CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

In this concluding chapter, the findings of the study will be presented.

8.1 What Facilitates Uptake?

8.1.1 Categories of treatment have a vital bearing on uptake

The categories which were assumed, in Chapter IV, to have the potential for uptake were tested against the data and found to be conducive to uptake. It was observed that uptake is boosted if learners work out the meaning with the help of relevant clues rather than being given the meaning

1 The list of categories is presented again to facilitate reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Learner</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Deliberately reinforces meaning.</td>
<td>2. Gives mother tongue meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Deliberately reinforces word.</td>
<td>3. Gives example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Elicits word by giving clue.</td>
<td>4. Guesses word in response to a clue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Elicits meaning by giving clue.</td>
<td>5. Guesses meaning in response to a clue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Clarifies meaning.</td>
<td>6. Checks on meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Corrects meaning/pronunciation.</td>
<td>7. Asks for example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Confirms meaning.</td>
<td>8. Confirms meaning through the mother tongue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Adds to meaning given by learner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Gives a near synonym.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1 The list of categories is presented again to facilitate reading.
straightaway. In the latter case deliberate reinforcement becomes necessary as an aid to recall. The category 'giving example' is specially conducive to uptake, because it lends itself to the weaving in of familiar knowledge and ideas which put learners into a state of readiness for uptake.

Thus, even if some of the categories in the assumed list (see footnote) were used, one could predict uptake, provided other factors in classroom interaction (discussed below) did not impede it. The actual number of categories used from the list at any one time would depend on the word-meaning being presented. It follows, therefore, that treatment has a vital bearing on uptake. A word inadequately treated may not be uptaken.

8.1.1.1 Learners' views on categories of treatment

According to learners, the categories which favour uptake are: use of example, repetition or reinforcement of word and meaning, use of word in context, and the giving of an easy synonym or mother tongue equivalent. They also considered the use of gestures or miming by the teacher a useful category.

8.1.2 Quality of treatment

Besides variation in treatment, quality of treatment has been observed to be a crucial factor in promoting uptake. In some cases, even a single powerful, appropriate category could lead to uptake.
8.1.3 Source of treatment

Apart from variation and quality of treatment, the source of treatment plays a significant role in facilitating uptake. Even when treatment was not adequate enough, a word was likely to be uptaken if a learner introduced it in the discourse. Learners generally tuned out of lengthy teacher-talk, and in such cases attended to what they themselves introduced in the discourse.

8.1.4 Easier spelling

Words that are inherently easy to spell and have easy equivalents in English or/and in the mother tongue of the learner were more easily uptaken.

8.1.5 Presence of interaction

In general, the presence of interaction correlated with the presence of uptake and absence of interaction with absence of uptake. Quite often at interview sessions, learners could recall bits of classroom interaction which had aided recall of word(s). The correlation between uptake and treatment is to be seen across the lessons.

8.1.6 Frequency of occurrence

According to learners frequency of occurrence is an important factor in facilitating uptake. The data, however, suggests that frequency by itself is of hardly any value
unless accompanied by interactive work. In conjunction with adequate treatment, frequency plays a distinctive role in facilitating uptake.

8.2 What Hinders Uptake?

8.2.1 Teacher input

8.2.1.1 Failure to use the blackboard

Even when a word is in an overall way adequately treated, its uptake may be impeded by one or the other drawbacks in the teaching, for example, the teacher's failing to highlight the spelling of a word on the blackboard.

8.2.1.2 Difficulty of processing input

In most cases, however, it was the general difficulty of processing teacher input that hindered uptake. This was because in attempting to use known words and structures, the teacher often repeated and hastily rephrased parts of sentences, with the result that her speech quite often sounded incoherent. Further, at times the teacher's attempts at elaborating and introducing extraneous material to explicate ideas, confused or misled learners because they could hardly keep track of pronominal references and other discourse markers.

8.2.1.3 Insufficient pre-class preparation

At times the teacher had not put in sufficient pre-class preparation and hence her attempts to think out
and express meanings of words on the spur of the moment. Such attempts seldom turned out to be satisfactory.

8.2.1.4 Confusing feedback

On other occasions, the teacher's inability to understand learners' genuine contributions and responses in the mother-tongue, either cut short the interaction or provided confusing feedback to learners, thereby interfering with uptake.

8.2.1.5 Teacher monopolises talk

Uptake was also impeded when the teacher monopolised talk leaving no room for negotiation of meaning.

