Behaviourist Theories of ESL [English Second Language] Learning

Outdated ELD Methods/Models of L2 Language Acquisition

- **Behaviorist Model/Theory** – Instruction based on the idea that "the mind is a blank slate" and practice based on drills focusing on specific grammatical forms. FROM THIS COMES THE AUDIOLINGUAL METHOD:

Audio-lingual Method – English Language Development (ELD) focused on the development of oral communication skills using dialogues, pattern drills and carefully ordered structures

Contemporary Theories/Language Acquisition

Acquisition Model – children acquire language, constructing their own understanding or rules without receiving explicit instruction

Interactionist Model- one of the most salient and significant modes of discourse is conversation

Interlanguage Hypothesis – refers to the separateness of a second language learner's system, that has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target language

Social Interactionist – the learner discovers the meaning potential of language by participating in communication

Socio-cultural model - students from a non mainstream culture are acquiring a second culture/language which may contrast between the patterns acquired at home

Constructivism - is based on the premise that we all construct our own perspective of the world, based on individual experience and schema, focuses on preparing the learner to problem solve.

(ZPD) Zone of Proximial Development Strategies: use a scaffold such as questioning techniques, modeling, demonstrations, realia [real life TLM like recordings of commentaries of football match], mentors to assist learning process. Meaning centered, whole language, using all 4 domains l,s,r,w to create classrooms where students' lives and experience are valued, and they explore the multiple functions of literacy, reading and writing to satisfy their own needs and goals.

BEHAVIORIST AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD

Definition

The Audio-lingual Method is a method of foreign language teaching which emphasizes the teaching of listening and speaking before reading and writing. It uses dialogues as the main form of language presentation and drills as the main training techniques. Mother tongue is discouraged in the classroom.

Background

The Audio-lingual Method was developed in the U.S. during the Second World War. At that time, the U.S. government found it a great necessity to set up a special language-training program to supply the war with language personnel. Therefore, the government commissioned American universities to develop foreign language program for military personnel. Thus the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) was established in 1942.The objectives of the army program was for students to attain conversational proficiency in a variety of foreign languages. The method used was known as the "informant method", since it used a native speakers of the language, the informant, and a linguist. The informant served as a source of language for imitation, and the linguist supervised the learning experience. The intensive system adopted by the army achieved excellent results.

Behaviorist psychology

The learning theory of Audiolingualism is behavioural psychology which is an empirically based approach to the study of human behaviour. Behaviourism tries to explain how an external event (a stimulus) caused a change in the behaviour of an individual (a response) without using concepts like "mind" or "ideas" or any kind of mental behaviour. Behaviourist psychology states that people are conditioned to learn many forms of behaviour, including language, through the process of training or conditioning.

Basic Principles

- Separation of language skills into listening, speaking, reading and writing, with emphasis on the teaching of listening and speaking before reading and writing;
- Use of dialogues as the chief means of presenting the language;
- Emphasis on certain practice techniques: mimicry, memorization and pattern drills;
- Discouraging the use of the mother tongue in the classroom

Objectives

The general objective of the Audio-lingual Method is to enable the target language communicatively, Short-range objectives include training in listening comprehension, accurate pronunciation, reading comprehension and production of the Audio-lingual Method are the development of mastery in all four language skills, beginning with listening and

speaking, and using these as a basis for the teaching of reading and writing. Long-range objective, or the ultimate goal, is to develop in the students the same types of abilities that native speaking have, to use it automatically without stopping to think.

Techniques

- Repetition drill : This drill is often used to teach the lines of the dialogue. Students are asked to repeat the teacher's model as accurately and as quickly as possible.
- Substitution drill : The students repeat the line from the dialogue which the teacher has given them, substituting the cue into the line in its proper place.
- Question-and-answer drill : The drill gives students practice with answering questions. The students should answer the teacher's question very quickly. It is also possible for the teacher to cue the students to ask questions as well
- Expansion drill : This drill helps students to produce longer sentence bit by bit, gradually achieving fluency. The main structure is repeated first, and then students have to put cue phrase in its proper place.
- Clause combination drill : Students learn to combine two simple sentences into a complex one.
- Background build-up drill (or back chaining: This drill is used when a long line of dialogue is giving students trouble. The teacher breaks down the line into several parts. The students repeat a part of the sentence, usually the last phrase of the line.
- Chain drill : A chain drill gets its name from the chain of conversation that forms around the classroom as students, one-by-one, ask and answer questions of each other. The teacher begins the chain by greeting a particular student, or asking him a question. That student responds, and then turns to the student sitting next to him.
- Completion Drill : Students hear an utterance that is complete except for one word, and then repeat the utterance in completed form.
- Use of minimal pairs : The teacher works with pair of words which differ in only one sound; students are first asked to find the difference between the two word and later to say the two words.

