A learning-centred approach to teaching linguistic knowledge: Teachers' perception of teaching periods 1 and 2(/3) in the new English curriculum for secondary schools in Vietnam

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The new curriculum was promulgated at the end of 2018. Therefore, there is a need to investigate how teachers perceive the teaching of linguistic knowledge in addition to skills to develop secondary school learners' communicative competence. The study was carried out during the three months of July, August and October of 2020 in the three provinces of Kien Giang, Ben Tre and Lam Dong with the participation of 120 teachers from 106 secondary schools. Data were collected in the form of group poster presentations for the first two/three periods in the textbooks for the new curriculum and analysed according to three aspects of form, meaning and use for linguistic knowledge and their sequence. The findings of the study indicate that the teacher participants have a vague idea about teaching the aspects of linguistic knowledge from a learning-centred approach, do not know their sequence of meaning, form and use, and normally follow the activities and their order in the textbook as the only resort available.

1. Introduction

Since the promulgation of the new English curriculum on December 26, 2018 (MOET, 2018), there have been two rounds of training in two consecutive years. In addition, this programme has been piloted in many secondary schools nationwide for many years already. As clearly stated in this document, the purpose of English language education is to develop learners' communicative competence which is defined as the ability to use linguistic knowledge of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar to participate in communicative activities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) (ibid., p. 16). Therefore, it is necessary to teach both language areas and skills. This is coupled with the need to shift from one teaching paradigm which is teacher-centred to the new one of learner or learning centredness. Therefore, there have still been controversies over how teachers can approach the teaching of linguistic knowledge from this perspective as what they have been so familiar with so far is either a deductive approach with the presentation of a rule first and then examples to illustrate it followed by an application into other examples in the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), or an inductive approach with mechanical drills to form a habit of a new pattern in Audio-Lingual Method (ALM). Even the most recent method of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) follows the 3Ps (Presentation - Practice - Production) as observed in ALM although the focus is on language function instead and is thus

classified as language-, but not learning- or learner-, centred method (Richards, 2013, p. 11).

This confusion and unfamiliarity have paved the way for this study to come into being. Thus, it aims to find out how teachers perceive the teaching of the three aspects for language areas from a different view on language education as claimed in the new curriculum. To achieve this aim, the study is concerned with dealing with the three aspects of linguistic knowledge, which are form, meaning and use. Therefore, it addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent do the teacher participants recognise the three aspects of form, meaning and use for teaching linguistic knowledge from a learning-centred approach?

2. What is the sequence of the three aspects and why?

3. How do the teacher participants deal with these periods of teaching linguistic knowledge in the new curriculum?

If this endeavour is successful, then the study can bring about both theoretical and practical contributions to teaching linguistic knowledge to accommodate the shift of focus in the teaching methodology from language- or teacher-centredness to learning- or learner-centredness. Theoretically, it contributes to the body of knowledge about the process of learning, especially learners' procedural knowledge (Ellis, 1985). Practically, teachers can become more aware of the theoretical framework underlying the design for teaching linguistic knowledge in the new curriculum and therefore feel more confident in working with the new textbooks.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. A theoretical framework for language learning and teaching

Views on language

According to McCarthy (2001), there are basically two paradigms in the study of language: language as an abstract system and language as a dependent system. With the first view, language should be studied without any reference to its context; however, for the other view, the social context where the language is used should always be taken into consideration as it provides the speaker's or the writer's meaning. Five years later, in 2006, Kumaravadivelu offered a classification of views on the study of language with three groups of language as a system, language as discourse and language as ideology.

As for the third category in Kumaravadivelu's classification, that is language is not neutral, more than two and a half decades earlier, there had been numerous studies in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA as its abbreviation. For instance, Kress and Hodge (1979) argue that language is not only a means of communication, but also a means of control as people use language to project social relationships from a certain perspective, which is always value-laden, or ideological. This perspective they hold is considered to be the truth. In the same vein, Lee (1992, p. 104) claims about the writer's power in creating the relationship of language to perspective and ideology: Those who have the power to create a text can choose a perspective to take, which is ideological, and different perspectives require a different choice of linguistic features, lexical and grammatical.

