

THEORIES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING





Different models have been proposed:

The behaviorist perspective

The innatist perspective

The cognitive/developmental perspective

The sociocultural perspective

THE BEHAVIORIST PERSPECTIVE

Learning is explained in terms of imitation, practice, reinforcement, and habit formation

It had a powerful influence on second and foreign language teaching between the 1940s and the 1970s.

The Audio-lingual method of second language teaching stemmed out of behaviorism: emphasis on mimicry and memorization

BEHAVIORISM

The term behaviorism refers to the school of psychology founded by **John B. Watson(1913)**

classic paper Psychology as **the Behaviorist Views It**

belief that behaviors can be measured, trained, and changed

BEHAVIORISM

(CONTINUE...)

Behaviorism, also known as behavioral psychology, is a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning (Watson 1920's Bloomfield 1930's Thorndike 1930's and Skinner 1950's).

Conditioning occurs through interaction with the environment.

Behaviorists believe that our response to environmental stimuli (factors causes a reaction) shapes our behaviors.

BEHAVIORISM

(CONTINUE...)

According to behaviorism, behavior can be studied in a systematic and observable manner with no consideration of internal mental states

This school of thought suggests that only observable behaviors should be studied since internal states such as cognitions, emotions and moods are too subjective.

BEHAVIORISM

(CONTINUE..)

Classical Conditioning

Pavlov experiments on dogs (US leads to UR, CS leads to CR)

Operant Conditioning

Skinner's box was used to teach behaviours

Experiments on small animals

Stimulus –Response- Reinforcement-Habit formation

BEHAVIORISM AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Language learning is seen as any other kind of learning as the formation of habits.

It is based on the concept of stimulus and response. Human beings are exposed to several stimuli in their environment.

The response they give to such stimuli will be reinforced if successful, if the desired outcome is achieved.

Through repeated reinforcement a certain stimulus will elicit the same response time and again ultimately becoming a habit.

The learning of any skill is seen as the formation of habits. It is due to stimulus – response pairing.

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

For first language learning

Simple process, Learn a set of new habits as we learn to respond to stimulus in our environment.

For L2

Complicated process,

Already have set of well- established responses in our mother tongue/L1

BEHAVIORISM

(CONTINUE..)

Second language L2 is learnt in the same way as L1.

Second language learning involves replacing those habits interfere with this process

Structure similarity of both languages will enhance learning process.

BEHAVIORISM

(CONTINUE..)

Learning a language is a process of habit formation: habits of L1 will surely interfere with the new habits of L2 that the learner wants to form. Lado 1957 puts in that

Those structures that are different will be difficult.

CRITICISM

Many critics argue that behaviorism is a one-dimensional approach to understanding human behavior and that behavioral theories do not account for free will and internal influences such as moods, thoughts and feelings.

Behaviorism does not account for other types of learning, especially learning that occurs without reinforcement and punishment

People and animals are able to adapt their behavior when new information is introduced, even if a previous behavior pattern has been established through reinforcement.

Chomsky argues that animals and human learning can never be the same.

2. THE INNATIST PERSPECTIVE

Chomsky 1986 stressed that linguistics theory is not concerned with SLA. Its main aim is to answer three basic questions

What constitutes knowledge of language ?

How is knowledge of language acquired?

How is knowledge of language put into use?

UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR CHOMSKY'S MENTALISM

Humans are born with innate knowledge of the principles of Universal Grammar: UG

The Universal Grammar approach claims that all human beings inherit a set of principles and parameters which control the shape of human languages can take

Principles and parameters make the languages similar



UG allows all children to acquire the language of their environment during a critical period of their development.

L1 acquisition

Children go through stages

These stages are similar across children in a given language. Rate of acquisition varies.

These stages are similar across languages

Child language is rule governed and systematic

Children are resistant to corrections

- **Children acquire . . . languages quite successfully even though no special care is taken to teach them and no special attention is given to their progress. (Chomsky 1965, pp. 200 1)**

language acquisition is an ability which all humans possess, entirely independently of their general intelligence.

language acquisition is an entirely subconscious and involuntary activity (in the sense that you can't consciously choose whether or not to acquire your native language)

UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES:

Structure dependency principle

She bought a new car yesterday

My friend bought a new car yesterday

The friend I met last year in USA bought a new car yesterday

Grouping called phrase . Mechanism same in all languages

PARAMETERS

Rules which are different in languages

Null Subject Parameter: Some languages (like Italian) allow a null pronoun to be used as the subject of any finite (auxiliary or main) verb, whereas other languages (like English) do not

A) Maria thinks that *(they) speak French

(b) Maria pensa che parlano francese

(Maria thinks that speak French)

UG AND L2

The process of acquisition is same for L2

Strengths

Sophisticated tool for linguistic analysis

It helped to describe the L2 acquisition systematic and step by step process.

Weaknesses

Did not focus on other linguistic areas except syntax

Social and psychological variables are ignored


3. STEPHEN KRASHEN

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (1981)

It is one of the models that adopt the innatist perspective

It was quite influential in the 1970s and 80s.

It emphasizes the role of exposure to comprehensible input in second language acquisition.



It is based on 5 hypotheses:

1. Acquisition/learning hypothesis
2. Monitor hypothesis
3. The natural order hypothesis
4. The input hypothesis
5. The affective filter hypothesis

THE MONITOR MODEL

FIVE HYPOTHESES:

1. **acquisition / learning** are two different processes (spontaneous vs. conscious)
2. **monitor** (learning functions only as an editor, or monitor)
3. **natural order** (grammar is acquired in a predictable order in a natural setting)
4. **input** (comprehensible input is essential for acquisition)
5. **affective filter** (acquisition occurs when affective conditions are optimal, i.e., low anxiety, motivation, confidence, etc.)

THANK YOU