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IMPLEMENTING THE PRINCIPLES OF THE SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORIES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON DEVELOPING LEARNERS' COMPETENCY

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Abstract

This article will introduce the definitions, merits, and demerits of the four prominent teaching and learning theories and their effects on developing learners' competency. Behaviorism, cognitive, mentalist, and monitoring are the most influential teaching and learning theories. The fundamental distinction between these theories relates to their interpretation rather than their definition. These distinctions are based on several critical problems that ultimately define the instructional prescriptions that emerge from each theoretical viewpoint (Yeoh et al., 2018).

Keywords: *merits, teaching and learning theories, critical problems*

Introduction

Recently, proficiency in the English language has become an essential need for everyone. Gaining proficiency in the English language is a beneficial way to access new information and take advantage of opportunities on a global level.

As defined by Hymes (1972), communicative competence refers to the ability to effectively and appropriately utilize language in a social context. It also includes comprehending the appropriate timing, method, and subject matter for speaking, as well as the appropriate demeanor to assume in a certain situation, location, and

with a specific individual for specific objectives. Linguistic proficiency refers to the level of language acquisition that enables individuals to effectively convey their messages to others in certain manners and comprehend the messages of others. It also refers to the inclination of language learners to juxtapose the actual world with the knowledge acquired in the educational setting. Hymes' definition of a professional language user encompasses the ability to comprehend grammatically correct phrases and the knowledge of when and how to appropriately use language. He formulated his new notion of competence by prioritizing the acceptability of

statements above their correctness. As a result, he changed his focus from studying language as a standalone system to studying language as a communication system (Al-Umma, 2015).

Khan et al. (2021) argued that improving and cultivating learners' proficiency is crucial, especially in nations where English is considered a Foreign Language (FL). Hence, in countries where English is not the official language, there is a concerted effort to create a fully immersive English environment in all schools as the first step to promote early proficiency in the language (Hasanah & Utami, 2020).

In this regard, Friedrichsen (2020) claimed that learning a second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) is a multifaceted process that needs exposure to a variety of learning environments. Thus, improving learners' spoken language and literacy requires equipping them with the appropriate learning and teaching tools from which to select, which motivates them and facilitates their development of the abilities necessary for language acquisition and learning through independent study.

Among other fields of applied linguistics studies, second language acquisition theory (SLA) focuses on developing a child's or adult's knowledge and use of another language besides their first language (Aljumah, 2020). This area of study is essential from both a theoretical and practical standpoint. The theoretical significance is connected to our knowledge of how language is organized in the brain and whether there is a distinction between the acquisition and processing of language and other types of knowledge. The practical significance stems from the notion that knowing how languages are acquired would contribute to more efficient teaching methodologies (Nina & Lightbown, 2020).

There are four main reasons for the focus on learning and acquisition theories. First, knowing several such techniques is crucial when picking an effective instructional method for solving a particular educational challenge. Second, learning theories provide the foundation for rational and informed strategy selection. Third, learning theories recurrently offer information on associations between instructional components and instructional design, suggesting how particular methods could work best in a given setting and with particular learners. Lastly, the theories' ultimate goal is to allow for accurate prediction (Aljumah, 2020; Devaki, 2021; Oommen, 2020).

Several scholars, including Devaki (2021), Ellis (2021), and Savignon (2017), assert that it is critical to recognize that different types of learners have distinct language requirements to learn and require different approaches to do so. Therefore, understanding the distinctions and overlaps between teaching and learning theories can help in understanding the characteristics and efficiency of the different types of teaching and learning approaches, helping the decision-makers make an informed choice about which teaching method to use based on their teachers' abilities, learners' needs, teaching environment, and planned goals for the process of learning and teaching English. This, in turn, can assist educators in determining how to assist their students in learning English and closing the proficiency gap.

Reviewing the four teaching and learning theories

A survey of these four different language learning and teaching theories, definitions, merits, and demerits are introduced in the following sections:

Behaviorism Theory

The behaviorist theory was first introduced by John B. Watson in the 1930s. It is a psychological theory since it concentrates on people's external and outward behaviors but not on their internal emotional and psychological conditions. It was indeed a theory of mother tongue language teaching and learning (Nina & Lightbown, 2020). Behaviorism began as an argument against introspective psychology, which significantly depended on first-person perspectives. Watson rejected introspective approaches because they were subjective and intangible. This theory was based on the stimulus-response (S-R) principle (Nelwatri & Neviyarni, 2022).

