CHAPTER VII
PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Introductory

The pedagogical implications presented in this chapter have been suggested by actual teacher and learner behaviour in the classroom, as captured by the taperecorder. Specific instances of data analysis reveal that certain aspects of behaviour facilitate while others hinder uptake.

As the teacher and learners interact, their behaviour would be more appropriately viewed as a whole. However, for convenience of organizing the suggestions, teacher behaviour will be focussed on first. Some general aspects of teacher behaviour which have adversely affected uptake all through the data are mentioned at the outset and next the more specific instances.

7.2 Clarity of Presentation

7.2.1 Use of blackboard

As the teacher in this data did not use the blackboard at all, students were often deprived of the visual stimulus representing the form of a word. The audio stimuli do not always suggest the correct spelling. Learners strained themselves to listen but often in vain. Some asked for the
spelling, others gave up the effort and reported words with incorrect spellings, in which case the claimed items were rejected as uptake. In this connection, Kathleen Bailey (1980) reporting her experience of learning French as a second language says:

It was so hard to hear what she (the teacher) was saying. I copied most of the vocabulary that she wrote on the blackboard, ...... The written words were so tangible, unlike the elusive spoken words that went in one side of my short term memory and out the other.

The need to use the blackboard as an aid to teaching is thus evident and should be stressed in every FL/SL teaching-learning situation.

7.2.2 Pre-class preparation

It is extremely necessary that teachers should put in sufficient, careful, pre-class preparation. Without such preparation a teacher is obliged to think out explanations, and to improvise examples on the spot. The result may often be very unsatisfactory. The right explanations/examples may not come to mind, (as for instance, in the case of 'resorting to' in Chapter V, Part (i)). Further, under pressure of eager, inquiring faces, the teacher is likely to hesitate, elaborate, break off, rephrase a sentence so that input gets rather vague and incoherent and therefore difficult to process. Hence, the need to prepare explanations before class.
7.2.3 Need to check, clarify, reinforce

A point that follows from (7.2.2) above is that teachers should constantly check if learners have processed input correctly and got at the right meaning. By making constant checks, teachers may eventually be able to judge how input is being received and processed so that they may modify it and render it comprehensible instead of thoughtlessly continuing with a lesson plan after it has ceased to be relevant. It is extremely important to recapitulate, check, clarify, reinforce and then proceed.

7.2.4 Processing and anticipating learner problems

Teachers themselves need to be able to process learners' difficulties and anticipate learners' problems. This is no easy task as it requires an insight into the working of learners' minds. However, interviews with learners on a regular basis can prove very rewarding if learners could be induced to regard them as part of the teaching learning experience.

7.2.5 Providing more than one example

It was observed that the category of 'the teacher giving an example' was useful as it had the potential for uptake. However, it was noticed that sometimes more than one example was necessary to enable learners to process the meaning correctly. Further, it would be necessary for teachers to check whether the meaning had been correctly
processed. (For instance, the example given to explain 'resorting to' was processed differently by three different learners).

7.2.6 Providing appropriate quality of treatment

Appropriate quality of treatment is as important as variety of treatment. In fact, sometimes a single appropriate category of treatment can lead to uptake.

7.2.7 Providing clear and focussed input

Next, learning opportunities issuing from the teacher should be clear and focussed. Needless elaboration ought to be avoided and pronominal references should be made clear.

7.2.8 Using familiar concepts

It was noticed that examples that presented concepts already familiar to learners were easier to process. (For example, thumb-impression used by voters who are 'illiterate'). Hence the need to carefully think out examples.

7.2.9 Using gestures

Gestures, it was observed, play an important role in facilitating uptake. (For example, see discussion on 'harvest' and 'barbed wire' in Chapter V, Part (vi)). Hence, teachers should not feel inhibited to use appropriate gestures in the classroom.
7.2.10 **Resisting the temptation to introduce words alike in some way**

The strategy of introducing words that were alike in some way (for example, expect, except, accept; pain, pane; verse, worse, worst) was found to impose an undue burden on the learners' minds and so interfered with uptake. The words were close and yet not so close in spelling as to relieve the mind of the burden of keeping them apart. Teachers should guard against the temptation of introducing such pairs or groups of words.

7.2.11 **Introducing the basic rules of English spelling**

It has been noticed that a polysyllabic word with a difficult pronunciation/spelling may not be uptaken by learners even if overall treatment is substantial. Therefore, it would be a good idea to teach learners certain basic rules of English spelling, syllabic division and simple rules regarding pronunciation and stress.

7.3 **Encouraging Participation**

7.3.1 **Teacher's ability to understand mother-tongue responses**

FL/SL learners often respond in the mother tongue to the teacher's classroom questions. If the teacher is unable to comprehend the learners' mother tongue contributions, the results can be frustrating, even disastrous (as for example in the case of the protracted
exchange on 'pain' in Chapter V, Part (i)). Thus, even if a teacher is unable to speak the learners' mother tongue, she should at least learn to comprehend it. It may not be necessary to speak the language because it is advisable to use the target language so that learners are provided with exposure to it.

The standard objection to the above would perhaps be teacher mobility and the fact that most classrooms are heterogeneous.

7.3.2 Allowing 'wait-time'

It is very important after posing a question, to allow the learners to formulate brief responses. In the present data, the teacher frequently gets impatient and answers the questions herself. Long and Porter (1985) say that the research done by Rowe (1974) and White and Lightbown (1983) "has shown that if students pause longer than about one second before beginning to respond or while making a response ............ teachers will tend to interrupt, repeat or rephrase the question, ask a different one, "correct", and/or switch to another student. Not all teachers do these things, of course, but most teachers do so more than they realize or would want to admit." After identifying several co-occurring features which are characteristic of good teacher-student interaction
Cazden (1987) mentions an additional feature called 'wait-time' which elapses between turns. Further, he refers to Rowe (1986) and Tobin (1986), both of whom have spoken of the value of 'wait-time' in teacher-student interaction. Chaudron (1985) reporting Hatch (1983) also refers to the usefulness of allowing learners more processing time. The teacher in the present data is generally in too much haste to allow such 'wait-time' to learners who are in no position to answer promptly. Learner contributions would be forthcoming if teachers allow the necessary "wait-time".

