Take Home Final

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Question 1

The linguist Stephen Krashen came up with a set of theories regarding language acquisition. Among these is his input theory which states that a language learner acquires language through acquisition of the target language that is one step beyond their current comprehension. This is known as ‘i+1’, with ‘i’ being the learner’s current level of understanding and the ‘+1’ being the next stage in comprehension. Although this seems simple and straightforward, this theory does not explain the complexity of such a situation and can be problematic when applying it to a real world classroom setting. These issues are highlighted in a study done by Mark Payne of the University of Sheffield. Payne attempted to apply this to his class of French learners and discovered problems before the application even occurred (2011). For example, given a class of thirty students with mixed levels of learning styles, previous target language knowledge, and learning speeds, how can the level ‘i’ be agreed on? If the level ‘i’ is agreed on, what is the next step up from that? It is difficult to find a stage that is just beyond all of the students’ level given these previously stated factors. The study also came across the issue of potentially drilling the phrases into the students’ heads without providing meaning, thus the students would know the phrase but not the meaning and would be unable to properly use the phrase on their own (2011). If I were teaching a classroom full of students, I would take parts of Krashen’s theory, providing my students with input in the target language, and make sure that they understand the new input rather than just memorizing it. In a classroom setting, Krashen’s theory would probably work best with a group of students all at the same level and who learn at the same rate. However, that is not realistic and I, therefore, would make sure I understand the level all my students are at before teaching them new material. Although it would not be possible to tailor my teaching style to each individual student, I would do my best to give the students who have more knowledge of the target language more of a challenge, rather than ignoring them in favour of teaching the students who do not know the target language.

References

Payne, Mark. (2011). Exploring Stephen Krashen's ‘i + 1’ acquisition model in the classroom. *Linguistics and Education, volume 22,* 419-429. Retrieved from <https://www-sciencedirect-com.library2.csumb.edu:2248/science/article/pii/S089858981100057X?via%3Dihub#>!.

Question 2

According to James Cummins, there are two areas of language proficiency: BICS and CALP. BICS, which stands for basic interpersonal communications skills, is the proficiency that language learners display in social settings. CALP, which stands for cognitive academic language proficiency, is the competence displayed in an academic setting. An article by James Bylund connects the work done by Cummins and a Russian psychologist by the name of Vygotsky who was studying the connection between language and thought several years earlier than Cummins. The article claims that the work done by both men promote the placing of students in foreign language classes due to the benefits seem in the development of the students’ native language. More specifically, the student is able to better development the CALP area of their native language due to the learning of a foreign language. The student is able to see the “linguistic operations” of their native language due to the teachings in the foreign language (Vygotsky, 1986/1934 as cited in Bylund, 2011). In my classroom, I would create assignments that would foster development of both BICS and CALP. For example, I would have academic papers and discussions in class. However, I would also have group projects that would be informal and enable development of BICS. I would also encourage my students to meet up outside of class and practice the target language together in an informal setting. Pairing up the students or grouping them together for regular class work and also projects would be beneficial to the development of BICS but having them be grouped together for projects could also help foster the development of CALP. Grouping the students up can also support the students who are struggling with the target language.

References

Bylund, James. (2011). Thought and second language: a Vygotskian framework for understanding BICS and CALP. *Communique, volume 39.5,* 4+. Retrieved from <http://go.galegroup.com.library2.csumb.edu:2048/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T002&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&currentPosition=2&docId=GALE%7CA253927404&docType=Report&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=&prodId=AONE&contentSet=GALE%7CA253927404&searchId=R6&userGroupName=csumb_main&inPS=true>.

