts in which meanings are communicated. Within these communicative events (cf. Hymes, 1974, p. 52), the object of contextualized attention could be forms, functions, or signs. [-7-]

Contextualized attention to signs.

The centre of the Two-Dimensional Model is conceptualized as contextualized attention to signs. The nature of this centre point is defined in (2).

(2) Contextualized attention to signs.

Contextualized attention to signs (CAS) occurs when learners engage in activities (i) that lead to simultaneously attention to both form and function, and (ii) that require the expression of meaning within the context of a communicative event.

Because CAS involves learning processes that correspond to both construction and growth, activities at the centre of the model may be especially effective for promoting acquisition.

CAS appears to be consistent with other pedagogical approaches that include meaningful activities that encourage concurrent attention to both form and function (cf. Collier, 1992, p. 88; Davies & Pearse, 2000, p. 122; Dubin & Olshtain, 1986, pp. 107; Hubbard et al., 1983, p. 36; Tomasello & Herron, 1988). For example, CAS activities appear to be consistent with the comprehensible output approach, in which acquisition is thought to be facilitated by language activities that force learners to make their language output comprehensible (e.g., R. Ellis & He, 1999; Swain, 1985, 1993; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). Clarifying and supporting the comprehensible output model, Cumming's investigation of writing processes led him to propose that the integration of new L2 knowledge is likely to occur in those "instances when learners attend to metalinguistic and ideational concerns in conjunction" (1990, p. 489). A second comparable position is the interactionist approach, in which acquisition is thought to be facilitated by the interactionally modified input and output that results from the negotiation of

meaning with interlocutors (e.g., R. Ellis, Tanaka, & Yamazaki, 1994; R. Ellis & He, 1999; Long, 1981; Mackey, 1999; Pica, Kanagy, & Falodun, 1993).

A third position comparable to CAS is the input-processing approach, in which acquisition is thought to be facilitated by activities that require a learner to attend to specific, often non-salient, forms in order to comprehend meaning (e.g., VanPatten, 1996). Finally, CAS appears to be consistent with the Focus-on-Form approach (not the Focus-on-Forms approach), which Long (1998, p. 40) describes as an instructional practice that shifts students' focal attention by "briefly drawing students' attention to linguistic elements (words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns, and so on), *in context*, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication." Doughty and Williams (1998) extend the scope of the Focus-on-Form approach to include proactive attention to language form and thus include tasks that are typical of the comprehensible output, interactionist, and input-processing approaches. [-8-]

The Centring Principle

In addition to principles that categorize learning activities, a second type of principle is one that determines the selection and sequencing of learning activities (e.g., H. D. Brown, 1994, pp. 135-155, 395-410; Dubin & Olshtain, 1986; Tyler, 1949, esp. pp. 95-98; Ur, 1996, pp. 216-218). Among the many possibilities, some principles relate to selecting and sequencing for an entire course. For example, principles have been proposed (i) for the proportional number of activities of each type in relation to the level of proficiency of the learners or the level of the course (e.g., Allen, 1983; Dubin & Olshtain, 1986, pp. 117-118; Yalden, 1987, pp. 93-97), and (ii) for the cyclic use of activities or topics throughout a course, including cyclic practice through all four skills (e.g., Dubin & Olshtain, 1986, pp. 55-57; Widmaier & Widmaier, 1999, p. xvii; Yalden, 1987, p. 140). In contrast, this paper proposes one principle that is concerned with the sequencing of activities in a classroom session or lesson (or a small set of consecutive lessons).

The new principle is proposed in (3).

(3) The Centring Principle.

The set of activities comprised by a lesson should (i) maintain coherence by consistently focusing upon the same formal and/or functional units, and (ii) be sequenced so that, by the end of the lesson, learners have engaged in activities that require contextualized attention to signs (i.e., activities located at the centre of the Two-Dimensional Model).