Advantages

- It is the first method to have a theory.
- Making language teaching possible to large groups of learners
- Emphasizing sentence production , control over grammatical structures and development of oral ability.
- Developing simple techniques and making use of language lab.
- Developing the separation of the language skills

Disadvantages

- Weak basis of its theory

- Not developing language competence , lack of effectiveness , and boredom caused by endless pattern drills.
- Learners having little control over their learning.
- Teacher's domination of the class .
- Teacher-oriented materials.

Stephen Krashen –

CONCEPTS OF COGNITIVE APPROACH = SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND BEHAVIORIST APPROACH = SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Stephen Krashen' Theory of Second Language Acquisition "Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill."(Stephen Krashen, 1987). "Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding." (Stephen Krashen, 1987)

Krashen's theory of second language acquisition consists of five main hypotheses:

- The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis
- The Monitor hypothesis
- The Natural Order hypothesis
- The Input hypothesis
- The Affective Filter hypothesis

According to Krashen, there are two independent systems:

•The acquired system is the product of a subconscious process. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language.

•The learned system is the product of formal instruction and learning. It involves a conscious process which results in conscious knowledge about the target language

ACQUISITION PREREQUISITES:

- Low affective filter (minimum stress)
- Accepting, encouraging environment
- Instructional pacing that provide wait time
- Activities that allow student-student interaction
- Primary language materials available (CDs, Books)
- Parent & older L1 (ELL) students participate

Natural Order Theory (Krashen)

According to Krashen, learners acquire parts of language in a predictable order. For any given language, certain grammatical structures are acquired early while others are acquired later in the process. This hypothesis suggests that this natural order of acquisition occurs independently of deliberate teaching and therefore teachers cannot change the order of a grammatical teaching sequence.

According to this hypothesis, teachers should be aware that certain structures of a language are easier to acquire than others and therefore language structures should be taught in an order that is conducive to learning. Teachers should start by introducing language concepts that are relatively easy for learners to acquire and then use scaffolding to introduce more difficult concepts.

The Input hypothesis[Krashen]

This hypothesis suggests that language acquisition occurs when learners receive messages that they can understand, a concept also known as comprehensible input. However, Krashen also suggests that this comprehensible input should be one step beyond the learner's current language ability, represented as $i + 1$, in order to allow learners to continue to progress with their language development.

This hypothesis highlights the importance of using the Target Language in the classroom. The goal of any language program is for learners to be able to communicate effectively. By providing as much comprehensible input as possible, especially in situations when learners are not exposed to the TL outside of the classroom, the teacher is able to create a more effective opportunity for language acquisition.

The Monitor hypothesis

This hypothesis further explains how acquisition and learning are used; the acquisition system, initiates an utterance and the learning system 'monitors' the utterance to inspect and correct errors. Krashen states that monitoring can make some contribution to the accuracy of an utterance but its use should be limited. He suggests that the 'monitor' can sometimes act as a barrier as it forces the learner to slow down and focus more on accuracy as opposed to fluency.

As an SL teacher it will always be a challenge to strike a balance between encouraging accuracy and fluency in your students. This balance will depend on numerous variables including the language level of the students, the context of language use and the personal goals of each student. This balance is also known as Communicative competency.

The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis

According to Krashen, there are two ways of developing language ability. Acquisition involves the subconscious acceptance of knowledge where information is stored in the brain through the use of communication; this is the process used for developing native languages. Learning, on the other hand, is the conscious acceptance of knowledge 'about' a language

(i.e. the grammar or form). Krashen states that this is often the product of formal language instruction.

According to this theory, the optimal way a language is learned is through natural communication. As a second language teacher, the ideal is to create a situation wherein language is used in order to fulfill authentic purposes. This is turn, will help students to 'acquire' the language instead of just 'learning' it.

The Affective Filter hypothesis

According to Krashen one obstacle that manifests itself during language acquisition is the affective filter; that is a 'screen' that is influenced by emotional variables that can prevent learning. This hypothetical filter does not impact acquisition directly but rather prevents input from reaching the language acquisition part of the brain. According to Krashen the affective filter can be prompted by many different variables including anxiety, self-confidence, motivation and stress.

In any aspect of education it is always important to create a safe, welcoming environment in which students can learn. In language education this may be especially important since in order to take in and produce language, learners need to feel that they are able to make mistakes and take risks. This relates to directly to Krashen's hypothesis of the affective filter.