Therefore, under scrutiny, the two ways of categorisation by these two scholars are quite similar, as the first is exactly the same and the other by McCarthy also entails, in addition to the second, the last of ideology by Kumaravadivelu.

A question that can be raised following the classification of views on the study of language is: Which paradigm should be deployed as raw materials by an applied linguist to solve practical language-related problems in language education in general and the teaching of language areas, i.e., grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, in particular? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the three aspects or dimensions of each area.

As for grammar, there are greatly various models, depending on whether they are formal or functional. Nevertheless, pedagogical grammarians, such as Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & DeCarrico, 2010, p. 22), strongly support the outlook that either approach should not exclude the other in language teaching. They suggest a three-prong approach, including a separate dimension of meaning, in addition to those of form and function. They clearly state that these three dimensions of form, meaning and use (i.e., function) are referred to by linguists as morphosyntax, semantics and pragmatics and strongly recommend using them as a conceptual framework for teaching grammar because it ensures not only the accuracy in form but also the meaningful and appropriate use of the structures.

Likewise, there are three aspects involved in knowing a word: form, meaning and use (Nation, 2008). Specifically, the first aspect consists of pronunciation, spelling and word parts. The second one is composed of form and meaning, concept and referents, and associations. Finally, use involves grammatical functions, collocations, and constraints on use (register, frequency…).

Following the lines of reasoning above for the two aspects of grammar and vocabulary, one may infer that there are also three aspects for the last area of language, which is pronunciation.

To sum up, the three aspects/dimensions for each of the three language areas, which are form (morphosyntax), meaning (semantics) and use (pragmatics), representing the two paradigms in the study of language, which are language as an independent system (for the first two aspects/dimensions) and language as a social phenomenon (for the last one), are to be taken into full account for language pedagogy.

However, a question that arises from this conclusion for the views on language is how the three aspects are learned which is to be addressed in the next section.

Views on learning

To account for how learners learn a language, several perspectives have been proposed so far. They are linguistic, psycholinguistic, cognitive, and social (VanPatten & Williams, 2015, p. 10). Learning theories can also be classified according to the factors that are thought by researchers to be important to the learning process whether they are external, internal, or a combination of both. Accordingly, there are three general theories of learning which are behaviourism, mentalism and interactionism (Ellis, 1985). According to a behaviourist, learning is habit formation. A habit can be formed when a particular stimulus is associated with a particular response. There are two theories to account for how this association can occur: the classical behaviourism by Watson and the neo-behaviourism of Skinner. In the former, the stimulus is thought to provoke the response. Meanwhile, in the latter, the significance of stimulus is played down. Instead, the consequence of the response is emphasised: It is the behaviour following a response that reinforces it and therefore helps to strengthen the association (ibid., p. 21).

Ellis (1985, pp. 170-173) also cites Faerch and Kasper (1980, 1983) as saying that to learn the language, learners undergo three processes of hypothesis formation, hypothesis testing and automatisation. Specifically, to form a hypothesis about an interlanguage rule, a learner can use

one of the three ways: by using prior linguistic knowledge, by inducing new rules from the input data, and by a combination of these two. After developing a hypothesis, the learner can test it out using one of the four ways: receptively, productively, metalingually, and interactionally. Finally, automatisation undergoes the two processes of formal and functional practice, being subject to whether the attention is paid to formal linguistic features or communicative attempts.

Similarly, according to VanPatten and Williams (2015), two early theories in SLA are behaviourism and Krashen's monitor theory. As the first theory is only concerned about learners' behaviours, another by Krashen is supplemented to account for their thoughts and feelings. Among the five hypotheses in the monitor theory is the input one: "humans acquire language in only one way - by understanding messages in the L2, or as Krashen says, by receiving comprehensible input" (ibid., p. 26). Hence, unlike language used in a mechanical drill, the input is "defined as the language the learner hears (or reads) and attends to for its meaning" (VanPatten & Williams, 2015, p. 9).

Unlike a stimulus in the first theory of learning, which is behaviorism, an input in the second theory of learning - mentalism - only triggers or activates the learner's internal mechanism. In input-processing, among the researchers who advocate the role of formal instruction is Schmidt (2001, as cited in VanPatten & Benati, 2010, p. 33) with the concept of noticing linguistic features in the input thanks to input enhancement as a model of pedagogical intervention.

