



# Modeling Input Modification Taxonomy Patterns: Lecturers' Perception in Tertiary Institutions in Katsina State

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## Abstract

Despite the importance of students' proficiency in English Language, studies have shown that students faced difficulties in understanding course content taught in English Language as reflected by their poor proficiency. Thus, to improve students' proficiency in English Language, input modification becomes imperative. Teacher input modifications play an important role in facilitating classroom interaction and students' proficiency. Adoption of appropriate input modification patterns gives an opportunity for the learners to make sense of what they hear or see and to understand the contexts in which the samples of the classroom language are used. The study is anchor on affective filter hypothesis by Stephen Krashen. The study adopted qualitative research method. Simple random sampling technique was used to select one university, one polytechnic, one college of Education among the Tertiary institutions in Katsina State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select three lecturers taking Use of English in each tertiary institution. In-depth interviews were held with 15 lecturers. The instrument used is Lecturer Input Modification Patterns Interview Guide (LIMPIG) comprises open-ended questions that were used to generate data from the lecturers on their understanding and Patterns of input modification. The qualitative data was transcribed and subjected to inductive thematic analysis via ATLAS.ti software. The study revealed that the lecturers' input modification patterns are characterized with use of simple vocabularies, appropriate vocabulary, comprehension checks (checking students' comprehension) and code-switching (Mother tongue). The factors that influence the lecturers' patterns of input modification include; learners' language background, learners' level of education and social context. The study found that the suitable input modification taxonomy model includes input simplification and input elaboration patterns. The study concluded that the lecturers lack adequate knowledge of input modification taxonomy models that would guide teaching of English Language. Therefore, the study recommends that considering the potential benefits of input modification in teaching and learning of English Language, seminars and conferences should be organized by the school management for English Language lecturers on input modification. This is to improve the lecturers' skills in input modification.

**Keywords:** Input Modification Patterns, Input Simplification Patterns, Input Elaboration, Patterns, Input Modification, Taxonomy Model.

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## INTRODUCTION

Teacher language in the classroom serves as a valuable input of language learning and it is used in different ways to generate interaction, to make the input clear (Xiao-Yan, 2006). The teacher use of language is instrumental in promoting effective classroom interaction and successful learning outcomes. One way of learning a second language is through input modification (Arzu & Meryem, 2015). Input modification is an important strategy for facilitating effective teaching and learning. Teacher input modifications play an important role in facilitating classroom interaction and students' proficiency. Adoption of appropriate input modification patterns gives an opportunity for the learners to make sense of what they hear or see and to understand the contexts in which the samples of the classroom language are used. Yana (2013) stressed that input modification in teacher talk leads to understanding of input, helps students to avoid misunderstanding, encourages students' involvement and exposes students to the communicable language for classroom interaction. Hasan (2008) observes that it is through simplified input that language learning becomes most beneficial and it is under such conditions that the classroom can be of a great benefit for Second Language (L2) learners.

Humans unconsciously make input modification in order to cater to different audiences. The quality of input modification thus depends on the communicative context in which the particular input is produced. Yana (2013) is of the view that input modifications can be due to the influence of different factors. Azeez et al. (2020) identified such factors like learners' language background (First Language), learners' level of education and learners' social context.

Taher and Marziyeh (2014) emphasized the potential benefits of input modification in language teaching and learning. First, access to comprehensible input is the main feature of all cases of effective second language learning. Second, more quantities of comprehensible input seem to cause faster or better second language learning. Third, lack of access to comprehensible input causes little or no second language learning.

Navés et al. (2017) relate students' learning difficulty to the teachers' use of complex language for teaching. Instances of non-understanding or difficulties in understanding of input are what allow the learners to realize that input modification is necessary in the classroom interaction (Fang, 2010). Therefore, learners need to be given the opportunity to make sense of what they hear or see and to understand the contexts in which the samples of the language are used (Straková, 2007).

More so, one of the tasks of the teacher is to overcome the learners' comprehension difficulties so that incomprehensible or partly comprehensible input becomes comprehensible. However, to perform this role becomes a great task for teachers due to lack of appropriate input modification taxonomy model. With this concern about the teachers' inability to continuously apply the necessary input modification patterns, educational researchers contend that input modification taxonomies can help teachers to match the patterns of input modification they use with the type of thinking that they are trying to develop in the learners.