The first part of the Centring Principle (CP) stipulates a type of coherence for the lesson (cf. Davies & Pearse, 2000, p. 122; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 108; Ur, 1996, p. 216). Coherence is achieved by using activities that require the learners to attend to the same forms, functions, and/or signs throughout the sequence of activities. The second part of the CP states that activities are sequenced so that, no matter the quadrant of the initial activities, the order of the activities will move toward the centre of the quadrant and the lesson will include CAS activities. The sequences involved in the CP reflect the hypothesis that contextualized attention to signs may be especially effective for promoting acquisition.

The sequences involved in the CP acknowledge that a lesson may not begin with CAS activities. For example, some learners may be most comfortable and effective with lessons that start with formal-construction activities. These learners might especially be adults (or learners who are cognitively mature) who are accustomed to a grammar and drill approach to pedagogy (e.g., many Asian ESL learners who are studying at a language school in an American, British, or Canadian city) (cf. Celce-Murcia, 1991). Lessons that begin with formal-construction activities might also be appropriate for some learners who are in the early stages of the acquisition of a sign (or a network of related signs) and who have considerable difficulties communicating with those signs. In contrast, other learners may be most comfortable and effective with lessons that start with functional-growth activities. These learners might be young children or might be adults of relatively higher proficiency levels who prefer to not focus on grammar and drill pedagogies (e.g., adult ESL learners in an American, British, or Canadian city who learned some English as a result of growing up in a bilingual society, such as in Montreal, Canada).

In addition to beginning with activities that correspond to one of the four quadrants, the sequences involved in the CP may also involve intermediate steps in which the activity corresponds to the confluence of one of the axes (e.g., attention to form and function; or attention to a function or form, contextualized within a communicative event). Finally, after an activity that encourages CAS, a sequence may then move outward, often to activities that are functional-growth. In these ways, the Centring Principle includes a wide range of sequences of activities, each of which may effectively promote learning. [-9-]

Lesson Sequences That Are and Are Not Consistent With the Centring Principle

Many well-known types of lessons are consistent with the Centring Principle. One example of a formal-construction-to-centre sequence is the drill sequence proposed by Paulston (1971): mechanical > meaningful > communicative (cf. the similar drills proposed by Hubbard et al., 1986, pp. 26-27: mechanical, meaningful, and realistic). In a mechanical drill, the student may provide the one correct way of responding without even understanding the meaning of the item. Mechanical drills include repetition, paradigm conjugation, as well as substitution and transformation drills. In meaningful drills, the student cannot complete the drill "without fully understanding structurally and semantically what he is saying" (Paulston, 1971, p. 206). Comprehension and description questions are examples of meaningful drills. According to Paulston's (1971, p. 207) definition, "the main difference between a meaningful drill and communicative drill is that in the latter the speaker adds *new* information about the real world." Paulston (1971, p. 208) concludes that "in teaching languages we need to take each pattern systematically through a sequence of mechanical, meaningful, and communicative drills, not leaving out any one step." As illustrated in Figure 3, mechanical drills correspond to the formal-construction quadrant, meaningful drills correspond to construction and are at the mid-point of the linguistic axis, and communicative (or realistic) drills are at the centre. The sequence, labeled as DR (referring to drills), corresponds to the Centring Principle.