To test a hypothesis about the target language, Swain (1985, as cited in VanPatten & Benati, 2010, p. 37) argues that learner production is required. Therefore, opportunities for contextualised, meaningful use should be provided. Therefore, the comprehensible output is also necessary for second language acquisition, in addition to the language input.

Finally, according to DeKeyser (2015, pp. 95-96), for knowledge to become a skill, a large amount of practice is needed to decrease the time required to execute the task, the percentage of errors, and the amount of attention required as this practice leads to gradual automatisation of knowledge.

Likewise, but going directly into the area of vocabulary from a learning perspective, Nation (2007, as cited in Nation & Meara, 2010) proposes the so-called 4 strands of vocabulary in turn: learning vocabulary from meaning-focused input (listening and reading), learning vocabulary from the meaning-focused output (speaking and writing), deliberate vocabulary learning, and developing fluency with vocabulary across the four skills. Except for the language focused strand with the role of noticing, the remaining three are incidental learning. A similar framework for teaching another language area which is grammar can be found in the work of Larsen-Freeman and DeCarrico (2010), who state that although traditionally discerning has been accomplished by a teacher presentation of an overt rule, nowadays far more implicit and interactive ways are preferred.

To wrap it up, as for the general theory of learning which accounts for their thoughts and feelings, learners need to be exposed to comprehensible input for forming hypotheses about formal features of the target language. For input to become intake or knowledge, they are supposed to notice what it is they are to learn via input enhancement. To test out the hypothesis about the language they have just formed, they have to meaningfully produce it. Finally, practice is needed for knowledge to become a skill, or, automatised.

Views on teaching

Kumaravadivelu (2006) classifies all the teaching methods into three groups of language-centred, learning-centred and learner-centred, depending on whether they focus on the teaching of content, process of learning, or products of learning, respectively. Richards (2013) specifies methods for these three groups as follows: Group 1 includes the ALM, Audiovisual Method, the Structural Situational Method, CLT, and Content-Based Teaching/Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (p. 11); group 2 comprises the Natural Approach, Silent Way, Counseling Learning, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (Version 1), and Dogme (pp. 16-17); and group 3 is composed of TBLT (Version 2), competency-based instruction (CpBI), and the use of standards and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (pp. 23-25).

Actually, the first group consists of such methods as GTM, Direct Method (DM), ALM, and CLT as they represent the four tendencies in the historical background to the development of the teaching methodology from the 17th century to the 1980s of the 20th century. In GTM, language is taught deductively: rule, examples and application into other examples; in DM, the other way around is the case: examples before rule; as for ALM, learning is habit formation with the use of drills in the teaching format of presentation, practice and production, or 3Ps, with a focus on form, meaning and use respectively; finally, CLT also employs the 3Ps although the focus is on the function, but not the form of language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

As for the types of tasks, Ellis (2009, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011) makes two distinctions between input-providing tasks and output-prompting tasks and between focused and unfocused tasks. Input-providing tasks not only "engaged learners with the receptive skills of listening and reading", but also provide instructors with "an opportunity to introduce new language"; output-prompting tasks "stimulate the students to write or speak meaningfully"; focused tasks focus on "some specific linguistic item, typically a grammar structure"; and unfocused tasks "provide learners with opportunities for communicating generally" (ibid., pp. 210-211).

2.2. A conceptual framework for language learning and teaching

From the theoretical framework discussed above, a conceptual framework for this study can be shaped. It is presented in the table below.