Furthermore, as a result of the importance of input modification in the classroom teaching, several studies have been conducted in different parts of the world, regarding the various ways of making input comprehensible so as to facilitate learners' comprehension and, subsequently, language learning. Some of the studies are; Hasan (2008), Yana (2013), Adriano et al. (2016). However, Ellis (1997) was among the researchers who built model of Second Language Acquisition.



Figure 1: Ellis's (1997), Model of a Second Language Acquisition

Ellis (1997) model of Second Language Acquisition is a general model of Second Language Acquisition that provides horizontal model of language learning but does not account for how input is modify for learners' intake and subsequent output. However, the need to develop input modification taxonomy model that could be used to assess how lecturers modify input by relating meaning with students, negotiating meaning with students, conducting comprehension checks to ensure students' understanding, makes students requesting for clarification when faced with comprehension difficulties became paramount. This led the researcher into investigating input modification taxonomy model that would be based on the principles of Krashen' (1982) input hypothesis' In this study, analysis is made of the input modification taxonomy model that could serve as potential frameworks and guide teachers in effective teaching in classrooms.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite that fact that the teacher that intends to teach course content is expected to modify the entry language within the domain of what the students are conversant with, learners appears not to benefit maximally from the teachers' input. Consequently, experts had advocated for adequate use of input modification patterns which account for student proficiency and demystify course content within the domain of what the learners can understand in teaching of English language. Therefore, this study investigated modeling input modification taxonomy patterns: lecturers' perception in tertiary institutions in Katsina State. This is with the view to developing input modification taxonomy model for teachers use.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to investigate modeling input modification taxonomy patterns: lecturers' perception in tertiary institutions in Katsina State. Specifically, the study's objectives are:

- To examine lecturers' input modification patterns in the classroom interactions.
- To examine factors influencing lecturers' input modification patterns in the classroom interactions.
- To come up with input modification taxonomy model that lecturers can adopt to effectively facilitate English Language classroom instruction.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

- How do you modify input (your language) during classroom interaction?
- What factors influence the choice of your input modification patterns during classroom interaction?
- What input modification taxonomy model can guide English Language teachers in the classroom teaching?

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted qualitative research method. Simple random sampling technique was used to select one university, one polytechnic, one college of Education among the Tertiary institutions in Katsina State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select three lecturers taking Use of English in each tertiary institution. In-depth interviews were held with 15 lecturers. The instrument used is Lecturer Input Modification Patterns Interview Guide (LIMPIG) comprises open-ended questions that were used to generate data from the lecturers on their understanding and Patterns of input modification. The qualitative data was transcribed and subjected to inductive thematic analysis via ATLAS.ti software.

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** How do you modify input (your language) during classroom interaction?

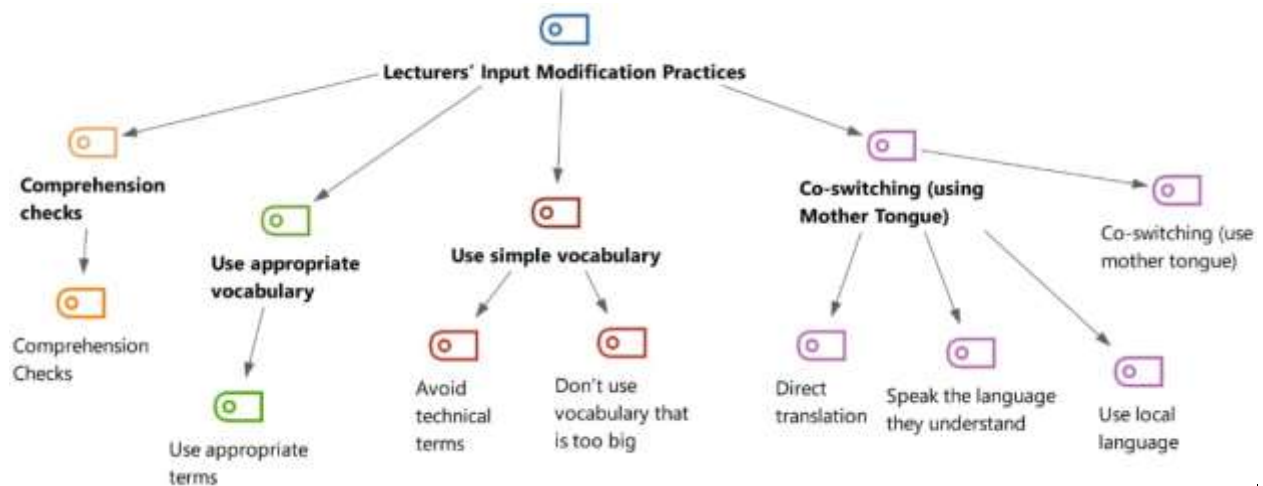


Figure 2: Thematic map of four emerging themes from eight codes that capture lecturers' input modification patterns

Figure 2 shows the emerging themes from the lecturers on input modification patterns. The themes are:

### Theme one: Use of Simple Vocabulary

Three lecturers stressed that they modify input by using simple vocabularies.