Behaviorism theory was dominant in psychology and education for most of the first half of the 20th century, which focused on views of second language acquisition and teaching. It is a three-stage process that includes stimulus, response, and reinforcement. According to this theory, the environment is important for learning because of the role it plays in conveying relevant information and motivating learners (Nina & Lightbown, 2020). Learning, in terms of this theory, is identified as variations in the shape or occurrence of observed behavior. When an appropriate reaction is exhibited in response to the presentation of a given environmental stimulus, learning occurs. Learning based on the behaviorism point of view is governed by the circumstances in which it occurs, and as long as individuals are exposed to the same circumstances, they will learn in the same manner (Devaki, 2021).

This theory follows the assumption that learning involving language happens entirely via the processes of imitating, practicing, and habit development. Behaviorism highlights the significance of the consequences of these actions, affirming that reactions that are strengthened are more likely to repeat themselves in the future. The learner is defined as someone who reacts to environmental situations rather than actively exploring them (Aljumah, 2020). According to this theory, language is learned through associating the meanings of uttered words with their objects. Learning is just a response to external stimuli, not a mental activity. The audio-lingual approach is used as a teaching-learning approach based on repetition and reinforcement to help learners acquire the L2 by replacing current habits with new ones. It can be concluded that learning and teaching processes should be formed based on personal experiences and assumptions about the environment. Furthermore, an individual's personality is formed by these experiences and the environment they act in, and any complicated activity may be split into smaller habits to be learned (Nina & Lightbown, 2020).

Cognitive Theory

Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, put language acquisition in the framework of a kid's cognitive processing maturation. He claimed that a kid must first comprehend a notion before learning the linguistic form that communicates that notion. He added that a child's intellectual growth must reach a point, and those who have not yet reached this point are unable to learn (Sankar, 2018).

Devaki (2021) stated that, in response to behaviorism, cognitivism emphasizes the importance of students' unobservable mental processes in the learning process. Cognitivism places greater emphasis on internal operations and interconnections than on exterior demonstrations of education. In this theory, psychologists and educators realized that a learner learns when he or she is developmentally ready to do so because learning follows growth. This theory focuses on how the mind absorbs, processes, preserves, and recalls information. According to this theory, learning is

mainly concerned with students' knowledge and how they acquire it (Friedrichsen, 2020). In this regard, Nina and Lightbown (2020) stated that this theory focused on practice as a vital factor in the learning and teaching process. It further prioritizes incorporating the already acquired knowledge into the new information, allowing learners to enhance their abilities (Oommen, 2020). According to this theory perspective, humans do not only respond to their environments; they also analyse and retain knowledge about them.

Unlike the behaviorist perspective, this theory claims that language acquisition is a comprehensive process that cannot be divided into stimulus-response relationships. However, learners, according to this theory, are active participants not passive. They do not rely solely on instructors for information; they actively build their own knowledge (Yeoh et al., 2018). This means that language learners concentrate on any aspect of the language they are learning or creating. They then put some of what they had learned into practice. Language acquisition, in this respect, can happen spontaneously. Therefore, according to this theory, language teaching and learning require a wide range of specialized abilities, including the capability to apply rules of grammar, select suitable terminology, and adhere to the idiomatic use norms of a given language (Gitsaki, 2018).

Consequently, the instructional strategy should be designed to accommodate learners at different developmental levels. Learners should receive training in such a way that the topics correspond to their growth levels (Akhigbe, 2019). The teacher's job is to enhance learning by making various learning opportunities available. Learners benefit from having opportunities to collaborate with each other, and teachers should strive to make sure that learners of varying cognitive abilities are able to work together. Furthermore, there are a number of different strategies that could be used in the classroom to foster learning, which could include providing visual aids; using familiar examples to reinforce students' better understanding of complex ideas; giving students the opportunity to talk about social, political, and cultural issues; teaching general concepts and putting them in a more understandable context (Nina & Lightbown, 2020).

