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# Enhancing second language learning: The PFIAP model and its pedagogical implications

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#### Abstract

The purpose of this work is to introduce a comprehensive and sequential pedagogical model for language teaching, known as PFIAP (perception, focalization, internalization, application and production). PFIAP aims to promote effective second language learning. Relying on current educational theories and approaches the model comprises five sequential phases. By integrating crucial elements for effective L2 learning, such as active participation, metacognitive reflection and awareness, and practical application of language skills in real-life like contexts, the model exhibits its efficacy and potential. Additionally, a proposal is presented to illustrate how a particular grammatical feature could be integrated with a phonological aspect, thus exemplifying the practical implementation of the model in the EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom. Finally, some pedagogical implications are discussed, along with possible limitations that could arise during its application.

*Keywords*: language skills development; second language acquisition (L2); integrative approach; cognition

#### 1. Introduction

In today's pluralized world, acquiring proficiency in a second language (L2) has become essential for making headway on both personal and professional levels.

However, the process of learning a new language may present several challenges for quite a few students. To address these challenges, our proposal introduces a sequential linguistic development model known as PFIAP (i.e., perception, focalization, internalization, application and production), which aims to guide students through different stages of learning an L2. This model is grounded on communicative and constructivist principles, and integrates elements of cognitive linguistics (Langacker, 2000) to promote the active development of knowledge in the L2 by students.

This approach acknowledges that the mind holds a multilayered relationship with language. Language acts as the means through which the human mind transcends the boundaries of the body and interacts with the outer world (Pinker, 1994). Through different linguistic mechanisms, the mind unveils its voice and shows it form and structure. Language, on its part, finds its way to convey the organization and configuration of the mind (Carroll, 2008).

The PFIAP model consists of five different phases: *perception, focalization, internalization, application* and *production*. Our proposed model mainly draws on some of the principles of cognitive theory to promote meaningful interaction with content, the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and the practical application of knowledge in real-life like contexts (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Langacker, 2008).

In the first part of this paper, we will introduce the theoretical foundations of the PFIAP model. In the next section, we will describe the components of the model, delineate their main objectives, and provide sample activities for each stage. The concrete implementation of the model assumes a central role in this paper, taking the primary focus in our proposal. The third part entails a practical example that will enable educators to notice how to implement and adapt the PFIAP model to different L2 settings. Finally, we will consider the pedagogical implications and potential challenges and constraints of this model, which offers a comprehensive and user-friendly pedagogical approach for L2 teaching

## 2. Theoretical framework of the model

The foundation of the PFIAP model lies in a communicative approach to language learning, which emphasizes effective and meaningful communication in real-life contexts. It profits from the task-based approach, whereby students actively engage in genuine and purposeful communicative activities, helping them to learn the language by addressing diverse challenges in a practical manner (Nunan, 1989, 2004; Sijia, 2022; Willis, 1996, 2021; Willis & Willis, 2007). By engaging in these communicative tasks, students have the chance to develop their L2 skills in a challenging and motivating environment (Long, 1985, 2015; Skehan, 1998, 2003).

Focusing on students' awareness and control over their learning processes, this model also adopts the principles of metacognition (Brown, 1987; Flavell, 1979, 1987; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2003). Metacognition refers to both knowledge relating to one's cognitive processes and the ability to regulate and control these processes (Flavell, 1976). The PFIAP model fosters cognitive and metacognitive reflection. Additionally, it promotes the use of assorted learning strategies, such as mental manipulation of materials or tasks, planning for learning, monitoring learning, self-evaluating learning outcomes, and leveraging social interactions to assist learning (Hariri *et al.* 2021). Through these learning strategies, students are likely to gain insight into their linguistic processes and to further develop their L2 proficiency (Bjork, 1988, 1999; Bialystok, 1990; Zimmerman, 2000, 2002; Witherby et al. 2023).

The model incorporates the concept of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1980, 1981, 1985), along with Long's (1980, 1985) adaptation of Krashen's (1980, 1981, 1985) input hypothesis, which acknowledges the importance of exposing students to L2 samples slightly beyond their level of linguistic competence (Cook, 2008; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Swain, 1985; VanPatten, 2015). Second language acquisition cannot simply occur in a vacuum (Long, 1980, 1985) without considering having exposure to some kind of language input (Gass & Selinnker, 2008), but there must be something in addition to sole exposure. Learners must notice that there is something to focus on. Their attention needs to be drawn to those parts of input which do not coincide with their already internalized competence (Gass, 1997).

