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Código 4295

BLOCK 3: The development of receptive and productive skills in English

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1

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Unit 6.

Theoretical approaches to the pyscholinguistic processes underlying the production and reception of messages in English and their influence on the development of linguistic multicompetence:

perspectives for practice.

Schedule:

1. What is a skill?

    1.1. General definition

    1.2. FLT definition

2. Locating skills within a model of FLL and FLT

    2.1. Declarative and procedural knowledge (DEC and PRO)

    2.2. The key: Automatisation (DECPRO = learning)

    2.3. Other alternative cognitive sequences: PRO (= acquisition), PRODEC (= learning)

    2.4. CI and CO

    2.5. The importance of practice in DECPRO

    2.6. The role of skill practice in DECPRO

    2.7. Transfer between skills

3. FLL never seems to end!

Selected references

NOTE: All the references used in this material appear in full in the final section *(Selected References)*, together with other relevant sources.

3

OBJECTIVES OF THIS MODULE:

- **Theoretical-practical:**
  - **To learn what a skill is in general and applied to foreign language learning and teaching (FLL and FLT)**
  - **To study the two main types of knowledge essential to achieve the mastery of a foreign language (FL): declarative and procedural.**
  - **To get acquainted with a well-known cognitive framework for FLL and how declarative and procedural knowledge are learned.**
  - **To ascertain the role of the four traditional skills in such a framework.**

    Materials for practical activities: handouts from Oxenden, C. & Latham-Koenig, C. (2001). *English File Upper Intermediate. Student's Book.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

4

1.1. GENERAL DEFINITION

Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary
http://dictionary.cambridge.org/
skill noun /skɪl/ n [C or U]

an ability to do an activity or job <u>well</u>, especially because you have <u>practised</u> it.
Ruth had/possessed great writing skills.
I have no skill at/in sewing.

Merriam Webster Dictionary online:
http://www.merriam-webster.com/Main Entry: 2skill

- Function: *noun*

  2 a : <u>the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance</u>

  b : dexterity or coordination, especially in the execution of learned physical tasks

  3 : a learned power of doing something competently: a developed aptitude or ability <language skills>

5

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- *Wikipedia*:

A skill is the learned capacity to carry out pre-determined results often with <u>the minimum outlay of time, energy, or both.</u>

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skill)

6

Foreign language mastery consists of the <u>skill</u> of being able to produce and understand (i.e. process) language quickly (similar to the skill of cooking, driving a car, etc.).

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FOUR TRADITIONAL SKILLS IN FLL:

Receptive: listening and reading (comprehension/understanding)

Productive: speaking and writing (production)

7

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Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEF) **(2001: 90-91):**

4.5 Communicative language processes

To act as a speaker, writer, listener or reader, the learner must be able to carry out a sequence of skilled actions.

To speak, the learner must be able to:

• *plan* and *organise* a message (cognitive skills);

• *formulate* a linguistic utterance (linguistic skills);

• *articulate* the utterance (phonetic skills).

To write, the learner must be able to:

• *organise* and *formulate* the message (cognitive and linguistic skills);

• *hand-write* or *type* the text (manual skills) or otherwise transfer the text to writing.

8

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To listen, the learner must be able to:

- *perceive* the utterance (auditory phonetic skills);
- *identify* the linguistic message (linguistic skills);
- *understand* the message (semantic skills);
- *interpret* the message (cognitive skills).

To read, the reader must be able to:

- *perceive* the written text (visual skills);
- *recognise* the script (orthographic skills);
- *identify* the message (linguistic skills);
- *understand* the message (semantic skills);
- *interpret* the message (cognitive skills).

9

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VERY IMPORTANT! Grammar and vocabulary go across the four skills:

From Criado-Sánchez (2008: 219):
Grammar and vocabulary do underlie all the four skills and their mastery is necessary for the correct - or at least acceptable - performance in both receptive and productive based activities.

The CEF (2001) affirms that the linguistic competences (lexical competence; grammatical competence; semantic competence; phonological competence; orthographic competence; orthoepic competence) are, "the formal resources from which well-formed, meaningful messages may be assembled and formulated" (p. 109).