One of them asserted that:

*I often avoid very technical terms. If I want to teach them spoken English, we know that we have place of articulation, manner of articulation and we have the state of the glottis. I don't immediately start by telling them that plosive is this and palate alveolar is this and that. I avoid those technical terms at the initial classes until the students are get use to my teaching. I just start by telling them that we have the organs of speech that are used in the production of sounds. I can tell*

*them that /b/ is pronounced with the two lips and when the air explodes suddenly after an obstruction and there is explosion that is when we have a plosive. You see that we are trying to simplifying.*

The finding shows that lecturer input modification is characterized with use of simple and basic vocabulary. This study is in line with Adriano et al. (2016) who observe that one of the major ways of simplifying input in classroom interaction is making use of simplified vocabularies. Also, the study is in line with Arzu and Meryem (2015) who assertion that when learners' are exposed to language input within their language proficiency level, successful learning takes place.

### **Theme two: Use Appropriate Vocabulary**

Close to half of the lecturers modify input by using appropriate vocabulary. One of the lecturers maintained that:

*"Hmm... I don't really have specific pattern but the first thing is that I just use the appropriate terms first and then I go to break the terms down because if you begin with the explanation, they might not know what the term is at the end of the day. So, I begin with simple vocabulary'.*

### **Theme three: Comprehension Checks**

Only few of the lecturers modify input by checking students' comprehension.

One of them asserted that:

*"In fact, sometimes, I allow them to do some measure of talking so that i can understand what they know before i can continue. I give them feedback".*

The study revealed that the lecturers occasionally check students understanding. This is in line with Krashen and Mason (2018) who asserts that it is impossible to know if students understand unless further step is taken to find out if they understand. Hasan (2008) also stress that comprehension checks are strategies to negotiate meaning in the classroom interaction as it helps to avoid break down of communication and mend breakdown communication.

### **Theme four: Code-switching (Mother tongue)**

Five of the lecturers emphasized that one of the major ways of modifying input is through code-switching. One of the lecturers stated that:

*"Yes, there are many ways of modifying input. But the best pattern is code-switching and code-mixing especially when you are explaining new concepts. In grammar, when you are teaching vocabulary, you have to bring it down to the closest available object that the students will identify naturally. In fact, there is no way of imparting without bringing in the first language (LI) of the students.*

*Naturally, the second language learners think in their mother tongue. So, there are so many processes that go on before the thought is uttered out. Same way you have to understand the psychic of the students that they have to identify things they are used to something they are familiar with. At time it may involve importation of the local lexicons they are familiar with into English language. At times, you do a total substitution of one word in a local language or the closest because most often time we have problem with having the exact replica of the ideology of that lexicon of first language in the second language (English Language)”.*

The study revealed that the lecturer input modification is also characterized with code-switch. This finding is in consonance with Adriano et al. (2016) finding that the teachers’ utterances were accompanied by occasional code-switching which were used to clarify instructions for classroom activities, emphasis important point, check students’ understanding and giving additional instructions. This finding is also in line with Sterns in Smejkalová (2014) assertion that there are certain periods during which First Language (L1) is allowed to be used in order to remove uncertainties, ask for verification or clarification and give explanations that would not be accessible for learner in Second Language (L2).

**Interview Guide 2:** What factors influence the choice of your input modification patterns during classroom interaction?