Table 1

A conceptual framework for language learning and teaching in this study

Learning		Language	Teaching	Framework
SLA		Applied Linguistics: 4 strands by Nation (as cited in Nation & Meara, 2010)	TBLT (Ellis, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011)	Teaching linguistic knowledge in the new curriculum
Faerch and Kasper (as cited in Ellis, 1985)	Synthesised theories			
(Input)	Comprehensible input (Krashen, as cited in VanPatten & Williams, 2015)	1. Learning vocabulary from meaning-focused input (L & R)	Input-providing tasks	Period 1: Getting Started: **MEANING**

Learning		Language	Teaching	Framework
SLA		**Applied Linguistics: 4 strands by Nation (as cited in Nation & Meara, 2010)**	**TBLT (Ellis, as cited in Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011)**	**Teaching linguistic knowledge in the new curriculum**
Faerch and Kasper (as cited in Ellis, 1985)	**Synthesised theories**			
1. Hypothesis formation	Input-processing: Noticing (Schmidt, as cited in VanPatten & Benati, 2010)	2. Deliberate vocabulary learning	Focused tasks	**FORM**
2. Hypothesis testing	Output (Swain, as cited in VanPatten & Benati, 2010)	3. Learning vocabulary from the meaning-focused output (S & W)	Output-prompting tasks	Period 2: Language (for upper) / Periods 2 & 3: A Closer Look 1 & 2 (for lower)
				USE: MEANING-FUL
3. Automati-sation	Skill acquisition (DeKeyser, 2015)	4. Developing fluency with vocabulary across 4 skills (L, S, R, & W)	Unfocused tasks	**USE: COMMUNI-CATIVE**

Source: The researcher's conceptual framework

As can be clearly seen from the table above, although there are slight differences among the theories from (applied) linguistics, SLA and teaching methodology, the three disciplines share much in common. Unlike the conventional way of 3Ps – Presentation, Practice and Production – with a focus on form first, meaning then and use finally, this framework is mainly derived from the second theory of learning in general, which is mentalism. As such, the meaning is paid more attention first as comprehensible input is necessary for SLA. In input-processing, the form is to be noticed. Finally, use is implemented via the two processes of meaningful practice first and communicative practice then.

3. Research methodology

Research sites and participants

As he was assigned by his educational institution to train lower and upper secondary school teachers in three provinces the new teaching methodology, the researcher conveniently chose these teachers and provinces as his participants and research sites. He was well aware of the negligible extent of generalisability in this type of sample, but, as sampling issues are inherently practical, the hard realities of time and resources actually forced him to make this pragmatic choice (Dornyei, 2007, p. 99). However, the choice could be considered to be partially purposeful as besides the relative ease of accessibility, as a matter of fact, these teachers possessed the characteristics that were related to the purpose of the investigation and hence shared them with the target population.

Demographic information about the participants in this study is summarised and presented in the following table.

Table 2

Participants' demographic information

Province	Secondary school				Number of schools	Familiarity with the new curriculum	Time
	Level		Total				
Kien Giang	Upper	27	M	10/37,0	26	1/27	13-17/07/2020; 20-22/07/2020
			F	17/63,0			
	Lower	38	M	5/13,2	33	1/38	23-24/07; 27-31/07 01/08/2020
			F	33/86,8			
Ben Tre	Upper	25	M	7/28,0	21	1/25	22-23/08/2020; 24-29/08/2020
			F	18/72,0			
Lam Dong	Upper	30	M	4/13,3	26	2/30	05-12/10/2020
			F	26/86,6			
Grand total		120	M	26/21,7	106	5/120	13-31/07, 01/08; 22-29/08; 05-12/10
			F	94/78,3			

Source: The researcher's demographic data analysis

As can be clearly seen from the table above, the three participating provinces were Kien Giang, Ben Tre and Lam Dong with a total number of 120 secondary school teachers, of whom a little more than a fifth were male with the remaining fourth fifths of females. They were representative teachers from 106 secondary schools, of which there were 73 upper and 33 lower ones. Nevertheless, a great majority of them disclosed a lack of familiarity with the new curriculum in general and the new textbooks in particular as only five confided to the researcher that they were assigned by their school to teach English using the "pilot" programme.

Specifically, in Kien Giang, there were two classes organised separately for upper and lower secondary school teachers. For the former, there were 27 with 10 (37%) males and 17 (63%) females from 26 schools. Only one of them claimed to teach the new textbook following the new curriculum. The participants in this group took part in the training with the researcher from July 13th - 17th and 20th - 22nd, 2020. The latter consisted of 38 participants with 5 (13%) males and 33 (87%) females from 33 lower secondary schools with only one saying that she had taught the new textbook of the new curriculum. The time the participants of this group spent on the new methodology with the researcher was July 23rd - 24th and 27th - 31st and August 1st, 2020.