Mentalist (UG) Theory

In 1957, Noam Chomsky critiqued the behaviorist hypothesis. He concentrated on the inadequate spoken input that kids gain. Parents or adults, he argued, do not usually produce completely grammatical sentences (Sankar, 2018). Chomsky's idea that humans are born with biological brain processes adapted for language gain is the foundation of the innate theory of second language acquisition.

According to Chomsky, language acquisition is not a social or psychological experience. Chomsky thought that contextual variables alone were insufficient to describe language learning since one's output might be more than simply what one receives from the input. He devised and introduced this theory to explain how such a language is biologically learned. He believed that brains are equipped with the necessary devices for language acquisition and that social interactions play an insufficient role in language acquisition (Friedrichsen, 2020).

The focus of this theory was the language's rule-governed and original character. It proposed that all languages have similar basic structures and particular fundamental universal principles that allow users to logically and effectively acquire and use language. Consequently, due to this perspective, researchers began

considering the child as a dynamic partner in the process of language acquisition instead of an inert recipient of linguistic input (Al-Jumah, 2020). This idea highlights the fact that nearly all children will learn their native language and its patterns in a similar manner and simultaneously. Thus, researchers who investigated language acquisition from a universal grammar (UG) perspective viewpoint focused on learners' competence rather than their performance and used the error analysis method instead of repetition and reward, which behaviorists used. Actually, Chomsky's theory was not meant to influence SLA because it was developed to describe how individuals gain their first language. However, it was used extensively in SLA hypotheses to determine why people learn languages (Nina & Lightbown, 2020).

Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory

The Stephen Krashen second language acquisition theory is both the most inspiring and the most divisive theory that seeks to offer a comprehensive account of SLA. It is an example of a macro theory that tries to account for most of the elements that influence second language learning and acquisition. Some of these factors are age, personality traits, teaching approach, teaching style, the way a person naturally learns a language, the effects of context, and so on (Gitsaki, 2018).

Krashen introduced five hypotheses for how individuals learn SL. They were the acquisition-learning distinction, the natural order, the monitor, the input, and the affective filter hypotheses. He presented these hypotheses to form a cohesive second language acquisition theory (Lai & Wei, 2019). These hypotheses seem to be better at describing the facts than other available hypotheses or generalizations. They also close enough to the current data to be relevant to the question at hand.

In the acquisition-learning hypothesis, Krashen distinguished between acquisition and learning when describing skills gained in a second language. Acquisition of L2 is expected to proceed similarly to first language (L1) acquisition in that the learners are not consciously aware of the language's grammatical rules. Language learning, then again, is the "conscious understanding of an L2, including knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to converse about them" (Nina & Lightbown, 2020, P.123).

Following the natural order hypothesis, Krashen proposes that L1 and L2 learners go through a sequence of predictable phases in their learning of language structures. Thus, grammatical structures are acquired in an expectable order. In other words, the natural order determines how a language is acquired, although learning may occur in a different sequence (Wu, 2023). In this context, Nina and Lightbown (2020) stated that "some grammatical patterns are learned early, whereas others are learned later. This occurs independently of a learner's first language, age, or conditions of exposure. The natural order does not have to be simple in appearance"(P.123).

In his monitor hypothesis, Krashen described how acquisition and learning are related and how one influences the other. According to this hypothesis, formal education serves only one purpose: evaluating and monitoring the output of the learner after the acquired system has made our speech. When the three criteria (there is enough time, the engagement is centered on form rather than meaning, and the learner is familiar with the rule at issue) are satisfied, the monitor works correctly (Gitsaki, 2018; Lai & Wei, 2019). According to this hypothesis, formal rules and conscious

learning have a minor influence on second language proficiency, and the subconscious learning process is more fundamental to second language acquisition than conscious learning (Bardovi & Harlig, 2015).

Actually, the input hypothesis is likely the most influential and crucial hypothesis among his five hypotheses. According to this hypothesis, a language can only be learned when it is comprehended in a way that is a little above our existing level of understanding. This is accomplished through extralinguistic or contextual information (Hajimia et al., 2020). In other words, L2 learning happens due to second language learners being exposed to meaningful and diverse linguistic information. The importance of meaning over structure was prioritized in this hypothesis. It claimed that the acquisition process occurred by pursuing meaning first and then gaining structure (Nina & Lightbown, 2020).