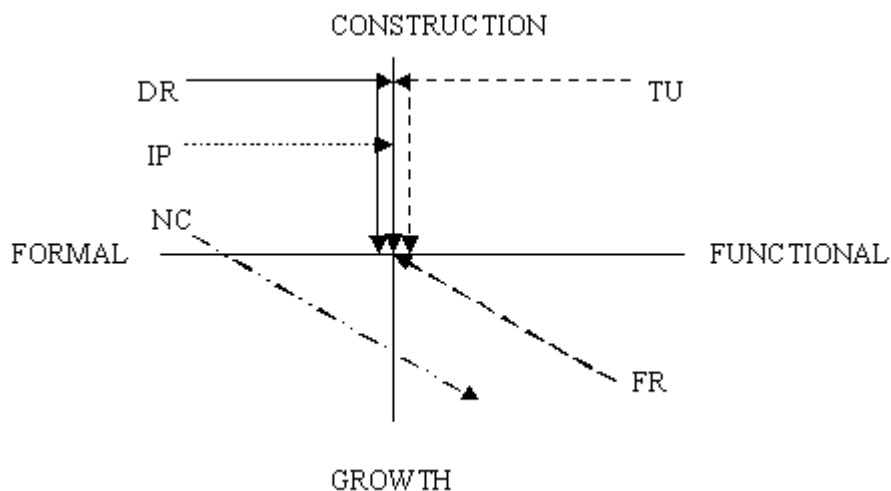


Figure 3.

Lesson sequences in relation to the Two-Dimensional Model:

Drill (DR), Input Processing (IP), Topical Unit (TU), Feedback and Revision (FR), and Not Centred (NC)

[-10-]

A second example of a formal-construction-to-centre sequence is the order of activities described as part of VanPatten's (1996, pp. 60-67) input-processing instruction. The lesson begins with two formal-construction activities: a metalinguistic explanation emphasizing the form and placement of Spanish pronouns (and also discussing meaning but not communicating that meaning), as well as explanations of strategies for paying attention to input. Subsequently, the lesson includes referentially-oriented structured-input activities. In these activities, the learners must comprehend specific signs within an input sentence in order to choose the correct answer to a question. This activity corresponds to construction and is at the mid-point of the linguistic axis.

Finally, the lesson includes affectively-oriented structured-input activities. In these activities, the learners must comprehend specific signs within an input sentence in order to convey relevant information about themselves (e.g., opinions, personal circumstances). Because of the communication of new information by the student, this activity corresponds to the centre of the Model. This sequence is illustrated in Figure 3, labeled as IP (referring to input processing).

An example of a functional-construction-to-centre sequence can be found within Yalden's (1987, pp. 108-109) description of a topical unit syllabus used to teach Bahasa Indonesian. A lesson could begin with reading and repeating translated sentences that are the speech acts involved in managing a transaction in a restaurant (e.g., *I want the menu* and *May I have the bill?*). This activity corresponds to a functional-construction activity. Subsequently, the students might ask the teacher about the structures in the speech acts or request additional vocabulary items. This activity corresponds to construction and is at the mid-point of the linguistic axis. The lesson could end with students engaging in an unscripted role-play in which they order a meal in a restaurant. The role-play corresponds to the centre of the Model. This sequence is illustrated in Figure 3, labeled as TU (referring to topical units).

A final example of a lesson corresponding to the Centring Principle is a functional-growth-to-centre sequence. The lesson is primarily comprised of the writing of a short story by an adolescent ESL learner. Several drafts of a learner's story are created and revised in response to feedback from the instructor. Much of the feedback and the revisions relate to the content of the story, including descriptions of characters, places, and events. This activity corresponds to a functional-growth activity. After the content is well established, the feedback and the revisions also relate to how well the written language expresses the intended meaning, including issues such as spelling and the use of prepositions, articles, and discourse markers. These revisions correspond to the centre of the Model. This sequence is illustrated in Figure 3, labeled as FR (referring to feedback and revision).