The class run in the second province of Ben Tre was for the upper secondary school teachers with a total of 25 participants of whom there were 7 (28%) males and 18 (72%) females. They represented the teachers from 21 schools. Like those of the first province, except for one case, the teacher participants clearly articulated that they had not taught the new textbooks, not to say the new curriculum. They spent the last third of August, 2020, namely, August 22nd - 23rd and 24th - 29th, 2020, with the researcher.

Finally, the upper secondary class for Lam Dong Province was composed of 30 teacher participants, of whom there were 4 (13%) males and 26 (87%) females. They represented the teachers from 26 schools. Like those in the first two provinces, before attending the methodology training, the participants in this province had not used a set of the new textbooks for the new curriculum as only two of them openly expressed their familiarity in front of the class in the first meeting. Both came from the same school for the gifted in Dalat City. Like those in the two other locations, all the participants took part in the methodology training for 8 days, from October 5th, 2020, to October 12th, 2020, including the weekend.

Methodology

In order to investigate the participants' perception of teaching linguistic knowledge in the textbooks for the new curriculum structured in the first three periods for a lower secondary school (i.e., 1. Getting Started, 2. A Closer Look 1 (for Vocabulary and Pronunciation), and 3. A Closer Look 2 (for Grammar)) and the first two periods for an upper secondary school (i.e., 1. Getting Started and 2. Language (for three language areas of Vocabulary, Pronunciation and Grammar)), the researcher asked them, mainly in groups, to make a poster presentation about how they thought they would teach these periods. For the upper secondary school teacher participants, he also requested them to express their ideas individually in the written form. These posters and individual opinions were collected as the data for the current study to investigate whether they knew how to adopt a learning-centred approach to teaching linguistic knowledge in the new curriculum. Details about how the data for this study were collected are presented in the following table.

Table 3

Data collection schedule

No	Province	Class run for secondary school	Location	Period		Form of data collection	Purpose
				1. Getting Started	2. Language (upper) / 2 & 3 (lower)		
1	Kien Giang	Upper	Center for Continuing Education in Rach Gia	July 16th-17th, 2020	July 18th, 2020	Individual + group	To find out how teachers dealt with three aspects of form, meaning & use
		Lower		July 27th, 2020	July 28th, 2020	Group	
2	Ben Tre	Upper	Upper Secondary School for the Gifted	August 24th, 2020	August 25th, 2020	Group	
3	Lam Dong	Upper	Dalat Teacher Training College	October 9th, 2020	October 9th-10th 2020	Group	

Source: The researcher's data collection schedule

As far as the objectives of the activities in the textbooks for the new curriculum that the textbook writers hope to achieve are concerned, it should be noted that for Period 1 Getting Started,

there is a main activity that asks for students' comprehension with a format of their deciding whether the statements are true, false or not given by ticking the correct box. That is to say, they are only supposed to comprehend the message and attend to a new language for its meaning. Therefore, in terms of the task difficulty, of the three activity types – processing, productive and interactive – the type normally used in this period is the first one where learners are required to respond nonphysically and nonverbally (Nunan, 1988, p. 55).

Unlike the first one with a focus on meaning, the second period – Language – for the upper and second and third – A Closer Look 1 and 2 – for the lower draw the learners' attention to the language input for its form first. Accordingly, they are encouraged to notice what it is they are to learn and, therefore, discover the form by themselves through guided problem-solving in the following sequence normally.

- *Giving input enhancement* or *input flooding*:

"Read the conversation in Getting Started again. Underline/Circle…"

- *Isolating a specific linguistic feature for focused attention:*

"List all the … that are mentioned in the conservation." / "Write … into this table."

- *Utilizing intellectual effort to understand the target feature:*

"What is the difference between … and …?"

- *Checking the above against more language data:*

"Which of the following sentences are ungrammatical? Why? / "Indicate whether the following sentences are grammatical or ungrammatical…" / There are six grammar mistakes in his email. Can you find and correct them?"

