

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING THEORIES/APPROACHES

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Summary

Language learning is a complicated procedure that needs to be understood better. In order to get the hang of this procedure and understanding how people learn languages, there have been many theories of learning with principles. These principles are used to choose the suitable learning tools and strategies in learning process. Each theory has its own principles. Behaviorism, for instance, has its base on stimuli-response associations. To shed light on this topic, this study, which was carried out by means of literature review model, gives detailed information about foreign language teaching and learning theories/approaches.

Key Words: learning procedure, theories, approaches

YABANCI DİL ÖĞRETME VE ÖĞRENME TEORİLERİ/YAKLAŞIMLARI

Özet

Dil öğrenme, daha iyi anlaşılması gereken karmaşık bir süreçtir. Bu süreç kavramak için ve insanların nasıl öğrendiğini anlamak için, ilkelerle öğrenme teorileri vardır. Bu ilkeler, öğrenme sürecinde uygun öğrenme araçlarını ve stratejileri seçmek için kullanılır. Her kuramın kendi ilkeleri vardır. Davranışçılık, örneğin, uyarıcı-tepkil ilişkilerine dayalıdır. Literatür inceleme modelinde yapılan bu çalışma, bu konuya ışık tutmak için, yabancı dil öğretme ve öğrenme teorileri/yaklaşımları hakkında ayrıntılı bilgi vermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: öğrenme süreci, teoriler, yaklaşımlar

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I. INTRODUCTION

In traditional language teaching classroom, also called teacher-centered classrooms, teachers are active and in the role of information giver. As DurakÜğüten (2016: p. 106) stated, when it is looked at traditional language education, "Education is teacher-centered. Teacher is information giver and learner is the person who receives the information". Nevertheless, it has had many changes and improvements during history with the advent of new technology and theories. Instead of teacher-centeredness, learner-centeredness has become popular in which the main point is in learning procedure, learner should be a part of the procedure. That is, both the teacher and the learner should share the responsibility of the procedure. Instead of just sitting passively and receiving the given information without questioning, they should take the responsibility of their own learning procedure. (DurakÜğüten 2009; Köse, 2006; Benson, 2001; DurakÜğüten 2015). Teaching/learning a foreign language is a complicated procedure that is affected by many factors such as teachers, learners, individual differences, learning styles, etc. Teachers have an important role to organize every step of this procedure, what to teach, when to teach, how to teach, etc. Learners are another important part as each learner has a different learning styles and backgrounds that affect his/her learning. It is known that each student has different learning style and pace. One can learn by memorizing while the other can learn by writing, etc. As Balcı stated individual differences have been a remarkable point in language learning as in the other fields of education (2017: p. 1). Teachers should take these differences into account as they affect the learners' way of learning, their learning styles.

Balcı (2016:p. 116) indicated that

parallel to the developments in science and technology, the developments in every part of life, in every part of the world, without a doubt, are also felt in the field of education. The value attributed to human beings as a result of the influence of humanistic psychology on education has increased. Reflections of this thinking in education have taken place in educational programs and the individual differences in learning-teaching processes are started to be considered by educators. These developments in education have also influence in the field of foreign language education and the effect of individual differences on foreign language classes have become an important issue for educators and researchers

There have been many theories that affect language teaching during the history. Two theories called "Behaviourism" and "Mentalism" have influenced the language teaching in many aspects. Depending on those theories many approaches have been adapted by the language teaching profession. Each of these approaches emphasis on different things; however, they all have an underlying similarity in the approach to syllabus and to the teaching.



II. BEHAVIOURISTIC VIEW (BEHAVIOURISM)

Behaviourism, which has three stages-stimulus, response and reinforcement, is based on the theory that an animal can be trained to do everything. Conditioning is the main point. According to the behaviourists, there is not a theory of language learning but merely the application of general principles of learning to language. Learning is controlled by the conditions under which it takes place and as long as individuals are subjected to the same conditions, they learn in the same way. As for the language learning, every utterance is produced as a result of the presence of some kind of stimulus. Physical, verbal and internal stimuli are the sources of utterances which form responses on the learners' part. When a child is learning to make responses to the stimuli mentioned above this first attempts should be reinforced. A child is reinforced in a variety of ways. A physical need in the child, pain or discomfort in him many act as stimuli to which he responds by crying or uttering some sounds. Parental approval is an important reinforces in children's learning the mother tongue. When a child says something which is not understood by people around him, the response, the pieces of language are acquired and incorrect utterances are not. In learning the mother tongue, a child learns where his responses will be appropriate and where they will be incorrect. This way he develops a formal and thematic repertoire of responses. The utterances are automatically elicited from the child by the presence of appropriate stimuli.

As it is known the behaviouralpsychologist Skinner is the forerunner of behaviouristic view. Language was considered as a behaviour. He applied the theory of conditioning to the acquisition of a language. He suggested that language learning is a habit formation. That means learning is a behaviour change. However, in order to change a behaviour, there should be an event. Ivan Pavlov's study of classical conditioning is an example that a response comes when there is an environmental stimulus. In other words, behaviours are developed by a set of stimulus-response associations.