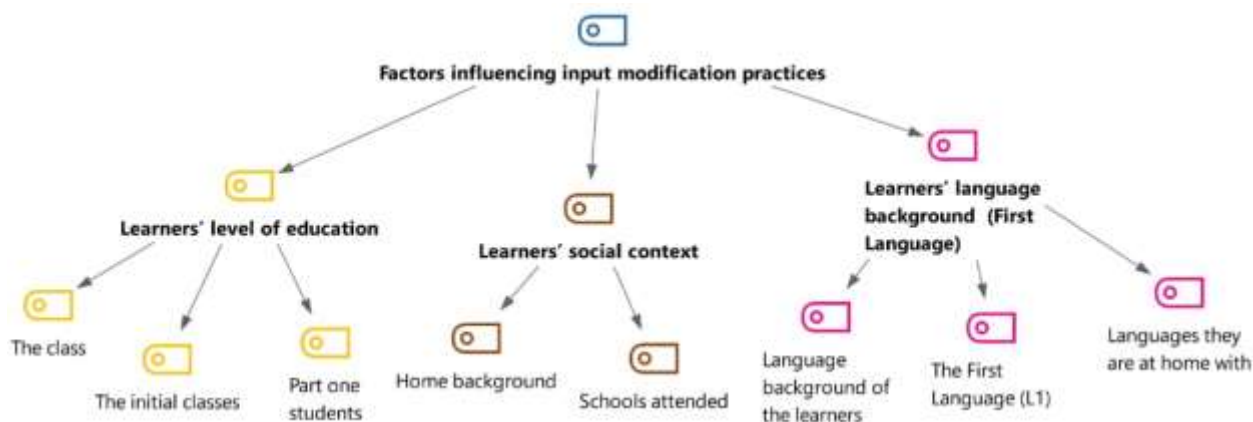


Figure 3: Thematic Map of Three Emerging Themes from Eight Codes that Capture Lecturers’ View on Factors Influencing Input Modification Patterns.

Figure 3 shows the emerging themes from the lecturers’ interview on factors influencing lecturers’ input modification patterns. The themes are:

**Theme One: Learners’ Level of Education**

One of the lecturers stated that:

*“For part one students, I often avoid very technical terms. If I want to teach them spoken English, we know that we have place of articulation, manner of*

*articulation and we have the state of the glottis. I don't immediately start by telling them that plosive is this and palate alveolar is this and that. I avoid those technical terms at the initial classes until the students are get use to my teaching. I just start by telling them that we have the organs of speech that are used in the production of sounds. I can tell them that /b/ is pronounced with the two lips and when the air explodes suddenly after an obstruction and there is explosion that is when we have a plosive. You see that we are trying to simplifying.*

## **Theme Two: Learners' Social Context**

One of the lecturers asserted that:

*"Let say that we have a learner whose grandma always say do you want to eat chicken as /sikin/ instead of /tsikn/. Go and sit down on that /sear/ instead of /tseə/. And the child picks up, even if the child has competence, the ability to say /tseə/. The child will not say it because the models that he or she has been consistently exposed to are wrong. I know of professor who says /sear/ instead of /tseə/. It is unfortunate that in this part of our word that we don't take cognizant of the school they have attended. There are some students coming from eyebrow schools where they have been exposed to speech pathology, all the sounds even in their kg. Also, in the same class, we have some students schooled in the rural areas where the students were not exposed to the sounds and if they were exposed, it is models that are not right. Like where the students is used to chicken as /sikin/ instead of /tsikn/. chair / sear/ instead of /tseə/".*

## **Theme Three: Learners' language background (First Language)**

Two lecturers emphasized the need to consider the background of the learners while providing input modification.

One of the lecturers maintained that:

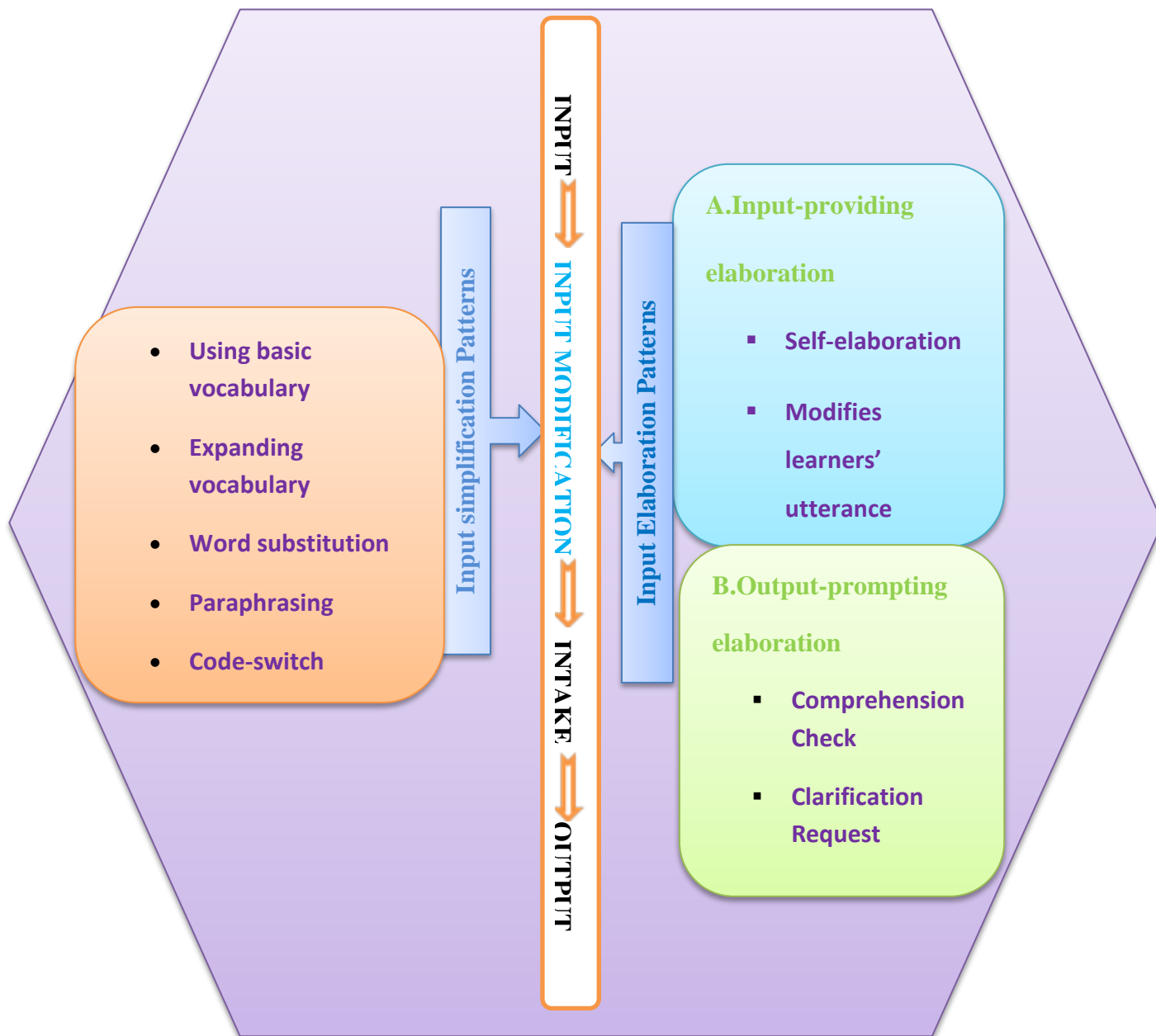
*"It is unfortunate that in this part of our word that we don't take cognizant of the language background of the learners, the language background in terms of their L1, what languages are they at home with, are they conversant with".*

Another lecturer maintained that:

*"The way you impact students of different background differs. To modification input, you have to come down to the level of the students of different background. Some of the students from the elite's background have been exposed to some lexicons at home, whereas their counterparts did not have this opportunity. It is important for the lecturer to have the love of the students in mind to really able to impact meaningfully."*

The finding of this study revealed that learners' language background, level of education and social context are the factors lecturers consider while making input modification in the classroom interaction.

Figure 4: Input Modification Taxonomy Model



The input taxonomy model contains two patterns of input modification which are input simplification and input elaboration patterns. The input modification taxonomy model shows that input is the first stage of language learning which connotes oral or written language presented to the learners. Then, the process of turning input into intake and finally output is called input modification. The input modification taxonomy model reflects two patterns of input



modification: input simplification pattern and input elaboration pattern. On the left side of the model is input simplification pattern with five variants: making use of basic vocabulary, explaining complex vocabulary, code-switching (explain concepts using other language), word substitution (replace complex words with synonym) and paraphrase (explaining an idea using more than one word to express the meaning).

However, the second pattern of input modification in the right side of the model is input elaboration with two variants: input-providing elaboration and input-prompting elaboration. In input-providing elaboration, the teacher provides the input as in self-elaboration and modification of learners' utterances, whereas in input-prompting elaboration, teacher pushes the learner to provide the input as we in comprehension check and clarification request.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the lecturers lack adequate knowledge of input modification taxonomy models that would guide teaching of English Language. Code-switching and basic vocabulary were the basic emerged themes on lecturer input modification patterns.

## Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Considering the potential benefits of input modification in teaching and learning of English Language, seminars and conferences should be organized by the school management for English Language lecturers on input modification. This is to improve the lecturers' skills in input modification.
- Lecturers should consider students' level of education, language background of the learners, in terms of their L1 (mother tongue) and social context in the selection of input modification pattern (s) to use.
- Lecturers should promote classroom interaction through input modification patterns that have the potential of improving students' proficiency in English language.

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