- *Articulating the rule describing the linguistic feature:*

"Work out a rule for …" / (Try and) Make up a rule to explain…"

After noticing the form, the students are further guided first to test out their hypothesis about the target language in a meaningful context and then to automatize it in a communicative one as illustrated in the following two tasks respectively:

- "Write sentences about what you like and don't like doing in your free time."

- "Write a similar email to tell your friend about your free time, using the verbs of liking + gerunds or verbs of liking + to-infinitives."

The illustration above of both form and use, mainly for grammar, was taken from the activities in Unit 1 for Grade 8 with some adaptation from the researcher to conform to his conceptual framework shaped in the theory part.

Analytical framework

As this study was about finding out how the teacher participants would deal with the three aspects or dimensions of any of the three language components - grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation - the data after their collection would be analysed according to whether the participants knew the purpose for each of the first two periods for an upper secondary school or three periods for a lower secondary school, the sequence of the three aspects, and the activities to help students learn linguistic knowledge from a learning perspective.

4. Data analysis and discussion of findings

4.1. Data analysis

The data analysis for poster presentations of Period 1 *Getting Started* is presented in descending order in the following table.

Table 4

"Getting Started" poster data analysis

1. Getting Started

No	Objectives	Province		Ben Tre	Lam Dong	Summary	Total
		Kien Giang					
		Upper	Lower				
1	Read for the main idea & specific information	G1, 2 & 3	G1, 2, 3, & 4		G1 & 3	20 + 38 + 26	84/70,0
2	Use vocabulary related to…	G1 & 3	G1	G2 & 3	G1 & 2	17 + 11 + 17 + 20	65/54,2
3	Ask & answer questions about…	G2	G1 & 3	G2 & 3		9 + 20 + 17	46/38,3
4	Make dialogues using expressions	G2	G2 & 4	G2	G3	9 + 18 + 9 + 10	46/38,3
5	Get started with language & skills			G1	G2	10 + 8	18/15,0
6	Identify some useful structures				G1	10	10/8,3
7	Develop comm. competence				G2	10	10/8,3
8	Identify 3-syllable nouns & pronounce	G3				9	9/7,5
	Total; number of members in each group	26; G1: 8, G2 & 3: 9/G	G1: 11; G2: 10, G3: 9, G4: 8	25; G1 & 3: 8, G2: 9	30; 10/G		

Source: The researcher's data analysis

It is obvious from the table above that there are altogether 8 objectives the teacher participants associated with the teaching of Period 1 *Getting Started* in the textbooks for the new curriculum for lower and upper secondary schools, which are reading the conversation for the main idea and specific information, using words and phrases related to the topic of the unit, asking and answering simple questions about the topic of the unit, making dialogues using the given expressions and then doing the role plays, getting started with some language items in the unit and

4 skills, identifying some useful structures, developing communicative competence (i.e., talking about the topic of the unit), and identifying 3-syllable nouns and pronounce them.

In particular, the idea that the purpose of the first period in the structure of the new curriculum is to help secondary school students listen and/or read for the main idea and more specific information enjoyed the most agreement from up to 84 (70%) of the teacher participants. This is quite easy to understand as before a new conversation for a unit there is an instruction that asks learners to listen and read. Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, the participants were split up in their ideas. The two groups of 1 and 3 from Lam Dong reasoned that students would listen for the main idea and read for specific information. Meanwhile, the opinions of the three groups of upper secondary school teacher participants in Kien Giang can be grouped into two: G2 said that students would listen, read and understand the main idea and the other two groups excluded both main idea and specific information when generally stating that they would read about the topic (G1) or listen and read the conversation about the topic (G3). Finally, unlike G2 of upper secondary schools, the two groups of 2 and 4 of lower secondary ones thought that one of the objectives of period 1 was listening and reading for specific information, and like groups 1 and 3 of the upper, groups 1 and 3 of the lower generally stated that learners would listen and read a dialogue about the topic of the unit.

Ranked second with a little more than half of the participants is the idea that period 1 helps students use words and phrases related to the topic of the unit. However, there is a slight difference among the groups as G1 in Lam Dong chose the verb to *apply*, G1 for the lower in Kien Giang preferred the verb *learn*, and G1 for the upper in Kien Giang also wrote the verb *know* before *use*.