Skinner (1974; p.209) explains behaviorism as follows:

1. It ignores consciousness, feelings, and states of mind.
2. It neglects innate endowment and argues that all behavior is acquired during the lifetime of the individual.
3. It formulates behavior simply as a set of responses to stimuli, thus representing a person as an automaton, robot, puppet, or machine.
4. It does not attempt to account for cognitive processes.
5. It has no place for intention or purpose.
6. It cannot explain creative achievements-in art, for example, or in music, literature, science, or mathematics.
7. It assigns no role to a self or sense of self.
8. It is necessarily superficial and cannot deal with the depths of the mind or personality.



9. It limits itself to the prediction and control of behavior and misses the essential nature or being of man.
10. It works with animals, particularly with white rats, but not with people, and its picture of human behavior is therefore confined to those features which human beings share with animals.
11. Its achievements under laboratory control cannot be duplicated in daily life, and what it has to say about human behavior in the world at large is therefore unsupported metascience.
12. It is oversimplified and naive and its facts are either trivial or already well known.
13. It is scientistic rather than scientific. It merely emulates the sciences.
14. Its technological achievements could have come about through the use of common sense.
15. If its contentions are valid, they must apply to the behavioral scientist himself, and what he says is therefore only what he has been conditioned to say and cannot be true.
16. It dehumanizes man; it is reductionistic and destroys man qua man.
17. It is concerned only with general principles and therefore neglects the uniqueness of the individual.
18. It is necessarily antidemocratic because the relation between experimenter and subject is manipulative, and its results can therefore be used by dictators but not by men of good will.
19. It regards abstract ideas such as morality or justice as fictions.
20. It is indifferent to the warmth and richness of human life, and it is incompatible with the creation and enjoyment of art, music, and literature and with love for one's fellow men.

Behaviourism was adapted by many language teachers and Audio Lingual Method of teaching was a result. Positive or negative reinforcement was a major focus of classroom activity. Constant repetition and reinforcement by the teacher were also important.

III. MENTALISTIC VIEW

In order to indicate the inadequacies of behaviourism, it is better to study cognitivism which takes the language learning as a mental process rather than a habit formation. According to mentalists, a baby is born with an innate capacity for language acquisition. Their inborn capability enables them to establish hypothesis about the language. They make their own sentences according to these hypothesis, and they test the appropriateness of the hypothesis by comparing them with the language they hear from the people around them. They're exposed to the adult language system since their cognitive abilities will mature gradually together with the acquisition of the mother tongue. A child formulates the rules of the language appropriate to the level of this cognitive maturity and thus "creative construction" of the language is based on his self-created rules.

Pădurean (2014) refers to



a group of psychological theories, which draw heavily on the work in linguistics of Noam Chomsky. He rejected the behaviourist view of language acquisition based on his model of competence and performance. Chomsky maintained that language is not a form of behaviour, on the contrary, it is an intricate rule-based system, and a large part of language acquisition is the learning of the system. There are a finite number of grammatical rules in the system and with the knowledge of these, an infinite number of sentences can be formed in the language. It is competence that a child gradually acquires. Language teaching has never adopted a methodology based on Chomsky's work or strictly upon cognitivist theories.

As it is seen mentalistic view is quite different from behaviouristic view. The mentalistic view is based on Chomsky's very well known claim against behaviourism. To mentalistics, language use depends on acquisition of the rules of the target language, rather than forming habits.

IV. STRUCTURALISM

It is known that structuralism is greatly influenced by behaviourism. Language learning is seen as a process of habit development. As it is concerned with patterns or structures of the spoken language, it is classified as structural. In broader terms, structuralist aspect of structural approach deals with language form rather than functional or semantic aspects of language. In addition to this, it gives importance to the selecting and sequencing of structural patterns in structural syllabuses.

As it is indicated in the introduction section the combination of behaviourism and structuralism has formed approaches to the language teaching. Structuralism concerned with it while behaviourism is concerned with how it is thought.

V. CONCLUSION

There have been many theories and approaches to foreign language teaching and learning. Each one has different characteristics. Behaviorism, for instance, sees language as a behavior. On the other hand, mentalistic view claims that acquisition of the rules of the target language is the main point, not habit formation. Structuralism is another theory that gives importance to structures, especially in spoken language. It is already known that no matter which approach has been used in the classroom it is impossible to enable the learners to communicate accurately and fluently with the natives unless the learners have long term opportunities to use their knowledge of language in the target language situation.

So as the second language teachers should be aware of the fact that there is no perfect approach in language teaching, or no one's approach is superior to the other. All have positive and negative aspects depending on teachers, learners and learning situation and we are to get benefits from the positive aspects of approaches considering our situations.



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