As the PFIAP model is aligned with constructivist principles, it recognizes the active role of students in their own learning process while promoting meaning construction through engagement in communicative tasks, reflection, and interaction with peers (Ellis, 2008; Lyster & Ranta, 2013; Mackey & Gass, 2016; Swain, 2003; Williams, 2012). Socially mediated interaction plays a crucial role in the construction of new language. Through interaction, learners are exposed to rich comprehensible input in the target language. Interactive input is more important than non-interactive input because there are interactional modifications that may occur while negotiating meaning (Ellis, 2008). Within this input-driven scenario, collaborative learning is positively encouraged, for it enriches language acquisition through enhanced social interaction (Jackson, 2022). In several stages of the model, learners are encouraged to practice interactively through collaborative work. One of the primary goals of collaborative learning is to strengthen students' confidence in a way that it captures learners' motivation and enthusiasm by engaging them in their own learning process (Johnson et al., 2008).

The PFIAP model also integrates the theory of cognitive linguistics, which highlights the interconnection between language and cognitive processes (Evans, 2009; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Langacker, 2008; Schumann et al. 2014), and

it emphasizes the development of effective and meaningful communicative skills through comprehensive tasks that activate cognitive processes such as perception, conceptualization, categorization, reformulation, and problem-solving (Schraw & Moshman, 1995). By engaging in these tasks, students not only acquire and practice the language but also enhance their cognitive capability and understanding of the surrounding environment (Veenman et al. 2006). In this respect, Skehan (1998) proposes a dual mode of language learning and processing in which both input and output processing have access to a rule-based system (formoriented) and exemplars (memory-oriented), based on redundant memory systems that do not require much internal computation processing. In the context of this framework that operates in two modes, Skehan (1998) presents three stages of information processing: input, central processing, and output or production, and suggests task-based instruction as an ideal approach for its implementation. He explains that as both tasks and instruction promote different cognitive strategies, tasks should be crafted in such a way that learners are pushed to use all their processing strategies (accuracy, fluency and complexity), all of them competing with each other as a result of limited attentional resources during the language production stage. Aligned with Skehan's (1998) three stages of information processing (i.e., input, central processing, and production), the PFIAP model advocates task-based instruction as an optimal approach for implementation.

The theoretical framework presented here will serve as guiding criteria for the development of the practical session, where we will explore how the PFIAP model could be effectively implemented in the L2 classroom. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, we aim to show the feasibility and efficacy of the model in fostering L2 acquisition.

# 3. The five stages of the model

The PFIAP model comprises five consecutive stages that enable students to gradually improve their language proficiency while focusing on various aspects of language learning. In Stage 1, referred to as *perception*, students are introduced to understandable input molded to their level of L2 proficiency. The objective of this stage is to facilitate students' understanding of the presented input conveyed through various formats such as visuals, videos, audios, and written texts, without actively producing language. Students are encouraged to employ comprehension strategies to stimulate their curiosity and interest. In Stage 2, students are required to complete a communicative task related to the topic introduced in Stage 1. The aim of this phase, known as *focalization*, is to create a linguistic gap for students to fill out using any available linguistic resource they

may have on hand while completing the task. They could even use their native language (L1), if necessary. Stage 3, named internalization, involves the formal intervention of the teacher, who may provide students with explicit rules on the use of the linguistic targeted form being studied. In this stage, specific grammar rules and structures related to the linguistic focus can be presented. The objective is to equip students with a solid foundation of knowledge and understanding of language rules and exemplars for practical application in communicative contexts. In Stage 4, referred to as application, students complete a new communicative task similar to the one presented in Stage 2, but within a different framework. If students have not fully internalized the linguistic targeted form, the teacher may reintroduce it formally here. The goal is for students to apply the studied linguistic focused form in a fresh context, thereby achieving further consolidation of their language skills. In the last stage, called Production, students are engaged in collaborative work in which they must create a more complex and extensive text, incorporating the linguistic focus studied in a new context. The objective is for students to demonstrate their mastery of L2 by effectively using the linguistic focused form in a more extended and complex communicative setting. Through a combination of understandable input, communicative tasks, rule-oriented presentations and controlled practice, and extended text production, students have the chance to further develop their communicative competence in L2.

# 4. A practical example of a didactic sequence using the model

Below is a practical example of a didactic sequence for teaching the simple past tense in English, incorporating a pronunciation component specifically designed to teach verb inflections in the past. This sequence not only provides a structured framework for language instruction but also guides students skillfully through a series of five stages, each with its own objectives and recommended activities. The purpose of this sequence is to enhance students' L2 proficiency.

## Stage 1: Perception

Objective: Promote overall comprehension of an audiovisual text without focusing on identifying verbs in the past.

