

## STIMULATED RECALL

Stimulated recall is one of the introspective methods. As discussed earlier, stimulated recall methodology can be used to prompt participants to recall thoughts they had while performing a task or participating in an event. It is assumed that some tangible (perhaps visual or aural) reminder of an event will stimulate recall of the mental processes in operation during the event itself. In other words, the theoretical foundation for stimulated recall relies on an information-processing approach whereby the use of and access to memory structures is enhanced, if not guaranteed, by a prompt that aids in the recall of information.

Why is stimulated recall important for L2 research? What is the function of this methodological tool? As DiPardo (1994) aptly pointed out, "stimulated recall is... less a unified approach than a flexible tool that has been adapted to widely varied agendas, and attended by a number of specific methodological choices" (p. 168). Through the use of stimulated recall, "a subject may be enabled to relive an original situation with great vividness and accuracy if he is presented with a large number of the cues or stimuli which occurred during the original situation" (Bloom, 1954, p. 25).

A crucial assumption behind stimulated recall (or any type of recall) is the basic one of recall accuracy. Bloom (1954) attempted to verify the reliability of recall by recording classroom events and asking participants to recall an overt event that occurred immediately following something in the recording. He found that if the recalls were prompted a short period of time after the event (generally 48 hours), recall was 95% accurate. Accuracy declined as a function of the intervening time between the event and the recall. Bloom made the assumption that "the recall of one's own private, conscious thoughts approximates the recall of the overt, observable events" (p. 26). Thus, he argued, the recall method itself is valid for the procurement of information about one's thoughts during an event. It has an advantage over a simple post hoc interview in that the latter relies heavily on memory without any prompts and it has an advantage over think-aloud protocols in that for think-alouds, the researcher needs to train participants, and even after training, not all participants are capable of carrying out a task and simultaneously talking about doing the task. This holds true to a greater extent with speaking activities, for which it is extremely difficult if not impossible to carry out a speaking task and talk about it simultaneously, without the process of think-aloud affecting the task talk.

Whereas Bloom's concern was the classroom, the ideas behind stimulated recall have been extended to other areas. For example, Kagan, Krathwohl, and Miller (1963), in a technique that they call Interpersonal Process Recall (part of stimulated recall methodology) investigated interpersonal behavior. In their interesting implementation of the technique, a counselor and client participate in a counseling interview in a closed circuit television studio. The camera is present, and no one but the counselor and client are in the room. At the completion of the interview, the client and counselor are moved to separate rooms; each is accompanied by an interviewer. The videotape of the original session is played back simultaneously in both rooms. The interviewers instruct the participants (counselor and client) to describe what they were feeling during the session, to interpret what they or the other had said, and to translate body movements. Any of the four (i.e., counselor, client, two interviewers) could stop the tape when they wanted in order to comment or to probe.

Stimulated recall has also been used as a tool for teacher training and to evaluate teaching effectiveness. Peterson and Clark (1978) video-

taped classrooms and extracted from the videotapes four short (2–3 minute) segments representing the beginning and ending of the class and two random sequences in between. Specific questions were posed to teachers after they watched each segment: What were you doing and why? What were you noticing about the students? How were the students responding? Were you thinking of any alternative actions or strategies at that time? Did any students' reactions cause you to act differently than you had planned? Variations on this study (Clark & Peterson, 1981; Marx & Peterson, 1981) involved different amounts of teaching time and included the following questions in addition to the preceding ones: Did you have any particular objectives in mind in this segment? If so, what were they? Do you remember any aspects of the situation that might have affected what you did in this segment?

Some researchers use stimulated recall to uncover things other than those that are exclusively cognitively oriented. For example, questions about individuals' perspectives on learning (Erickson & Mohatt, 1977) can be explored, as can their impressions of social interactions. Stimulated recall can also be used to explore children's development, including their use of argument skills (Benoit, 1995) or their reasoning abilities (Hample, 1984). One can also use stimulated recall to probe solitary composing processes in L1 or L2 writing (Rose, 1984) or interactions of their social affective and linguistic issues in talk about writing (DiPardo, 1994). It can be used to explore readers' lexical retrieval mechanisms or their opinions and impressions about what they have read. Stimulated recall is often used to address questions in research on teachers and their actions, including their decision making and interactive thoughts (Calderhead, 1981a, 1981b). The uncovering of cognitive processes in L2 research is only one area where stimulated recall can be used, although it is probably best known for its uses in more cognitively oriented research. Finally, it should be noted that stimulated recall is often employed in conjunction with other methodologies, as a means of triangulation or further exploration.

Within the field of education, there are a number of variations on the theme of stimulated recall, including, for example, how much of a video is watched during the recall session.

There is also variation in terms of who selects which episodes to comment on or whether there are pre-scripted questions to respond to.