8.2.1.6 Teacher insists on providing planned input

The teacher was intent on dealing with comprehension while learners were daunted by difficult words. Their queries generally related to word meaning or spelling. Their attempts to 'navigate' the teacher exasperated her. As the teacher and the learners were often at 'cross purposes' the lessons seldom progressed according to the teacher's plan. Learners' queries sometimes met with insufficient attention from the teacher and in such cases uptake was likely to be adversely affected.

8.2.2 Faulty learner strategies

8.2.2.1 Inability to listen correctly

Learners often lack the skill of listening. They
would miss words and hence uptake tended to be inaccurate.

8.2.2.2 Lack of attention

Often learners did not pay attention consistently. They would listen only to the first few words of an explication and get busy in writing it out.

8.2.2.3 Absence of focus on words in the textbook

Seldom did learners look into the textbook or focus on the spelling of a word.

8.3 Nature of the Interaction

8.3.1 Teacher and learner

The interactive process did not involve many learners. Generally, individual learners interacted with the teacher. Teacher and learner turns alternate on the tape. Very seldom does one find several learner turns intervening between two teacher turns. This happens only when the teacher is not in too much haste to carry on with the lesson; when she is patient enough to provide clues and elicit answers from learners enabling them to negotiate meaning themselves. A good example of such negotiation is in Lesson 3, lines 505-528 where the meaning of the word 'classics' is being negotiated. Such instances (though rare in this data) prove that learners are willing to interact and work out the meaning if encouraged and helped by the teacher. However, if the teacher showed any kind of
haste to get on with the lesson, learners did not insist on continuing the interaction. Also if the teacher abruptly ended a session with "Okay, that'll do", learners were deterred from asking questions and seeking clarifications. It was, nevertheless, observed that when the meaning of a word intrigued learners (for example, 'declare' in Lesson 5), they were eager to prolong the interaction in order to sort out the meaning and felt frustrated when the teacher hurried on to other things.

8.3.1.1 Opportunities created by the teacher

The teacher categories discussed in an earlier chapter clearly spell out the learning opportunities created by the teacher. It would be repetitive to refer to them here.

8.3.1.2 Opportunities availed of by learners

The list of categories of treatment in Chapter IV indicates which categories learners availed of. In addition to this, learners apparently had reasonably accurate perceptions of peer competence. Though they preferred to model the teacher and take their cues from her, they also paid attention to the contributions of the more competent learners in the class.

8.3.1.3 Opportunities created by the learners

Some learners seemed to be aware of the value of certain learning opportunities. For example, in order to
help her to understand the meaning of 'consequently', Nirmala asks the teacher to give her an example (that is use the word in a context) (See Lesson 6, lines 469; 472).

It has been observed that some learners by deliberately displaying their knowledge create learning opportunities for their peers. Kusum's behaviour is a testimony to this.

8.3.2 **Interactive work more useful to others**

Even if a single individual learner interacted with the teacher, several other learners were able to uptake the item. In fact, interactive work is generally more useful to other learners than to the ones interacting. "...personal involvement in the interaction is less important than the opportunity to witness the making comprehensible of input, whoever does the actual interactive work." - Allwright 1984(b). There are instances of the interacting student not benefiting from the interaction she had herself initiated while others benefited from it. It appears that this happens in the case of average achievers such as Raakhi and Virbala who perhaps lack confidence to pay attention after they have initiated the interaction. The above-average, for example Kusum, on the other hand, being more sure of themselves continue to pay attention and so benefit from the interaction they generate. (See discussion on achievement groups in Chapter VI). Evidence for this aspect of interaction is slender and
therefore one cannot generalize from it. Further research would throw light on this issue.

8.3.3 Learners interact in small groups

Learners sometimes interacted in small groups among themselves while the lesson proceeded, but felt inhibited to do so publicly. Thus it appears that with encouragement and training they would be able to interact publicly too.

8.3.4 Allwright's interaction hypotheses

In the event of such learner-learner and learner-teacher interaction being realized, one would witness longer and 'in-depth' episodes of meaning negotiation. And such episodes would provide evidence for Allwright's 'Strong Interaction Hypothesis' namely that interaction is the learning process itself. In the present data, such concentrated episodes of meaning negotiation involving several learners are rare, perhaps because of situational constraints discussed above. Therefore, the present data provides evidence of only the Weak Interaction Hypothesis - namely that interaction makes learning opportunities available and learners learn whatever they do from the opportunities made available.

