Design – is it all in your head?

Shaping classroom discourse with Advanced Learners of Military English

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Overview

1. challenges and opportunities of teaching on content-based language teaching (CBLT) courses for military professionals at higher levels – the positive relationship between attention to form and comprehension of content
2. CBLT provides rich subject-specific input, and tasks situate language as meaningful discourse (Valeo 2013. P27)
3. languaging and student agency as means to learning
4. Components of specific purpose language ability (Douglas) in focus on CBLT courses
5. Teacher and learner-led discourse (TLD/LLD)
6. Example of CBLT on a military English course at MA level and the sustained output the students produced
Higher level professional student groups are characterized by students with/by (recap)

- well-developed knowledge and awareness of the language they are learning
- diverse language learning needs and deficits that are complex to address because they require the learner to develop even more sophisticated or analyzed knowledge of the language
- more experience of using professional language (at least their own) and genres than the teachers themselves
- professional confidence - a positive -often leads to initiative and risk taking
Some appropriate aims for advanced language learning based on surveys of the literature (based on Ellis 2008)

1. building a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence
2. attending to developing implicit knowledge of the second language while not neglecting explicit knowledge
3. creating as many opportunities for *languaging* as possible
4. giving the students as many opportunities to interact in the second language as possible – *sustained output* (Ellis)
Swain – “Languaging”

Speaking, writing, collaborative dialogue, private speech, verbalizing about language issues

Collaborative dialogue is dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem-solving and knowledge-building/co-constructing knowledge – in the case of second language learners, solving linguistic problems and building/co-constructing knowledge about language

(Swain 2000; 2002; 2006)
What type of discourse best facilitates languaging – Teacher-led discourse (TLD) or Learner-led discourse (LLD)?

Toth (2008 pp.270-272)
### Scaffolding functions of TLD (Källkvist 2013 p. 223)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R - Recruitment:</th>
<th>enlisting the learner’s interest in the task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RDF - Reduction in degrees of freedom:</td>
<td>simplifying the task by reducing the number of constituent acts required to reach a solution</td>
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<td>DM - Direction maintenance:</td>
<td>keeping the learner motivated and in pursuit of the objective</td>
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<td>MCF - Marking critical features:</td>
<td>highlighting certain relevant features and marking discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution</td>
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<td>FC - Frustration control:</td>
<td>reducing stress and frustration during problem solving</td>
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<td>D - Demonstration:</td>
<td>modelling solutions to a task or explicating the learner’s partial solution</td>
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Components of specific purpose language ability 
(Douglas 2000, p. 23)

1 - Language Knowledge

Grammatical knowledge
Knowledge of vocabulary, morphology and syntax, and, phonology

Textual knowledge
Knowledge of cohesion and knowledge of rhetorical and conversational organization

Functional Knowledge
Knowledge of ideational functions, manipulative functions, heuristic functions, and imaginative functions

Sociolinguistic knowledge
Knowledge of dialects/varieties, registers, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references
2 - Strategic Competence

Assessment
- Evaluating communicative situation or test task and engaging an appropriate discourse domain
- Evaluating the correctness or appropriateness of the response

Goal Setting
- Deciding how (or whether) to respond to the communicative situation

Planning
- Deciding what elements from language knowledge and background knowledge are required to reach the established goal

Control of execution
- Retrieving and organizing the appropriate elements of language knowledge to carry out the plan
3- Background Knowledge

**Discourse Domains**

Frames of reference based on past experience which we use to make sense of current input and make predictions about that which is to come.
Student Agency

If we define it as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn 2001 p. 112)?

Or

believe that learning depends on the activity and the initiative of the learner (Vygotsky, Dewey, van Lier)?
Example - a series of lessons used with students on an MA course
The Group and CBLT teaching setting

- all AF Majors on an MA course during a six-week single service period towards the end of term 2 (had English once-a-week)
- The first two lessons were teacher-led and the last four learner-led
- had already done a number of tasks in English including making presentations and preparing discussions
- had all demonstrated a great interest in languaging and integrating course literature into classroom activities
- in feedback tutorials they had reported that they found such activities and personal feedback very useful as they placed more motivating demands on them and were directly related to their immediate content and language learning needs
Aims of the phase

- to get them to try to analyze how they would organize and lead a seminar in English in terms of the linguistic aspects of such a task
- to improve their awareness of the effect different question types would have on the progress of the discussion in such contexts
- to improve their ability to exploit the literature to select and learn new words and phrases to increase the range of vocabulary
- to improve their ability to exploit the literature to select and learn functional phrases that can be used effectively when participating in speaking events of this nature
Lesson 1 - Tasks 1 and 2

1. When you are leading a seminar or any other type of formal professional discussion, how do you prepare in advance?
2. In what way is facilitating a seminar comparable to leading other types of meeting? How is it distinct?
3. How do you deal with participants contributions on such occasions?
4. How do you ensure that the discussion develops and is fruitful?
5. How do you formulate questions and what types of questions work best?
In pairs prepare an overview of how you would structure a seminar. Describe how you would open and close the seminar and what you do in the intermittent phases in order to promote an effective and coherent discussion.
Outcomes of the activities

- task 1 generated an interesting discussion about distinctions between language use in military and non-military contexts, turn-taking conventions in Swedish and other language cultures, cultural perceptions about being direct and indirect and how to respond in ways that encourage the interest and further participation of others and the use of open questioning techniques.
- task 2 generated interesting overviews which they illustrated through the flow charts.
- both tasks generated ideas for some brief functional grammar and vocabulary exercises that I designed for further lessons, including dealing with digressions, using contrasting and balancing phrases for effect.
- see page 3 of the handout for task 3 – a heavy languaging session.
Student vocab selections by lesson 5 of 6 – Chapter 3 Bombing to Win

1. Aerial punishment/punishment strategies (P.59)
2. Punitive effects (P.59)
3. Industrial web theory (P.62)
4. The manipulation of risk (p.66)
5. Denial strategies (P.70)
6. Strategic interdiction (P.72)
7. Operational interdiction (P.72)
8. Induce operational paralysis (P.72)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Facilitators</th>
<th>Chapter to prepare seminar on</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>P &amp;P</td>
<td>16 A History of Air Warfare Air Space Power</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>T &amp; M</td>
<td>3 Bombing to Win Air Power and Coercion in War</td>
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<td>February 27</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>A &amp; M</td>
<td>Italy Air OP WW 2 (Kesserlings Memoirs/Wolfram von Richthovens Biography)</td>
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<td>March 4</td>
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Salerno

- Areas around Foggia AF
- Range of Air Power
- Montecorvino airfield
- Carrier aviation
- Apulian Air Bases
- FAC used by US
- Hitler turned a deaf ear to the most self-evident tactical demands.
- Rommel’s idea was to evacuate south and central Italy
- Air Fleet 2 went to action

Key factors (Eisenhower)
1. Air protection
2. Early capture of an airfield
Language learning

language learning is defined broadly, as

changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs about language systems, genres etc., both in participants accounts of their experience and in tutor accounts through assessed work and feedback (a definition derived after Borg 2011).
Main References


