

**LANGUAGE THEORIES IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION  
DEVELOPMENT OF COGNITIVE THEORY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

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The development of cognitive theory in language learning emerged from the cognitive linguistic field in 1970. However, the root of this development, we can observe in the work of Chomsky (1959) when he published his critical review of Skinner's article. Although, Chomsky did not develop any theory in field of learning, his ideas became a stimulus for further researches in cognitivism in language learning. According to Kennet (1970), Chomsky's critical review of Skinner's article showed that behavior and language developed at the same time, later this idea contributed to the development of cognitive evolution in psychology.

Wolfgang, (2006) argued that there is no doubt that Chomsky's ideas in education and psychology can be presented as theoretical framework for learning.

According to Chomsky, language acquisition is a part of social life. In his view, language carries culture and human nature with its acquisition and transaction. Chomsky's work in linguistics played an integral part in developing modern psychology. He believes that linguistic is a part of cognitive psychology. In addition, Chomsky's theory about universal grammar explains how language is learnt by children and what abilities children have for acquiring a target language. Piaget was similarly influential. Piaget (1963, 1970) believes that language develops epigenetically from early cognitive bases. Piaget said, "In short no structure is ever radically new, but each is limited to generalizing this or that form of action abstracted from the preceding one" (1963, p. 83). Piaget wants to reveal that language acquisition develops through growing process, abstraction from early primitive to advanced structures. Similarly, Vygotsky (1934) stated that language development connects with social learning.

Vygotsky (1934, based on Saul McLeod's article) reveals that community plays an integral role in the process of making meaning. According to Vygotsky language plays two important roles in cognitive development.

1. Language is the main means by which adults transmit information to children.
2. Language itself becomes a very powerful tool of intellectual development.

Vygotsky (1962) defines language as a means of influencing later cognitive development (Suharno, 2010). This means that children acquire a language and interpret new experience that reflect on their language learning development later.

The first step in development of cognitive theory as a separate field can be seen works of three main researches: Chomsky, Piaget and Vygotsky. Cognitive theory is still developing field and further investigations may seem to be carried out in the future.

*Differences in language theories: behaviorist, cognitive and constructivism*

Language learning theories have been developing for the last centuries significantly. More researches are being carried out in understanding how language can be acquired effectively depending on learners' age, gender, motivation, personal qualities and attention. Therefore, behaviorist, cognitive and constructive theories appeared to be focused on different needs and strategies.

The principle of behaviorism in language learning acquisition is a form-habits which develop among learners. The idea is to reward learners for desirable behavior (positive reinforcements) and punish or ignore for wrong answers. Skinner defines “learning” as a process of adjustment to adaptation through stimulation and accommodation of a second language. Behaviorism theory and its stimulus response models, seated a person as an individual passive learner (Alissa, 2003).

The influence of the behaviorism theory can be seen in some teaching learning processes: Grammar Translation method, Direct Method and Audiolingual method. These methods base on stimulus response models and leading position of teachers in language teaching.

In contrast, Cognitive theory concentrate more on learners’ self-education. Cognitivism is a theory that studies human mind, thinking and mental process which occur during language learning acquisition. Mental process is an essential part in understanding how we learn. Teachers give opportunities for learners to ask questions, to fail, make their own research and discuss their ideas with other learners. This process helps learners to look at language from different sides and construct better learning opportunities.

Constructivism language learning theory is focused on the principle that learners create their own learning on their previous experience. It is an active learning as teachers play roles of guides who help learners create their own processes and reality based on their experience. Behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism play their own roles in language learning acquisition. Each of the theory has its own advantages and drawbacks. The basic concept of using one of these principles is to observe the needs of learners and their personal differences.

### *Cognitive Linguistics*

As it was said before, cognitive linguistic emerged in 1970 and began developing widely after 1980. Cognitive linguistics research is focused on understanding the process of language acquisition, grammar conceptualization, semantics, polysemy, the link between the human mind and language learning.

Looking at researches’ observations in understanding of language in cognitive linguistics, it can be presented in this way.

Evans and Green (2006) observe language as “...a window to cognitive function that provides insights into a nature, structure and organization of thoughts and ideas. The most important way in which cognitive linguistics differs from other approaches to the study of language, is that language is assumed to reflect certain fundamental properties and design features of the human mind”. According to Kubryakova (2004), cognitive linguistics observes language as a cognitive mechanism that plays an important role in encoding and transmitting information.

Geerts and Cuyckens (2007) reveal “cognitive linguistics is the belief that linguistic knowledge involves not just knowledge of the language, but knowledge of our experience of the world as mediated by the language”.

Cognitive linguistics focus on cognitive explanation of grammatical structures, linguistic communication and develop a model of categorization which is used by functionalist linguists.