It also asserts that, "The development of the learner's linguistic competences is a central, indispensable aspect of language learning" and that "Grammatical competence, the ability to organise sentences to convey meaning, is clearly central to communicative competence" (CEF, 2001: 149 and 152 respectively).

10

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Declarative knowledge (DEC) is:

- **Knowledge <u>about</u> things, facts and rules of language/knowledge about the system.**

  E.g. In English, the third person singular in the present simple tense carries an –s.

- **Conscious/explicit knowledge:**

  E.g.: formation of the present perfect in English (Johnson, 1996). "Has worked"

  3rd singular of have: *has*
  Past participle of work: adding –ed to work = *worked*

11

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Procedural knowledge (PRO) is:

- **Knowledge about <u>how to</u> perform various mental procedures, activities or behaviours/knowledge, or how to use the system.**

  E.g. Automatic and error-free production of 3rd person singular verbs in the present simple tense.

- **Implicit knowledge.**

  E.g.: "has worked" is directly accessed to/produced without any conscious recourse to its underlying grammar rules.

12

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A question to ponder …

1)   'Knowledge about' a language is very different from 'knowing how to' speak it. So, if your goal is to be a fluent speaker in the L2, is it useful at all to understand how the L2 works?

A crossroads between two different cases…

a)   Think about naturalistic learners… (no formal instruction; listening and speaking)

b) But, is the following familiar to you?
An L2 English learner knows that the canonical word order in indirect questions in English is S V O… However, during spontaneous conversation, (s)he ends up saying, * "Could you tell me where is the post office, please?"

Prototypical situation of most Spanish adolescents when they finish secondary school: they cannot speak or write English correctly and fluently despite knowing grammar rules and vocabulary…
That means: the system is not efficient in ELT.

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EXTENSIVE AND ADEQUATE PRACTICE
so that attention is gradually deviated from forms to the correct and automatic transmission of meaning

13

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- **The role of Automatisation is "getting a skill right when minimal attention is available for getting it right" (Johnson, 1994: 126).**

- Example: A seven-year course in cigar rolling (Crossman, 1959)

Another crucial question…

2) How does the learner automatise, i.e., move from the first stage of full conscious attention to the state of effortless (and correct) production?

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Anderson's model of skill learning or
ACT-R *(Adaptive Control of Thought Rational)*

14

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Anderson's model of skill learning or ACT-R
(*Adaptive Control of Thought-Rational*)

(Anderson, 1982, 1987, 2005; Anderson & Fincham, 1994; Anderson *et al.,* 2004)

► **Foreign language mastery consists of the skill of being able to produce and understand (i.e. process) language quickly.**

► **Anderson's model has been applied to SLA by Criado-Sánchez (2008); DeKeyser (1997, 1998); Johnson (1994, 1996); O'Malley *et al.* (1987), etc.**

► **DeKeyser (1998: 48): "Anderson's is the most widely accepted model in the cognitive psychology of skill acquisition".**

► **Language learning is analogous to other types of complex cognitive skill acquisition (mathematics, engineering, geometry) in**

1) the representation of information in memory and

2) the mental processes involved in the achievement of language mastery

15

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► Why Anderson's model?

Specification of the processes and stages towards language expertise:

Declarative knowledge

↓

Procedural knowledge

↓

Automatised knowledge

through 3 different successive stages.

DECPRO (Krashen's learning)

As applied to language learning and following on from the past tense example,

1) **Declarative stage:** The teacher may begin with the explanation of how the past tense is built. This information has to be memorised by the student (i.e. stored in long-term memory), so that it may be later retrieved, when needed, in order to apply the rule.

2) **Procedural stage:** When the student wants to build and produce a verb in the past (i.e., to apply the rule in real language use, instead of just memorising a rule), the stored knowledge should be retrieved from long-term memory and held in working memory for conscious manipulation so that he/she can build the past of the verb with the previously acquired knowledge (which is the rule for forming the past).
      With much PRACTICE, declarative knowledge (how to build the past) eventually leads towards procedural knowledge, that is, towards automatic application of the rule so that conscious manipulation is less and less necessary (see below and slide 23).

3) **Autonomous stage:** Complete proceduralisation or automatisation. After abundant PRACTICE, there emerges automatic and error free production of past tense verbs in fluent oral or written communication/interaction.