Next in order is asking and answering simple questions about the conversation as an objective of period 1 with 46, accounting for 38%, participants. Among these participants, however, the members of G2 for the upper in Kien Giang supposed that students would only answer questions about the conversation. Another similar idea with exactly the same number of participants is making dialogues using the given expressions although a slight difference could be observed: G3 in Lam Dong also added "then do the role plays", or G2 for the lower in Kien Giang thought that students would practice speaking with lexical items related to the topic of the unit.

Two groups, one in Ben Tre and the other in Lam Dong, employed the very title of the first period, which is *Getting Started*, to talk about the first objective before adding "with some language items and 4 skills". G1 in Ben Tre also added the word *grammar*.

The remaining three items in the table enjoyed much less agreement among the participants, only from one group, but they are also worth noting: One of the objectives of period 1 is identifying useful structures, or developing communicative competence (talking about…), or identifying 3-syllable nouns and pronouncing them.

The data analysis for poster presentations of Period 2 *Language* for the upper and Period 2 *A Closer Look 1* (Vocabulary and Pronunciation) and/or Period 3 *A Closer Look 2* (Grammar) for the lower is presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5

"Language" / "A Closer Look 1/2" poster data analysis

2. Language / A Closer Look 1/2

Objectives	Province				Summary	Total
	Kien Giang		**Ben Tre**	**Lam Dong**		
	Upper	**Lower**				
Form						
Pronunciation						
Pronounce correctly	G1, 2		G1, 2, 3	G3	17 + 25 + 10	52 / 43,3
Listen to…				G1	10	10 / 8,3
Grammar						
Distinguish…	G1			G3	8 + 10	18 / 15,0
Get the form of …	G2				9	9 / 7,5
Use						
Vocabulary						
Use some words…	G3	G2, 3	G1, 2, 3	G1, 3	9 + 19 + 25 + 20	73 / 60,8
Pronunciation						
Use forms correctly				G1	10	10 / 8,3
Grammar						
Use … correctly	G2, 3	G1		G3	18 + 11 +10	39 / 32,5
Use combinations…		G1, 2, 3, 4	G1, 2, 3	G1	38 + 25 + 10	73 / 60,8
Develop own talk…				G2	10	10 / 8,3
Others						
Read for specific inform./ Review…	G1	G1		G2, 3	8 + 11 + 20	39 / 32,5
Total; number of members in each group	26; G1: 8, G2 & 3: 9/G	38; G1: 11; G2: 10, G3: 9, G4: 8	25; G1 & 3: 8, G2: 9	30; 10/G		

Source: The researcher's data analysis

  Evidently from the table above, all the objectives presented in the posters by 13 groups representing 120 teacher participants from 106 secondary schools in three provinces for Period 2 *Language* for the upper and periods 2 and 3 *A Closer Look 1/2* for the lower were classified into three categories: form, use and others.

As for form, the participants paid attention only to the two language areas of pronunciation and grammar, ignoring vocabulary. For the former, they attended to the productive knowledge more than the receptive knowledge: 52 (43%) stated that one of the objectives of periods 2(/3) was to help students pronounce correctly whereas only 10 (8,3%) thought about helping them "listen to the contracted forms in conversations". For the latter, they used the verb distinguish (18; 15%) or the verbal phrase get the form of (9; 7,5%).

The second category of use drew more attention from the participants as they mentioned all the three language areas, especially the two of vocabulary and grammar with exactly the same frequency/percentage: 73 accounting for 61%. That is they thought this period was to help students use vocabulary and grammar. Only one group (10; 8,3%) thought about pronunciation when writing "use contracted forms correctly in speaking or writing".

The last category of others consists of four ideas suggested by four different groups: "Read for specific information" (G1, lower, KG), "Enhance the words and phrases" (G1, LD), "Review some irregular verbs" (G3, LD)", and "Understand the meaning of the vocabulary given" (G1, upper, KG).

4.2. Discussion of findings

The data analysis in the previous part pays the way for the researcher to discuss the main findings of the study as follows. The discussion is organised along the three research questions posed in the first part of the study problem.