#### Activities:

Video of narrated experiences: The teacher shows an audiovisual resource presenting different experiences narrated in the simple past tense.
 Students are asked to pay attention to the meaning and overall comprehension of the video, without focusing on specific grammatical aspects.

Guided discussion: After watching the video, the teacher initiates a discussion whereby students share their impressions and understanding of the video. The teacher asks about the presented experiences and encourages students to naturally use the simple past if they wish, without focusing on identifying verbs in the past.

## Stage 2: Focusing

Objective: Practice using the simple past in communicative contexts.

## Activities:

- Completing sentences: The teacher provides students with incomplete sentences related to past experiences. Students must complete the sentences using the available linguistic resources, without worrying about the correct form of the simple past at this stage. They are encouraged to pay attention to any noticeable differences between past and present forms.
- Role play: The teacher organizes students in pairs or small groups and assigns roles to represent different situations of narrating past experiences. Students must interact using the simple past with the linguistic resources they have at this stage. They are encouraged to notice any difficulties or differences they encounter in using the simple past.
- Travel Blog Post: Students imagine they are travel bloggers and they want
  to share their vacation experience with their readers. Their task is to write
  a captivating blog post describing and narrating your recent vacation (location, visited places, travel itinerary, activities done, highlights and memorable moments of the trip, cultural encounters, breathtaking sights, exciting adventures). Students are required to use the simple past tense to
  engage their audience.

# Stage 3: Internalization

Objective: Present the rules and grammatical structures of the simple past explicitly, including the pronunciation of verb inflections in the past.

## Activities:

- Constructive feedback: The teacher collects the most common mistakes
  made by students during the focusing stage highlighting the incorrect use
  of verbs in the past. These mistakes are discussed with students, pushing
  them to notice gaps or differences in their linguistic repertoires.
- Rule-driven block: Based on identified mistakes, the teacher provides students with the rules and grammatical structures of the simple past, along

- with the correct pronunciation of verb inflections in the past. The teacher also offers clear examples of language use, focusing on targeted forms.
- Analysis and reflection activity: The teacher asks students to reflect on the mistakes made during the *focusing* stage and how the rules presented in this stage can help them improve their use of the simple past and the pronunciation of verb inflections. Students are encouraged to make sensible connections between the targeted rules/structures and the mistakes they have made.

## Stage 4: Application

Objective: Apply the simple past tense in real-life like communication situations and practice the pronunciation of verb inflections in the past.

## Activities:

- Guided conversations: The teacher presents a set of questions related to the students' past experiences (personal anecdotes). In pairs or small groups, students are encouraged to engage in interactive tasks using the simple past to share and discuss their answers. During these conversations, the focus is also put on the correct pronunciation of verb inflections in the past.
- Question and answer game: The teacher sets up a question-and-answer game in which students create and respond to questions using the simple past on diverse topics. The proper pronunciation rules of verb inflections in the past is focused on as students actively interact.
- Interviewing a historical figure: Students are asked to imagine they have the opportunity to travel back in time and interview a famous historical figure. Their task is to create a dialogue-based interview in which they ask thought-provoking questions to this character about their life, achievements, and events they were involved in. The interviewed responds using the past tense form. Students present the interview script to the class or engage in role-play activity in which one may act as an interviewer and the other student may portray the historical figure, responding using the past tense and also focusing on their pronunciation.
- Reflection and correction: After completing the application activities, the teacher encourages learners to engage in self-reflection and improve any mispronunciation they may have had in their productions. While students share their reflections, they provide each other with constructive feedback.

## Stage 5: Production

Objective: Produce written and oral narratives in the simple past based on photos of students' personal experiences.

#### Activities:

- Writing project: The teacher asks students to create a story or narrative
  in the simple past based on photos of their own experiences. Students
  must use the learned rules, including the correct pronunciation of verb
  inflections in the past. They are encouraged to reflect on their own
  learning and how they have improved in using the simple past.
- Presentation and discussion: Students must present their narratives using the simple past to their classmates. After each presentation, the teacher facilitates a discussion in which students provide constructive feedback and reflect on the positive aspects and areas for improvement in terms of grammar and pronunciation.
- Individual reflection: The teacher asks students to reflect individually on their experience of learning and using the simple past. Students are encouraged to share how they felt applying the rules and the correct pronunciation of verb inflections in the past and how they plan to continue improving in the future.

# 5. Pedagogical implications

The PFIAP model has impactful pedagogical implications for effective teaching that can improve the process of learning an L2. In the first place, the model is grounded on communicative approaches in which genuine communication is promoted in favor of teaching isolated grammar and/or vocabulary items. This pedagogical framework advocates the development of students' effective communication skills, necessary to operate effectively in everyday situations. In addition, by adding components from the constructivist approach, this model acknowledges that learning is an active and personal process through which students construct their own understanding of language and knowledge of the world. In fact, it is through communicative tasks that learners are recurrently driven to participate in the process of working on the meaning-form-meaning progression in which they are pushed to actively use rules and structures effectively in diverse contexts.