16

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Dangers of *PRO* alone…

- **Criado-Sánchez (2008: 117)**

  - **Naturalistic learners are more likely to draw on language chunks rooted in meaning rather than in language structures (O'Malley *et al*., 1987). This might give the illusory impression of effective communication, given the quick development of such chunks.**

  - **However, this efficacy may be counterproductive in the long term as the interlanguage becomes less apt to restructuring changes (Skehan, 1998).**

  - **Johnson (2008: 93-94): the *Fish-and-Chips Syndrome.***
  *"Give to me fish and chips".
  "I'd like fish and chips, please".

  - **Some learners seem to reach a stage beyond which they fail to make any further progress (Cancino *et al.,* 1978; Saphira, 1978). This leads to the stabilization of erroneous forms or productions: FOSSILISATION.**

  - **The expected remedial teaching action in a formal learning context is to ensure that *DEC* follows *PRO (PRODEC)* with explicit didactic strategies*.***

- **Thus in a formal learning setting: *DECPRO* and *PRODEC* (but not *PRO* alone).**

17

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Being fluent in an L2 concerns both reception and production. Two approaches:
COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT AND COMPREHENSIBLE OUTPUT

Comprehensible Input (CI) (Krashen, 1982, 1985).

– All you need for acquisition to take place is CI, i.e. input or exposure to language which the students can comprehend (either by seeing it or hearing it).

– Such input should be slightly above their productive level (roughly tuned input or i + 1)

– But: CI challenged by studies of immersion classes in Canada (Harley and Swain, 1984): CI alone, although good to develop fluency and knowledge of lexical chunks, did not imply the acquisition of all language patterns.

Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1983, 1998; Pica, 1994)

Comprehensible Output (CO) (Swain, 1985, 1994, 1995, 2005).

Functions of output practice:

1) To help learners get access to more input.

2) To provide an opportunity to learners to test and get feedback on their hypotheses about how the L2 works.

3) To call the learners' attention to things they do not know or cannot do, perhaps prompting them to focus on these items on subsequent input.

18

The importance of feedback (DeKeyser, 2007c)

Example: Manchón and Murphy (2002: 23):

T: Tell me, Juan, what did you do yesterday?

*S: *Yesterday, I goed to the cinema.*

Ta: OK, so you <u>went</u> to the cinema. And what else did you do? [implicit negative evidence in the form of a recast]

Tb: <u>No, Juan, you say "I went to the cinema"</u> [explicit negative evidence]

Traditionally, teachers have associated practice to *productive practice*.

Different types of practice should be implemented in the language classroom to allow for the consecutive development of declarative, procedural and automatic knowledge.

1) DEVELOPMENT OF DECLARATIVE KNOWLEDGE
Focus-on-Form activities: fill-in-the-blanks, sentence-combining, some forms of translation, etc. (Criado-Sánchez, 2008; DeKeyser, 1998)

E.g. *ENGLISH FILE UPPER INTERMEDIATE* (2001).
O.U.P. FILE 6C. Activity Practice A (p. 98). See slide 22

- **The objective is "accuracy", in the sense that no attention to meaning is needed to rewrite the sentences correctly and that the student has to stick to a single (restricted) model of an answer.**

- **However, the final purpose of this exercise should be to check and refine the declarative knowledge underlying the formal structure of contrast clauses (see next point).**

- **There should be enough time to develop declarative knowledge! Students should be given loads of practice and teachers should not expect them to reproduce forms accurately and automatically right after rules have been explained.**

20

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2) ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP PROCEDURALISATION, i.e., the establishment of form-meaning connections in language processing (instead of exclusive attention to form)

Possible types of exercises: Meaningful and communicative drills

DRILL: A traditional type of a productive practice activity →
Language repetition by means of a cue provided by the teacher to the student, who has to respond to such a cue.