8.4 Idiosyncracy of Uptake

The greater the number of reporters for each word, the less idiosyncratic is learners' behaviour and the more common
is success among learners. Uptake has been most idiosyncratic in Lesson 2 and least idiosyncratic in Lesson 5.

In Lesson 2 (see Table IV) only 5 words were recalled by one-third or more learners, 19 words were recalled by 2 or less than 2 learners at a time and 12 words were recalled by not more than 1 learner at a time.

Even in Lesson 4, in which both students and the teacher put in a lot of effort, uptake was considerably idiosyncratic. Twenty nine words were reported. Fifteen learners were present. Only 3 words were recalled by two-third of the class. Only 6 words were recalled by more than half the class. Twenty three words were recalled by less than a half. Eighteen words were recalled by a third or less of the students. Thirteen out of 29 words were recalled by atleast one-third students. Sixteen words were recalled by less than one-third students.

In Lesson 5, however, learners' uptake behaviour is the least idiosyncratic. Ten learners were present. More than half the items were reported by more than half the students.

8.4.1 Accounting for idiosyncracy

In Chapter V (which deals with the analysis of generally uptake) the uptake of each lesson is divided into 3 groups.
Words uptaken by nearly 50 per cent or more than 50 per cent learners are put in Group A. Words uptaken by 1 or 2 learners are put in Group C. Words in Group B are those that are uptaken by less than 50 per cent learners but by more than 2 learners. Qualitative analysis has revealed that quite often the Group C words are known words which learners have listed in their uptake list to impress peers/teacher. In the case of words in Group B, qualitative analysis reveals that these words could not be uptaken by a larger group of learners, because they were not clearly and explicitly presented. Some drawback in the teaching had hindered uptake. This lessonwise analysis in Chapter V explains the reasons for idiosyncracy to some extent.

Very seldom did 'personal agenda' account for idiosyncracy of uptake. But this issue certainly needs to be researched further. Perhaps it may be true in the case of adult-learners.

8.5 Uptake and Long-term Retention

Success on the PI (Post Investigation) test is here taken to be a measure of long-term retention.

Seventeen words out of 32 (that is more than 50 per cent) were retained by 60 per cent of the claimants.

Eight learners out of 16 (that is 50 percent) had retention scores between 60 and 100 per cent.
This may appear a fairly successful picture but seen in relation to uptake (of each individual learner) which was very little, the picture is illusory. (See discussion in Chapter VI).

Most learners who had relatively high uptake scores did not necessarily retain more words. Thus short-term recall cannot be equated with long-term retention.

On the other hand a learner (namely, Mamta) with very poor uptake was able to do quite well at the PI test. She may have uptaken words subconsciously and may not have been able to recall them immediately because uptake is necessarily conscious recall. Besides, the PI test required identification of meaning not expression of meaning as did uptake. Although in general, it is difficult to say whether an item not listed as uptake (but successfully identified at the PI test) was already known to the learner, this certainly did not appear to be the case with Mamta as her classroom and interview behaviour suggests. Moreover, learners who have failed to uptake (that is recall) items soon after a lesson, may be able to assimilate them later through proper study strategies and may therefore do well at the PI test. Thus it appears that, on the one hand, uptake (conscious recall) may not be necessary for long-term retention and on the other hand, while uptake may be an aid to retention it does not ensure it. (See Chapter VI).
8.5.1 What helps retention of uptake?

Several factors have a bearing on retention.

8.5.1.1 Classroom interaction

Classroom interaction has a bearing on both uptake and long-term retention. Lexical items which are not satisfactorily treated are less likely to be retained. This suggests a correlation between immediate recall, treatment and retention.

However, even if an item has been uptaken by several learners, their grasp of the item may be less sure on account of unsatisfactory treatment and this is likely to affect retention. This is because, to be retained over time, a learner's grasp of the item has to be more thorough than for uptake, (which is immediate recall and not necessarily long-term retention).

8.5.1.2 Reinforcement

Reinforcement plays a significant role in aiding uptake and retention. It was observed that an uptaken word had a better chance of being retained if it was included in the PS (Post-Session) test and the learner had successfully matched the word with its meaning in the PS test. The PS test thus offered a means of reinforcement. Reinforcement in some form seems essential for long-term retention.
8.5.1.3 Understanding meaning

An uptaken item has a far better chance of being retained over time if the learner has been able to understand its meaning and express it at the uptake stage. Therefore it appears that lexical uptake without uptake of meaning is of little value.