Lastly, the affective filter hypothesis encapsulates Krashen's belief that various affective variables aid or hinder the L2 acquisition process. Motivation, self-confidence, and anxiousness are three of these variables. For Krashen, learners with "high motivation, self-confidence, a positive self-image, and a low degree of anxiety" are better prepared for L2 acquisition attainment (Lai & Wei, 2019, P.1461). In this context, Roberts and Taylor (2020) asserted that several studies have found that learners' motivation, attitude, and anxiety are all significant determinants of success regarding second language learning and/or acquisition. These factors are intrinsically connected to linguistic competence and are context-dependent; they affect students' intake, output, and general growth in language proficiency. In other words, these considerations must not be disregarded if we want to maximize students' learning abilities. According to this hypothesis, if a student is not motivated to study, an affective filter will actively dampen his or her desire to seek out information (Wu, 2023). Therefore, teachers can facilitate the teaching and learning process in ways that are effective for language learners by having a better understanding of the affective filter that can be an obstacle to the educational process (Hajimia et al., 2020).

For Krashen (1982), it is critical to clarify that theory and theoretical research should not be the only factors considered when selecting a teaching approach and materials. However, "the theory of second language acquisition, applied linguistics research, and ideas and intuitions from experiences" (p.12), should be the other factors that must be considered when constructing or selecting teaching approaches and teaching materials. He added that for a successful teaching and learning process that aims to achieve the planned objective, there must be an effective interaction between these three areas. Krashen's second language acquisition theory focuses on the idea that a successful teaching and learning process can be achieved by providing or supplying the learner with understandable information in a friendly atmosphere (Lai & Wei, 2019).

Conclusion

It seems that different theories of teaching and learning L2 and FL try to explain where knowledge comes from, how people learn it, and how it can be made more accessible for people to learn it. No matter which method is employed, language learners must go through a series of phases before reaching proficiency in the target language. In addition, even though the primary focus of the hypotheses is to explain how a language is acquired or learned, none of these theories can solely account for all the complexities

involved in learning a new language. These theories offer different points of view on how to teach and learn the language and the best and most effective methods to achieve this goal.

Thus, through studying SLA theories, learners' paths to second-language proficiency are investigated as scientifically suitable, and more efficient methodologies and frameworks for teaching and studying a second language are explained and explored. It provides a framework for the investigation of L2 acquisition and further aids in acquiring a new language. It streamlines progress in language instruction and study. Understanding teaching and learning theories will help teachers make an informed choice about which teaching theory to use based on their abilities, learners' needs, teaching environment, and planned goals. Teachers who choose to implement the behaviorist theory's principles will likely rely on rote learning and repetition to fossilize learners' behavior. If learners properly answer, the instructor will congratulate them and thus promote the desired behavior. If learners make mistakes, the instructor will use negative reinforcement, such as reprimanding or repeating the response with corrections. According to behaviorist theory, language acquisition is a learned activity that can be adjusted, altered, and encouraged through rewards and punishments. However, other teachers who implement the principles of UG theory will use traditional teaching approaches such as the direct and grammar-translation methods. They place a strong emphasis on learning grammar rules and vocabulary. These activities can be taught by direct instruction and a curriculum that relies heavily on repetition, memorization of interchanges, question-and-answer exercises, and replacement exercises, and, as a result, the other skills, such as speaking and listening, receive less attention. Finally, for teachers who implement the principles of the monitor model, the classroom will be student-centered, in which learners are comfortable and not frightened by the instructor or their classmates. Here, the CLT is used as a teaching approach. The teacher in this type of class would provide learners with enough support to help them cope with the foreign words and grammatical rules of the L2. The teacher tries to provide a friendly atmosphere to motivate his students to gather all the instructional input and produce a respectable output.

Based on the above discussion, the reason behind touching on those learning theories is attributed to the fact that they may provide educational stakeholders with tried-and-true instructional methods and approaches for supporting learning as well as a framework for making informed strategic choices to enhance and develop the EFL learners' communicative competence abilities.

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