Having analyzed this language explanations, it is obvious to conclude that cognition plays an integral part in language acquisition. We encompass our knowledge and thinking within a language. So, it has become a common concept to study relationships between language and humans’ mind.

*Cognitive approach in language acquisition*

Cognitive approach deals with mental process and problems solving.

According to Ellis and Wulff (2019), cognitive approaches to second language acquisition share two main assumptions:

- Language learning is widely usage-based. Human use language for communication and making meaning.
- The cognitive mechanism that learners use in language learning are not exclusive to language learning. However, we can observe this cognitive mechanism in any kind of learning.

For Ellis and Wulff (2019), construction means the target of language learning. Learning a language involves learning constructions. These constructions can present different meaning and purposes, not only grammar explanation or lexical variety, but also idiomatic meaning. One of the main approaches in language learning can be connected with the understanding of the role of a sentence construction in language learning. Ellis states some separate factors for constructions and learners which are necessary for acquiring a new language.

For acquiring a new language construction, these factors can play a role: frequency of experience of these constructions, their salience of forms, significance of meaning, contingency of forms and functions.

Learners' cognitive factors (attention, automaticity, transfer and overshadowing) also play an important part (Ellis, 2008).

Another type of approach can be seen in the role of comprehension in language learning. Krashen (1985) proposed that comprehensible input is the driving force for interlanguage development and change. Learners can demonstrate more successful results when they process comprehensive input.

Cognitive grammar approach is a widely studied concept. According to Chandra Seckhar Rao (2021), cognitive grammar approach can be divided into central guiding assumption:

- The symbolic thesis
- The usage-based thesis

Rao (2021) states that the primary unit of grammar is a form meaning pairing and symbolic unit. According to Langacker (1987), symbolic unit presents two poles, a semantic pole (meaning) and a phonological pole (sound).

The usage-based thesis holds that the psychological grammar of the speaker is demonstrated in symbolic units from positioned occurrences of language use (Rao, 2021).

*Role of cognitive theory in SLA*

Psychology and language can be defined as the main factors in acquisition. However, its role was often ignored in language learning acquisition in the past. And, only for the last decades, it has become an integral part in language learning process. Stern (1983, according to Suharno, 2010) defines psychology as the science of mental life and behavior of the individual. Psychology was included in the main idea of cognitive theory in language learning.

In order to understand the role of cognitive theory in a second language acquisition, we should observe some of its benefits in SLA. Comparing behaviorist theory and cognitive theory in language learning, we can focus on this explanation: “Whereas the behaviorist theory of learning demonstrates the learner as passive receiver of information, the cognitive view takes the learner to be active processor of information” (Ausubel,1978). In cognitive theory, learners’ role become prevailing under teachers’ role in language learning process. In current time, more educational institutions use this theory in their practice as it presents considerable benefits for learners’ metal skills and language learning developments.

Suharno (2010) describes some teaching techniques that associate with cognitive theory: problem solving, discovery learning, cognitive strategies and project-based learning. By doing solving problem activities, students show their abilities to work independently, they develop their skills in applying the science and improve interpersonal skills with classmates, in addition, learners improve their learning achievements. Discovery learning techniques demonstrate learners’ abilities to ask questions and evaluate strategies. Cognitive strategies include repetition, memorizing information, processing and presenting data, finding association with their target language.

Florence Myles states that many researchers use current understanding of the relationship between cognition and SLA for understanding what kind of instructions are more helpful (Doughty and Williams 1998; Doughty 2001; Ellis 2001; Robinson 2001). Norris and Ortega (2001) conclude that explicit form-focused instruction is more effective in promoting learning. Therefore, the research in cognitive theory and its role in SLA acquisition plays an important part in understanding different ways of presenting input, define the role of implicit and explicit instructions, understanding the role of negative and positive attitudes on processing information, the role of motivation, memory and anxiety, the role of interpersonal relations between teachers and learners, and between learners and learners for successful acquisition of a second language.

### *Conclusion*

Language development is a slow process that starts from early childhood. These theories can help to understand how new language is acquired in a learner’s mind. In Linguistics, there are different theories that talk about this process. In Piaget view, language develops together with human mind, it has a close relation. Skinners believes that children acquire a new language by imitating their parents. Vygotsky focuses on a link between language development and social connection. In this literature review, I tried to investigate about cognitivism and its impact on language learners. As said before, cognitive theory deals with connection between human mind and language learning. The cognitive theory describes how language can be acquired and what mental processes can occur during language learning processes. Cognitive theory can vary in its usage and understanding. I found that each of the theory is connected between each other. Cognitive theory came from behaviorism, construction theory takes some features of cognitivism.

All theories connect between each other, these differences happen because of new carrying researches and discoveries in language learning acquisition. That means, it is more likely that new theories will be developed and new discoveries will be made in learning.

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