Some lessons might not be consistent with the Centring Principle. For example, a lesson might begin with a review of a homework assignment that involved a number of grammatical exercises regarding the form of the present progressive with a variety of English verbs. This activity is a formal-construction activity. Subsequently, the students might begin work on a written report that summarizes a recent field trip to a museum. This activity is functional-growth and primarily involves verb forms in the past. This sequence of two activities is indicated in Figure 3, labeled NC (referring to not centred). This sequence does not correspond to either aspect of the CP. Coherence is not maintained by consistently focusing on the same formal and/or functional units. In addition, learners do not necessarily engage in activities that involve contextualized attention to signs. [-11-]

Examples of the Centring Principle Within Composition Pedagogy and the Teaching of

Cohesion

These diverse sequences that are consistent with the CP reveal a fundamental similarity across teaching approaches that might otherwise be considered distinct or different. The diverse activities that are similar with respect to their consistency with the CP can be further illustrated in the teaching of writing at the discourse level, including the use of cohesive ties (e.g., repetition, synonyms, pronouns). Writing educators have proposed two different types of instruction that can lead to contextualized attention to signs. The first type of discourse instruction is developed in Zamel (1982, 1983). Zamel (1983) illustrates a number of exercises that could be used to teach cohesion including completion (fill in the blank), sentence combining, unscrambling sentences, and identifying pronouns and their antecedents in a text. Although these exercises focus on specific features of language, Zamel emphasizes that learners need to consider linking devices in relation to the ideas being communicated. This activity corresponds to construction and is at the mid-point of the linguistic axis. In accord with Zamel (1982), after doing these exercises students could be encouraged to attend to these rhetorical features while revising and editing future essays (cf. Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, esp. pp. 262, 320, 326). These revisions correspond to the centre of the Model. Thus, Zamel's approach illustrates pedagogy that begins with planned attention to linguistic considerations (construction) before learners attend to these signs while composing.

A second type of discourse instruction is illustrated in Johns (1986). Through a series of lessons and drafts of their own papers, Johns proposes that learners examine sample essays and their own essays. Sequentially, the learners consider the nature of (i) the writing prompt, (ii) the thesis, (iii) the relationships among assertions in a draft, and, finally, (iv) the information structure in a near final draft, including text-based considerations such as cohesive ties (cf. Grabe and Kaplan, 1996, esp. pp. 360, 390). Johns (1986, p. 252) refers to this approach as "moving from top down, that is, from more global to more local considerations." Within the Two-Dimensional Model, this sequence (which may be across several lessons) would be described as beginning with functional-growth activities and then proceeding to CAS.

Using either of these approaches, CAS is likely to occur during revisions. Efforts to make output more comprehensible (Swain, 1985, 1993) are likely to result in attention to the adequacy of the form-meaning relations in the text. Cumming (1990), as noted above, investigated this type of writing process, finding that composing processes include concurrent metalinguistic and ideational thinking. Swain and Lapkin (1995, pp. 386, 383-384) replicated and extended Cumming's findings with respect to the L2 processes involved in drafting and editing a written article, finding that "the communicative need engendered by the task did force the learners into thinking about the form of their linguistic output," and that these processes involved "formulating and testing hypotheses about linguistic forms and functions." Given that CAS is likely to occur during revisions, either of the lesson sequences proposed by Zamel or Johns is likely to encourage attention to specific aspects of language, such as cohesion. [-12-]

Evaluation

The proposed categorization of teaching activities and lessons may be valuable for educators because its explicitness may aid in an understanding of different types and sequences of activities. However, as noted above, this paper proposes only a small portion of a principled eclectic approach to language teaching (cf. Norris & Ortega, 2000, p. 502). Adding other dimensions or categories of principles could enrich the Model. For example, an additional dimension might involve the nature of classroom discourse (e.g., Greenleaf & Freedman, 1993). This dimension could consider whether classroom discourse is primarily comprised of Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) structures or whether the turn-taking resembles non-classroom conversation structures. Within these discourse structures, the nature of the specific turns could also be considered. For example, the teacher's initiations could be considered in terms of display questions, for which the teacher knows the answer, and genuine questions, for which the teacher does not know the answer. Another category of principles would involve specifying important learner characteristics that affect the choice of learning activity (e.g., age, educational background, goals and expectations, styles and strategies). These characteristics have only been briefly mentioned in the discussion the choice of different types of sequences that are consistent with the CP. In addition to the CP, a principled eclecticism will include other principles for sequencing activities. These principles could consider lesson stages such as warm-up and wind-down (e.g., H. D. Brown, 1994, p. 397; Davies & Pearse, 2000, p. 122), as well as concerns for using an appropriate variety of activities (e.g., H. D. Brown, 1994, pp. 399-401; Davies & Pearse, 2000, p. 120; Purgason, 1991, p. 422; Ur, 1996, p. 216).