First and foremost, as the design of the new curriculum for teaching linguistic knowledge follows a learning-centred approach which is quite different from the conventional ways as can be observed in the first four trends in the development of the teaching methodology - GTM, DM, ALM, and CLT - the teacher participants find it really challenging to deal with the three language areas of vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar, especially in relation to the three aspects or dimensions of form, meaning and use. The data analysis for the first period shows that, various as their opinions are, they cannot correctly realise that as language input and its comprehension is necessary for second language acquisition, it is their duty to expose them to it and make it comprehensible.

In the same vein, albeit less chaotic than the first period, the second period for the upper and second and third periods for the lower pose certain problems for the participants. It should be fairly acknowledged that they do recognise that form and use are to be focused on. Nevertheless, besides the ignorance of one language area, they do not really know how to approach pronunciation and grammar from a learning-centred approach so that their students can work out the phonological and grammatical form by themselves. To put it another way, the fact that students are encouraged to discover the form through guided problem-solving tasks is a new and quite strange concept for them. This is coupled with another reality about their confusion of use. They do claim to help their students to use the forms correctly. However, it turns out to be not of use according to the learning perspective as the students are asked to supply a correct form of the linguistic point, but not to use it in a meaningful context. That is not to say a more communicative context as found in the design of some units of the textbook.

The finding presented above about the three aspects for each of the three language areas and, especially, the sequence of these aspects in language teaching and learning should be consulted with proper caution and, therefore, more importantly, should not be misread and misinterpreted. Once again, it should be emphasised that the diverse assumptions most of which neither reflect the textbook writers' real intentions nor fulfill the researcher's expectations

according to his conceptual framework are due, mainly, to the participants' unfamiliarity with the new curriculum.

As a consequence of the confusion discussed above as one of the main findings of this study, the teacher participants are not really aware of the sequence for dealing with the three aspects or dimensions of language areas in general and that within each language area in particular. Especially, they are ignorant of the technique called "input enhancement" as a way to draw their learners' attention to the features of the target language whether it is vocabulary, pronunciation, or grammar.

Complicated as the methodology for teaching linguistic knowledge in the new curriculum is, the teacher participants manage to deal with these periods in their own way. Typical is the close adherence to the guidelines in the teacher's book and activities in their strict order in the student's book. Although this strategy cannot be considered to be a good solution in the long run, it is an interim one to help them overcome the difficulties in their teaching practices. That is the reason why it is clearly stated as one of the conditions for teaching the new curriculum that only those who have undergone the training of the new methodology are eligible for teaching it (MOET, 2018, p. 52).

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The findings as discussed in the previous part indicate:

1. The teacher participants do not really recognise the three aspects of form, meaning and use as embedded in the design of the first two periods in the structure of the new curriculum for teaching linguistic knowledge as the approach adopted is unfamiliar with a focus on the learning process;

2. As a consequence, they are not aware of the change in the sequence of the first meaning, then form and finally use of two types where the three aspects are presented with the activities designed to serve this purpose;

3. Encountering the difficulties in dealing with the teaching of linguistic knowledge, they strictly follow the activities with their strict order in the textbooks as the only resort available to them for dealing with the teaching methodology in the new curriculum.

The following three recommendations can be made for practitioners based on the main findings of the study.

- As the approach to teaching linguistic knowledge focuses more on the process of learning, but not products of learning with the two main learning outcomes of listening or reading for main idea and specific information, it is the teacher's responsibility to make the language input in period 1 comprehensible so that by the end of the lesson learners can comprehend the massage. Therefore, they are first supposed to attend to the new language introduced for its *meaning* only in Period 1;

- Next, in Period 2, to help the learners process the input after its comprehension, the teacher should encourage them to discover by themselves the *form* of the new language, including all the three language areas of vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar through guided problem-solving tasks, or the so-called consciousness-raising tasks (Tasnimi, 2018);

- Finally, the learners are to be given at least two opportunities for *use* at the two levels of meaningful and communicative practice. The former is for them to test the hypothesis about the target language rule out in a meaningful context to them and the latter is for automatisation with more focus on fluency.

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