– "Could I have some (milk, water, cola)?"
– Teacher: *Milk.* (Cue)
– Student: *Could I have some milk?* (Response)
– T: *Water.*
– S: *Could I have some water?*

Paulston (1972): mechanical, meaningful and communicative drills

21

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2.1. Mechanical drill: no focus on meaning but on repetition of structures/forms.
(I) have the book
(She) has the book

DeKeyser (2007b: 11): "mechanical drills can only serve a very limited purpose, because they do not make the learner engage in what is the essence of language processing, i.e., establishing form-meaning connections".
(The establishment of form-meaning connections = starting of proceduralisation)

E.g. *ENGLISH FILE UPPER INTERMEDIATE* (2001). O.U.P. FILE 6C. Activity Practice A (p. 98)
This exercise is useful from the point of view of *form* learning: to master the correct structure underlying contrast clauses, i.e. how contrast clauses are formed (regardless of the actual meaning of the sentences).

22

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Meaningful drill: some sort of attention is centred on meaning as well as on form
A: Is this a pen or a pencil?
B: It is a pen.
(DeKeyser, 1998: 50)

Communicative drill: the primary goal is the transmission of content whilst emphasising form as well.
Teacher: What would you do if you were a priest and a criminal confessed to you that he's planning a crime?
Student A: I would call the police.
Student B: I wouldn't call the police.
Teacher: Why?
Student B: Because priests cannot do that. I would not tell anyone.
(Criado-Sánchez, 2008: 77).

↓

Sánchez and Criado-Sánchez (in press): *In so far as drilling is meaningful, it can be considered useful 'repetitive practice'*
(to attain mastery of both form and meaning. Without attention to meaning, any language learning experience is useless)

VALUE OF REPETITION ATTACHED TO LEARNING BY COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGISTS AND SECOND/FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCHERS (DeKeyser, 2007b)

E.g. *ENGLISH FILE UPPER INTERMEDIATE* **(2001). O.U.P. FILE 6C. Activity Practice b (pp. 98 and 99)**

23

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3) ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP AUTOMATISATION

– **Extensive practice of open-ended or communicative activities which require negotiation of meaning between interlocutors (listening/speaking) or consideration of audience (reading/writing):**

summarising or finishing aural or written texts, discussions, debates, extended roleplays and simulations, problem-solving, essays, etc.

E.g. *ENGLISH FILE UPPER INTERMEDIATE.* O.U.P. (2001).

File 6A.

– *Write Better.* Activity 4c (p. 87)

– *Making Conversation* (not the *Get It Right* part), p. 90

FILE 6C. Activity Practice C (p. 99)

24

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Always remember that practice in a single activity and in a single lesson does not account for the complete declarativisation, proceduralisation and full automatisation of the language and skills targeted at!

25

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Why does secondary school teaching sometimes fail?

Extrapolation from the "study abroad" situation to the language classroom (DeKeyser, 2007c):

1) **Lack of real practice time**
2) **Lack of opportunities for proceduralisation**
3) **Lack of explicit and immediate feedback** [remember Johnson's *Fish-and-Chips* syndrome!]
4) **Lack of active negotiation of meaning**
5) **Lack of conditions for ample comprehensible input**
6) **Poor motivation**
7) **Requirements: low standards in FL knowledge**

THINK ABOUT SPANISH SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

a) **Lack of reliability of final exams: students typically pass them with no consolidation of the knowledge which should have been acquired.**
b) **Lack of time and of hours within the syllabus devoted to ELT (Germany: 6 ELT weekly hours vs Spain: approx. 3-4 ELT weekly hours)**
c) **Sometimes: Overcrowded classrooms**
d) **Few opportunities for real practice**
e) **And film dubbing!**

26

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Thornbury (2005: 28): *Frequently, training and practice in the* **skill** *of interactive real-time talk, with all its attendant discourse features, is relegated to the chat stage at the beginning and end of lessons. It is this lack of genuine speaking opportunities which accounts for many students' feeling that, however much grammar and vocabulary they know, they are insufficiently prepared for speaking in the world beyond the classroom.*

27

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Broadly speaking, there are two main types of skill activities: Focused and unfocused

1) **Focused skill activities:**

- Their main objective is language forms, either structures or lexis

- Presentation and/or controlled practice (not semi-open or open/free)

- Language is contextualised in aural or written texts

- In the case of receptive activities, the aural or written text is used as a *pretext* for the study of language

- In the case of productive activities, see Unit 7, slides 50-52, 60):

  – For speaking: language practice as objective and accuracy/fluency as focus; for writing, writing as a means and as a means and as an end as the writing objectives.