Perhaps the most important evaluation of the principles in this paper will be a determination of their effectiveness. Among the many criteria that may be used to evaluate lesson effectiveness (e.g., Ur, 1996, pp. 219-222), the effectiveness of these principles may be determined in terms of both (i) utility for teachers, and (ii) learning outcomes for students. With respect to utility for teachers, the proposed principles have been expressed in a manner that is relevant to practice (Eisner, 1984; Schwab, 1973) and to a teacher's sense of plausibility about teaching (Prabhu, 1990). In addition, the new curricular ideas are relatively simple and, as illustrated above, consistent with many existing practices (cf. Orlosky & Smith, 1972). These properties of the principles may make them useful to teachers. The principles have also been expressed in an explicit manner that might provide a foil for teacher reflection (e.g., Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Schön, 1983). Although reflection could lead teachers to adopt these principles, it might also lead teachers to determine principles that complement and/or replace the Two-Dimensional Model and the CP. Ultimately, investigations of teacher thinking and decision-making are needed to reveal how teachers might use or interpret the principles. In sum, the principles proposed here could be utilized in the same way that H. D. Brown (1994, p. 31) encourages teachers to use his twelve

principles: to prioritize important principles, to discover additional principles, and to use the principles to create a teacher's own personal theory of learning and teaching. [-13-]

Many educational researchers have indicated that teaching methods, including eclecticism, should be evaluated in terms of empirically determined learning outcomes (e.g., Gilliland, James, & Bowman, 1994, p. 554; Hubbard et al., 1983, p. 327; Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 4; Lazarus & Beutler, 1993, p. 384; Mellow, Reeder, & Forster, 1996; Norris & Ortega, 2000). However, validly determining learning outcomes is a very difficult research activity. Some researchers have even suggested that learning outcomes are not an appropriate means to evaluate teaching because of the complexities and pluralities of outcomes (e.g., Schwab, 1971, pp. 540-541). Prabhu (1990, p. 171) has clearly stated this position: "An evaluative comparison of different methods calls for a degree of objectivity and specificity in cause-effect relations that may well be unreasonable to expect in the field of language pedagogy." Similarly, Pienemann and Johnston (1987, pp. 48, 114) have argued for the near universality of the Contradiction Principle: "For every proposition about the influence of an external factor [on language acquisition] and evidence for that proposition there is a corresponding counter-proposition and corresponding counter-evidence."

In order to propose ways to evaluate principles of eclecticism, I will discuss strategies to deal with three difficult aspects of determining outcomes. The first important concern is that experimental investigations require a theory of psycholinguistically relevant instructional design features that may be subjected to experimental testing, but are not so artificial or discrete as to be irrelevant to the real classroom (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, pp. 22, 325-326; Mellow, 1996, p. 60; Norris & Ortega, 2000, p. 502; VanPatten & Oikkenon, 1996; cf. Eisner, 1984, Schwab, 1973). The determination of causality within an experiment requires that the scope of an instructional design feature will not be an entire course, with many different activities. Instead, optimal units for investigation are smaller units, such as a lesson or small set of lessons, which are coherent and consistent with psycholinguistic hypotheses. According to these criteria, lesson sequences that correspond to the CP appear to be appropriate units for experimental investigation because they involve a relatively small and coherent unit of instruction. Only after the effects of specific types of lessons have been determined will it be possible to investigate the effectiveness of different combinations of lessons into an entire course.