Question 3

The phonology of African American English, or Ebonics, differs from Standard American English in noticeable ways. For example, the /r/ is deleted in words, except before a vowel in Black English. The /l/ is also removed for some speakers. In African American English, consonant clusters are simplified, meaning that instead of all the consonants being articulated, they would get simplified to a single consonant sound. Before a nasal consonant, the distinction between the vowel sounds of /I/ and /ε/ is lost and they end up sounding the same. Furthermore, the distinction between /aj/ and /aw/ has been removed, leading the two sounds to become /a/. African American English also differs from Standard American English in that it reduces /⊃j/ to [o] without the glide. In addition to these differences, Ebonics also changes /θ/ and /δ/ to f and v respectively. Because language affects our identity and our acceptance into certain groups, I would not only allow but encourage the use of Black English in my classroom. If my students speak this way, then I would do my best to allow them to express themselves in the way they feel fits their identity best. However, I would want my students to demonstrate Standard American English on academic papers and assignments. I do not know the impact Ebonics has on the written word, however, I would not allow it on formal, academic writing. In addition to formal papers, I would also give my students more personal writing assignments that I would allow the use of African American English on, as the papers would be an expression of their identity and their goals. In regards to presentations, if the assignment was very formal and academic then I would expect the use of Standard American English. However, if the presentation is less formal and more on a personal level, then I would allow the use of African American English.

Question 4

Because Chicano English is based on Spanish, it imposes some Spanish characteristics on the English language. Due to this imposition, Chicano English has five vowel phonemes, as opposed to English’s eleven. Chicano English also differs from Standard American English in the alternation of /tʃ/ and /ʃ/. Additionally, some consonants become devoiced, as seen in the word guys with the last consonantal sound. The /θ/ and the /δ/ also get replaced with /t/ and /d/ respectively. As in African American English, Chicano English also simplifies consonant clusters found at the end of words. Furthermore, Chicano English may remove past tense suffixes and delete third person singular agreement. The impact of Spanish rules on English can also be seen in the addition of a sound in front of a word starting with an /s/ cluster. In Spanish a word cannot start with the letter “s” and that rule gets carried over into Chicano English. Just like Ebonics being an expression of identity and culture for African American people, Chicano English is a sign of identity and culture for Latino people. Therefore, I would do my best to encourage it being used by my students. However, in a formal, academic paper, I would want my students to write in Standard American English. While in groups, informal papers, informal discussions, and informal presentations I would allow and encourage my students to express themselves in the way they feel is best. As a teacher, I would encourage my students to interact with each other in whichever dialect they feel most comfortable in and if my students speak Chicano English, then I would want them to use that dialect. Identity is expressed through language and I want my students to express that identity in any way that they feel best represents them.

Question 5

Being able to speak in a standard and local dialect allows the speaker to be understood by different communities in different places. However, as it is impossible to be completely without bias and judgement, humans will impose stereotypes on certain groups of people based on their local dialect. The film *American Tongues* discusses the various dialects spoken throughout the United States (1988). Certain dialects, such as the dialect spoken in the South, hold the stereotype of the speakers not being very well educated. Other dialects, such as Ebonics, is only used by a certain group of people, as opposed to a certain region, and therefore, the dialect is used as an identifier for that group. Given the different slang used in different parts of the country, there is also a chance of miscommunication occurring when people inadvertently use a word that is a slang word in other parts of the country. However, dialects are also expressions of identity and the use of it can promote acceptance within the groups who use it. For example, the filmmakers interview a group of young, black women who all use varying degrees of African American English. One of the girls did not use it as much as the others and was therefore, lightly teased for the lack of usage. The teasing was not malicious but she was identified for not using the dialect as much as her peers did. Not only can the usage of local dialects mean being accepted into groups, it also can be a way of self-expression. The film interviewed some people from New York where one person used the local dialect more than his peers did. He used that dialect to express his roots and heritage as well as also expressing his cultural identity. The usage of local and standard dialects allows cultural groups to grow, as it is a way to honour one’s heritage and also one’s identity.

References

Alvarez, Louis (Producer and Director), & Kolker, Andrew (Producer and Director). (1988). *American Tongues* [Motion Picture]. United States.