

Lecture 10

Theories of Second Language Acquisition - V

Cognitive theories

- Focus on input, attention, memory, and retrieval mechanisms
- Implicit vs explicit learning
- Implicit learning - learning that occurs without intention and without awareness
- Explicit learning - involves reflection about language that leads to 'understanding'.
- But is learning without any awareness possible?

(Ellis 2015: p.208)

Skill learning theory

- Declarative vs procedural knowledge
- Controlled vs automatic processes
- language learning is like learning any other skill.
- Learning starts with declarative knowledge stage involving controlled processing
- Successful when learner moves to procedural knowledge stage and automatic processing
- How to move from declarative to procedural - through extensive practice.

- Declarative knowledge - explicit knowledge of specific linguistic forms
- Procedural knowledge – implicit knowledge which has been automatised

Socio-cultural theory

- Vygotsky, Lantolf etc
- Language learning part of overall personality development
- Development as a result of interaction between biologically endowed abilities (e.g. hand-eye coordination, motor skills) and culturally organized artefacts (e.g. society, cultural beliefs).
- Higher mental functioning —for example, memory, attention, rational thinking—develops through the ‘interweaving of our cultural and biological inheritances’ (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 59).
- Sociocultural theory aims to explain the nature of this ‘interweaving’

- The pattern of cognitive development is not predetermined – external factors can always change the course of development
- Zone of Achieved Development – the current level
- Peer support/ scaffolding
- Zone of Proximal Development
- What children do when they are given a task that is beyond their current level of development along with some form of external assistance to help them solve it.
- Gradually children internalise the assistance and they do not need it after some time

An example of 'scaffolding'

- T Look at this one.
- L Man and a ...
- T What's it doing? It's ... It's raining. Huh?
- L Raining.
- T Raining. What's the man holding in his hand?... D'you know what this is called? ... Begins with 'u' – 'um ...'
- L (sounds of trying to remember) Umbrella.
- T Umbrella, yes.

(Ellis 2015: p. 234)