A second important concern is that experimental investigations require valid measurement in order to assess learning outcomes (e.g., Norris & Ortega, 2000, pp. 498, 501). For example, Lantolf and Frawley (1988) have argued that instruments and scoring that use psychometric principles may not be able to adequately measure language proficiency because language ability is a construct that may not be easily captured by typical scales of measurement (i.e., ordinal, interval, or ratio scales). Similarly, Long and Crookes (1993, pp. 14-15) have argued that acquisition is not a linear, additive process, but instead involves the acquisition of complex mappings of form-function relationships (i.e., sign networks). In addition, given the limited state of current interlanguage research, it may be difficult to know which effects are 'better' than other effects. For example, changes that result from instruction could lead to U-shaped learning, a temporary restructuring of the interlanguage system that appears as a short-term decrease in target-like use, but enables a more substantial long-term improvement. Similar concerns for the construct validity of a rating scale were mentioned by Harley (1989, p. 356) in her summary of her quasi-experimental study of the acquisition of the expression of past-time in French by 319 learners: "[I]t is possible that the scoring procedures were not sufficiently delicate to capture potential differences between the groups. Further, more detailed analyses . . . could reveal more subtle benefits for the experimental students." In order to evaluate the effects of lesson sequences that correspond to the CP, it will be important to use measures that assess interlanguage development using principles that are psycholinguistic rather than just psychometric (for an example of possible psycholinguistic principles, see Mellow & Stanley, 2001). [-14-]

A third important concern is the type of research question that is investigated in an experimental study (e.g., Norris & Ortega, 2000, p. 497). A typical research question is whether one method of instruction is better than another method. A number of practical and methodological difficulties arise in investigating such a question. For example, to compare methods, researchers require equivalent groups who receive each type of instruction. The random assignment of a relatively large number of learners to each group is the best strategy to create equivalent groups. However, random assignment could lead to disturbances of the usual schooling context and the

investigation of a large number of learners will likely reduce the validity of the measurement process, as discussed above. In addition, this design encounters the ethical problem of not providing half of the learners with instruction that is hypothesized to be especially beneficial.

In contrast to a method comparison, an appropriate research question to investigate the instructional options described here is more restricted: to determine the effects of a specific unit of instruction. This question could be investigated by looking at the effect of additional instruction on the development of a small group of learners, comparing the learners' development to their own baseline development or to a group of learners who did not receive the additional instruction. Smaller scale studies could be replicated relatively easily with other learners. This more limited research question is motivated by one of the underlying assumptions of principled eclecticism: There is no one best method (cf. Prabhu, 1990). Instead, many different lessons sequences are hypothesized to promote acquisition (although some non-coherent, non-CAS lessons are not expected to result in substantial acquisition). This question also seems more appropriate given the limited state of current second language acquisition research. Thus, an investigation of instructed acquisition could contribute to an understanding of the complex developmental course of interlanguage, with changes to sign networks (cf. Mellow et al., 1996; Mellow & Stanley, 2001). In relation to pedagogical decision-making, such investigations would also be useful. Rather than indicating that a lesson (or method) may result in a large or larger increase in accuracy or proficiency, such studies could indicate the specific uses of language that may change as a result of instruction. Teachers and curriculum developers could then assess the desirability of these specific changes and look for them in the language use of their students.

In sum, the evaluation of pedagogical proposals is a complex undertaking. The Two-Dimensional Model and the Centring Principle suggest specific, testable directions for developing the principles that could comprise an eclectic approach to teaching. The fundamental premise within these principles is that acquisition is facilitated when learners attend to signs (form and function) while using language in contexts in which meanings are communicated. The diverse sequences that are consistent with the CP reveal a fundamental similarity across seemingly different teaching approaches. The effectiveness of these principles may be determined in terms of their utility for teachers and the learning outcomes achieved by students. By proposing pedagogical guidelines such as these, principled eclecticism may provide a valuable alternative to absolutism, relativism, and unconstrained pluralism. [-15-]

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