7.3.3 Avoiding monopoly of talk

Yet another drawback that teachers need to guard against is that of monopolising talk. When the teacher monopolises talk there is no room for negotiation of meaning through learner participation. The teacher in the present data is sometimes a victim of this trait and especially in Lesson 5. The lesson tapescripts suggest that learners generally tune out of lengthy teacher talk. They prefer to interact and negotiate the meaning but often lack the skill and the language to do so.

7.3.4 Inviting learner involvement

Further, when learners hesitate to seek clarifications, hesitate to negotiate meaning, teachers can draw them into the talk by asking pointed, leading questions. Constant
effort would have to be put in, to bring in even small rewards. Teachers may have to make available opportunities for pupils to respond, to ask questions and be actively involved. The teacher in the present data deliberately changed her teaching strategy in Lesson 6 (See Chapter V, Part (vi)) with encouraging results.

7.3.5 Encouraging small-group talk

It has been observed that sometimes learners who feel inhibited to take turns publicly, talk in small groups, checking on each other's understanding of teacher input. Such small group talk should be encouraged. Later the teacher may check what is going on in the small groups and the class could share it.

7.3.6 Encouraging mother-tongue contributions

Further, spontaneous learner contributions (even in the mother-tongue) should be encouraged as they provide input and learning opportunities to other learners. According to Seliger (1983), "... it is a truism that learners provide feedback and input to each other in various ways". Even when a learner contribution is incorrect, it is valuable as it generates further interaction among learners or between learners and the teacher.
7.3.7 **Being sensitive to learners' needs**

Finally, teachers should be sensitive to the learners' need to seek clarifications and not discourage them by showing haste to get on with the lesson. Learners in turn must learn to stop the lesson and seek the necessary help in processing it.

7.4 **Learner Training**

7.4.1 **Training learners in the skill of meaning negotiation**

From (7.3.3) above it follows that if instead of supplying answers and giving meanings, teachers provide hints, suggestions, clues, then learners are likely to respond and interaction may be promoted. Teachers have to gradually train learners in the skill of negotiating meaning.

The reader may have noticed that the discussion is already moving on from teacher behaviour into learner behaviour and what teachers should do to help learners.

7.4.2 **Helping learners to process teacher talk**

It has been observed that learners often find it difficult to process teacher talk. They lack the skill to infer meaning. They often miss pronominal and other anaphoric clues to meaning. Hence if teachers themselves help learners to process teacher talk by appropriate clues,
prodding and checking, learners may in course of time be able to sift and then put together relevant aspects of meaning which are diffused in teacher input.

7.4.3 Altering learners' study habits, learning strategies

Two rather serious drawbacks observed in learner behaviour were (a) a tendency to avoid looking into the text-book. Learners hardly ever looked into the book to note the form and spelling of words. (b) They seldom listened at length to what the teacher said. They would latch on to the first word/example and tune out. They switched off as soon as they had the slightest idea of what they had heard. This behaviour has been responsible for a number of errors. (See data analysis). Hence, it is very essential to train learners in continuous listening and in looking into the text-book. The teacher in the present data devised a strategy (in Lesson 6) to oblige learners to look into their books. She would ask learners to find out words from the book with the help of certain clues which she gave. The strategy proved rewarding, in general. Teachers would, therefore, have to find out ways and means of inducing learners to develop proper study habits and appropriate learning strategies and strategies for recalling words and meanings.

1The teacher in the present data does so but not consistently.
7.5 **Suggestions for Teacher Training**

A glance at the above implications and suggestions seems to indicate that most of these would be emphasised in any teacher training programme and would be familiar knowledge for any good teacher. The lesson tape transcripts however make it evident that even a teacher aware of much of this fails to put it into practice. Moreover, the reasons for confusing and/or misleading input have emerged more clearly from this study.

It seems therefore, a worthwhile possibility for future teacher training programmes to include audio recording of lessons and also learner interviews not merely for what they yield but also to train teachers in handling them.

Lastly, systematic pre-course learner-training would be an asset to any teaching programme. The learner training programme envisaged would aim at training learners to get rid of the faulty study habits and learning strategies which have been revealed through the present study and to develop proper learning habits. It would not be much use simply telling learners to do this, but tasks which oblige them to look into their books, to focus on spelling, to listen carefully and consistently would have to be devised. Training in creating learning opportunities, in obtaining feedback and in clarifying doubts would also be a part of the programme.
Further, a sense of awareness would have to be created in the learners so that any gains made are consolidated.

... it is not enough that we strive to help language learners to diversify their repertoire of strategies. A critical and informed awareness is necessary for the artful use of acquired skills.

- Wenden 1986.

It appears that an attempt to adopt Hosenfeld's (1979) views on the "twofold teacher's task" would prove amply rewarding. Hosenfeld (1979) suggests that teachers try "(1) to discover what students do as they perform foreign language tasks, and (2) to implement procedures in which strategies of skillful students provide a basis for remediation of strategies of unskillful students."

Perhaps the "two-fold task" recommended above would itself demand a certain amount of training which teacher training programmes would have to provide.

This chapter has presented the pedagogical implications from the study. The next chapter entitled 'Conclusions' gives the findings of the study.