Motivation and active student participation are essential aspects of language learning. Stimulating their interest and curiosity, the PFIAP model fosters these aspects by having students resort to diverse multimodal resources. Challenging communicative tasks also provide a clear purpose for their learning, and thus increase their motivation and commitment. Another crucial pedagogical implication emphasized by the model is the development of cognitive and metacognitive skills. Learners are continuously encouraged to analyze and reflect on their own learning process, identify effective language learning strategies, self-evaluate their development and promote autonomy. The use of these strategies aims to develop the students' abilities to self-regulate and transfer their metacognitive skills to other learning contexts throughout their educational trajectories.

Students' self-efficacy may also be influenced by the model's potential impact on their development (Bandura, 1994). By highlighting real and authentic communication, the model provides students with plenty of opportunities to express themselves using the target language. Through these opportunities, learners are encouraged to build confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in the L2 and enhance their self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1991a, 1991b). Their own language learning abilities and skills are likely to be enhanced, as they perceive themselves as competent language learners able to engage in meaningful interactions, handling real-life like situations.

Collaborative learning is also fostered by the model. Through collaborative tasks, learners are engaged in social interaction and motivated to cooperate with one another. Improving their oral skills, especially fluency, is also achievable through communicative tasks through which learners are engaged in pair or small group work to practice the target language in genuine social contexts. This real-world setting paves the way for constructive feedback not only from their peers but also from their teachers.

In sum, the model offers a battery of pedagogical implications that encompass various aspects such as interaction, understanding, construction of knowledge, motivation, development of cognitive and metacognitive skills, self-efficacy, and collaborative learning. This comprehensible pedagogical approach to language learning enriches not only the learners' linguistic development but also enhances their interactive and communicative abilities.

## 6. Constraints and considerations

While the PFIAP model offers numerous benefits for second language learning, it is also essential to consider some limitations that may arise during its implementation. Firstly, the model demands careful consideration and a substantial commitment of time and resources. Planning materials, creating relevant communicative tasks, and providing customized support to students can be challenging, particularly in settings with limited time and resource availability.

Another possible constraint is related to the diversity of proficiency levels in a classroom. Adapting communicative tasks to meet students' individual differences and needs can be a challenge. Evaluating learning outcomes can also pose a difficulty within this model. Assessing communicative skills holistically requires more complex assessment methods than traditional ones. To address this concern, teachers need to find appropriate methods for assessing learners' progress in genuine communication situations. Ensuring alignment between assessment practices and the objectives and methods of the model becomes of paramount importance in this regard.

Classroom dynamics may also play a role in the implementation of the model. Managing group interactions, promoting equal participation, and maintaining a supportive learning environment can be demanding for teachers. Individual learning styles also need to be taken into account. Some students may thrive in the communicative approach, while others may require additional support or different learning strategies to fully benefit from the model.

Lastly, the adequacy of teacher training is an important factor. Teachers need to be adequately trained to implement the PFIAP model, designing effective communicative tasks, providing guidance on metacognitive skills, and managing diverse proficiency levels in the classroom. Contextual challenges such as the availability of technological resources, lack of suitable materials, class size and teacher training can further affect the effectiveness of its implementation. It is thus paramount to take these limitations into account and foresightedly address them to augment the realization of the PFIAP model and guarantee purposeful and effective students' learning outcomes.

# 7. Concluding remarks

Language teachers will benefit from the PFIAP model in that it serves as a high-value didactic sequence, which offers a comprehensive blueprint for boosting teaching practices. The step sequence provided in the model could be used as a platform to provide guidance and directions for planning, designing, and implementing foreign language lessons while allowing educators to scaffold students' learning by offering customized support. By capitalizing on our model, educators will be able to organize their teaching materials, design meaningful communicative tasks, and promote a wide-ranging and inclusive learning environment.

The implementation of our model in diverse educational contexts may as well hold significant importance. While the model may provide promising results in specific settings, its true effectiveness can be better understood by applying it in a range of classroom environments. By doing so, educators will be able to explore how the

model adapts to different learner populations, cultural backgrounds, and educational contexts. Through the collection and analysis of data, educators as well as researchers will be able to evaluate the outcomes of implementing the model and identify its strengths and areas for improvement. This iterative process will hopefully allow for the refinement of our model and the development of best practices that align with the unique needs and characteristics of different educational contexts worldwide.

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