  E.g. *ENGLISH FILE UPPER INTERMEDIATE* (2001). O.U.P. File 6C.
  -Activity 1e from *Read Better* (p. 97)
  -Activity Practice A (pp. 98 and 99).

28

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2) Unfocused skill activities:

- not primarily focused on language study and practice
- their main objective is the message of the text, by means of reading/listening (receptive) practice or speaking/writing (productive) practice.
- types of activities:

2.a. Short answer questions or recognition questions (yes/no, true/false…), whose answer is known by the teacher;

2.b. Short or long questions
– to which the teacher does not have a definite answer and/or
– where the student can freely express him/herself without any previously planned or guided model of a response.

E.g. *ENGLISH FILE UPPER INTERMEDIATE* (2001). O.U.P.
File 6A
    (2.b.) Activity 4c from *Write Better* (p. 87)
    (2.b.) *Making Conversation* (not the *Get It Right* section), p. 90

File 6
    (2.a.) All *Read Better* section except for 1e (pp. 96-97)
    (2.a.) Listen Better, activities 2a-2c until "Do you feel sorry for him" (pp. 97);
      Listen Better (p. 98)
    (2.b.) Listen Better, activity 2.c ("Do you feel sorry for him"?), p. 97
    (2.b.) *Making Conversation* (not the *Get It Right* part), p. 98

29

FOCUSED AND UNFOCUSED SKILL ACTIVITIES FROM A COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

1) **Focused skill activities** help towards initial or consolidation of declarativisation and the beginning of proceduralisation.

   Teaching implication from a cognitive perspective: Focused skill activities are aimed at declarativisation and the beginning of proceduralisation of grammar and vocabulary (which go across the four skills)

2) **Unfocused skill activities help towards**

a) **Proceduralisation and automatisation (the latter especially in advanced levels) in both receptive and productive skill activities**

b) **Remember the functions of output practice for speaking and writing activities (slide 18): output practice can also develop and restructure declarative knowledge**

   Teaching implication from a cognitive perspective (see slide 31)

30

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– **Teaching implication from a cognitive perspective (2.a.):**
Given the cognitive implication from focused activities,

- **Receptive skill work** should be implemented in the language classroom when the students are able to process the language sufficiently at least to extract meaning, whether the language has been roughly-tuned (remember Krashen's CI) or the language is completely authentic (for advanced students). (Harmer, 1991).

- **Productive skill work** should be implemented when in the language classroom when the students are able to respond to input somewhat "fluently" regardless of their level, i.e. without a great amount of hesitations so that they manage to convey their message (regardless of possible accuracy mistakes).

√ **Following the DECPRO cognitive sequence → Comprehension (receptive skills) should precede production (productive skills)** (Criado-Sánchez, 2008: 114)

– **Teaching implication from a cognitive perspective (2.b):**
RECYCLING (in similar and divergent functions, contexts and skill types)

31

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– **Transfer of declarative knowledge between reading and writing and listening and speaking (DeKeyser 2007b)**

– **Remember the functions of output practice**

– **Evidence from teaching experience and expertise: transfer from reading to writing (Williams, 1998: 5):**

Reading is especially important because it provides L2 learners with exposure to vocabulary, spelling, structures, and usage that learners may not get from everyday conversation or even from lectures, thus improving the quality and range of input they get. Reading is important for native speakers as well: skilful writers and writers with rich vocabularies are usually also extensive readers.

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√ **Remember that grammar and vocabulary go across the four skills (slide 10).**

√ **Besides grammar and lexis, there can also be transfer from reading to writing and from listening to speaking in the conventions and structural organisation of writing and of formal and informal speech**

32

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– **Some <u>empirical</u> evidence about the specificity of skills: DeKeyser & Sokalski (1996) and DeKeyser (1997)**

- **Along the predictions of skill theory, input *practice* is better for comprehension skills while output *practice* is better for *production* skills**

- **However, far more *practice* than what the subjects actually received is necessary to precisely, "assess the effect of long-term systematic comprehension and production practice on the automatisation processes" (DeKeyser & Sokalski, 1996: 105).**

33

And finally, remember…

"Second Language Acquisition [or FLL] takes a long time; for many, the process never ends" (Williams,1998: 11)

34

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