Week 2: Theories of Acquisition & Learning

Second Language Acquisition Theory

Teach English... ...See the World

Week 2: Theories of Acquisition & Learning

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Paradigms of Human Learning Revisited

- Behaviorism
  - Stimulus-response conditioning
  - Pavlovian vs Operant conditioning
- Innatism/Cognitivism/Mentalism
  - Innate knowledge & capacity (LAD)
  - Emphasis on cognitive capabilities: induction
  - Emphasis on Meaningful learning
- CLT: Communicative Language Teaching
- Constructivism
  - Social construction
  - Interaction & Negotiation of meaning
  - Cooperative learning

Related Theories of Learning Relevant to Lang

- Social Learning Theory
  - Bandura (1941; 1977) Observational modeling in society coordinated with social and individual values
  1. The highest level of observational learning is achieved by first organizing and rehearsing the modeled behavior symbolically and then enacting it overtly. Coding modeled behavior into words, labels or images results in better retention than simply observing.
  2. Individuals are more likely to adopt a modeled behavior if it results in outcomes they value.
  3. Individuals are more likely to adopt a modeled behavior if the model is similar to the observer and has admired status and the behavior has functional value.

Multiple Intelligences

- Related to Learning Styles yet distinct to learning capacity
- Howard Gardner (1983) → Jerome Bruner → Various charlatans...
  - The capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural' (Gardner & Hatch, 1989)
  - "Learning involves figuring out how to best take advantage of the uniqueness conferred on us as a species exhibiting several intelligences’
- 7 orginal intelligences (+3)

Differences Between Child & Adult L2

- Child vs Adult L2 Acquisition: transfer → L1
- Fundamental Diff Hypothesis: Adults use cognitive analytical strategies [explicit] and children use experiential application strategies [implicit]
- Adults can actually learn faster than children → but usually fail to obtain native level fluency in all areas
- Critical Period Effects: Very controversial
- Critical Period issues go to the heart of language teaching...

7+3 Multiple Intelligences

- 1. Linguistic (academic)
- 2. Logic (academic)
- 3. Musical (artistic)
- 4. Kinesthetic (artistic)
- 5. Spatial (artistic- academic)
- 6. Interpersonal (social)
- 7. Intrapersonal (social)
  +1 Naturalist
  +2 Spiritualist
  +3 Existentialist
  ~ Emotional Intelligences
Gestalt Perception and Learning

- The mind perceives holistically
- Perceptual patterns are super-imposed on constituent parts
- Tel: When get home?
- According to research at an English university, it doesn't matter in what order the letters in a word are, only that the first and last letters are at the right places. The result can be a total mess and you can still read it without a problem. This is because we do not read every letter by itself, but the word as a whole.
- *conceptual metaphor & Lakoff

Dual Coding Theory
(Palvio, 1991)

- Both linguistic and non-linguistic processing are important: The two dominant cognitive processes
- Perception, saliency and retention can be enhanced via multimedia: linguistic + audio/visual
- *Human cognition is unique in that it has become specialized for dealing simultaneously with language and with nonverbal objects and events. Moreover, the language system is peculiar in that it deals directly with linguistic input and output (in the form of speech or writing) while at the same time serving a symbolic function with respect to nonverbal objects, events, and behaviors* (1986)
- Basis for multimedia in the classroom and CALL

Ausbefel's Meaningful Memory Theory

- Learning must be meaningful or it will not be retained in long-term memory
- Synaptic associations with meaningful events
- Cognitive pruning eliminates weak and/or non-meaningful neural connections in the brain

Theory of Information Processing & Memory

- Three essential stages of processing
  1. Encoding: a conceptual chunk is formed
  2. Storage: short or long depends on how the info was encoded
  3. Retrieval: a job in hand and retrieved
- Sensory Perception
  - We perceive unimaginable amounts of info, but only hold onto 99% of it for 1-3 seconds
  - In order to retain info, we must attend to it:
- Controlled versus Automatic Processing
  - Controlled: indiv item retrieval from mem
  - Automatic: chunked item retrieval from mem
  - Primarily as issue of neural strength & speed

Inductive vs Deductive Learning in Language

- Inductive Learning: Observing language in use (performance) and constructing a pattern/rule from this (competence)
- Deductive Learning: Applying a pattern or rule (competence) to language in use (performance)
- The former tends to be more meaningful, but takes longer

Humanistic Approach to Learning Language

- Carl Rogers’ Community Language Learning
- Suggestopedia
- Lasanov Institute
- These so-called humanistic or designer methods all attempted to address one major element of language learning:
  - LEARNER AFFECT
Affective Factors
- Self-Esteem
- Inhibition
- Risk-Taking
- Anxiety
- Empathy
- Tolerance for Ambiguity

Personality Type:
1. extroversion-introversion
2. sensing-intuition
3. thinking-feeling
4. judging-perceiving

The Game of Assigning Learning Styles...
- Auditory
- Visual
- Auditory-Visual
- Kinesthetic / Tactile
- Concrete vs abstract
- Active vs reflective

These macro categories are in turn HIGHLY influenced by all the affective issues we have already discussed...

Major Consideration: Educational practice, traditions and background...

Motivation: The Key to Language Learning Success
- The Basic Dichotomy
- Intrinsic Motivation: wanting to learn for oneself
- Extrinsic Motivation: wanting to learn for an external reward
- These are NEVER exclusive → always exist on a continuum

The Goal of Communicative Competence
- First Articulated by Dell Hymes
- 1. Linguistic Competence: Metalinguistics → rules of the game
- 2a. Sociolinguistic Competence: Pragmatics → Language use in society; cultural expectations for politeness, authority, etc.
- 2b. Discourse Competence: Register → Rhetorical forms beyond the sentence level; story telling, complaining, etc.
- 3. Strategic Competence: Finding ways to communicate when one lacks knowledge/competence or difficulty arises

Thank You for Listening!