8.5.2 Possible reasons why uptake is not retained

8.5.2.1 Unresolved learning problems

It appears that if problems encountered during classroom interaction remain unresolved, they interfere with either uptake or long term retention.

8.5.2.2 Words inherently difficult

It may be that certain words are inherently more difficult to process than others. This would be specially the case when a word lacks a tangible referent, when the non-literal meaning is very unlike the literal and when there is no mother-tongue equivalent. "Concrete words are generally learned first and are generally easier to retain and to recall. Abstract words may be more difficult." Carter (1987). These issues have however, not been researched systematically in this study.

8.5.2.3 Levels of processing

Craik and Lockhart (1972) have observed that retention of an item in long-term memory is facilitated by
deeper levels of processing (that is, at more conceptual levels). It has already been noticed that most of the present set of learners generally failed to handle tasks involving thinking and reasoning. Therefore, it may be that they processed input too in a rather superficial way. They probably failed to relate items to previous learning and knowledge.

8.6 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The chief value of the study lies in the qualitative analysis of interview and transcript data. At first, the researcher did attempt quantitative analysis but as it did not prove conclusive, she turned to in-depth qualitative analysis which in fact proved more useful. It sheds light on actual classroom processes and provides useful insights into what actually happens in the classroom. One learns, for instance, what factors facilitate/hinder uptake, what makes teacher input difficult to process, what sort of problems learners encounter, what teacher strategies are rewarding, how learners behave in the classroom and so on. Some of these aspects could be observed even otherwise but can be discussed more specifically by learners themselves at interviews.
The correlation\(^2\) between interaction and uptake is significant\(^3\) and the findings which relate to learners' difficulties in processing teacher input are useful and important. As regards, various other findings, it may be rash to generalise from the limited amount of data and the small sample of poorly motivated learners. The constraints under which the study was conducted (See Chapter III), and the problem of absenteeism which persisted right through make some of the findings inconclusive albeit of great value for future research.

8.7 **Suggestions for Future Research**

8.7.1 **Relationship between uptake and retention**

It may be worthwhile to reinvestigate the relationship between uptake and long term retention. This is extremely important because learning in any true sense must be long term. If reinvestigation is undertaken, the design of the tests will need to be considered in advance and learners would have to be given practice in contextualized test formats from the beginning of the investigation. This is no easy task as the tests would have to be prepared while the interaction is in progress.

\(^2\) & \(^3\) The terms 'correlation' and 'significant' are not used here in a statistical sense.
8.7.2 Three observers

It would be almost mandatory to have three observers at each teaching session— one to prepare the test, one to note down the names of learners who contribute to the discourse and to note the first few words of each learner's contribution so as to be able to identify her voice on the tape, and a third observer to note down all the non-verbal aspects of interaction. The present study was handicapped by having only one observer who tried in vain to cope with various tasks at once, single-handedly.

8.7.3 Reinforcement

As reinforcement in some form appears to be desirable and a necessary factor in consolidating uptake and leading to long-term retention, a hypothesis for future research would be:—'Deliberate reinforcement by the teacher of every uptaken item would lead to long-term retention'. In this study, the teacher made no attempt to find out what words learners uptook and therefore made no attempt to establish those words. It will therefore be interesting to know the pattern of uptake and success in the PI tests, if the teacher specially tries in the course of the lessons to establish the words that had been uptaken from time to time.

8.7.4 Personal address

As the teacher very seldom addressed learners by their names or used any personal form of address, the question—
how far personal address helps the particular addressee in uptaking an item or in retaining it needs to be researched. Seliger (1983), referring to the importance of personalized input says:

Language that is not personalized or that which the learner does not perceive as directed at him or her as an individual is probably of little use for construction or repair of learner's hypotheses.

8.7.5 Words inherently difficult

As the issue hinted at 8.5.2.2 namely the inherently difficult aspects of some words has not been systematically researched in this study, future investigations may be able to shed light on it.

8.8 Replication and Extension of the Present Research

Finally, the kind of research that has been carried out in the present study can be replicated/extended by practising teachers in their own classrooms. Improvement in teaching and action research are closely bound. If teachers take on the mantle of researchers, the classroom may sooner or later cease to be a 'black box'.

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