

INNOVATIVE METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

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Annotation: *This article highlights the theoretical aspects and history of Monitoring in Language Teaching. Monitor Theory has come in for considerable criticism over the years. Each of its hypotheses has been seen as problematic in some way. Indeed, there have been few empirical studies actually testing any of the aspects of Monitor Theory. One reason is that there are problems with what researchers call operationalization of the constructs; specifically, they are vaguely defined, making empirical testing difficult. For example, there is no independent way of confirming which knowledge source—acquired or learned—a learner is using as the basis for use. “When presented with evidence of spontaneous and error free production by L2 learners who have only been exposed to formal instruction in which comprehensive input is scarce, learners have developed parallel language stores. Their acquired knowledge has simply “caught up” with the learned knowledge. Such a contention is difficult to prove of use of the natural orders of acquisition as evidence for Monitor Theory has been criticized as circular. Predictable acquisition orders are both explained by and proof of an innate language faculty”.*

Key Words: *Method, Strategy, Monitoring, Teaching Techniques, Approach, Grammar, Hints, Modern, Technologies.*

Abstract: *In the 1960s and 1970s, throughout the wider fields of psychology and linguistics, there was a widespread rejection of behavioral*

*approaches to learning and structural approaches to language analysis. First language acquisition research in the early 1960s very quickly began to demonstrate that children could not possibly internalize a linguistic system according to the tenets of operant conditioning. The linguistic system was far too complex, and children's utterances showed evidence of processes beyond imitation and analogy. Instead, researchers began to argue that children bring an innate facility for language learning to the task of language acquisition. The facility was unaffected by the kinds of conditioning that were the basis of behaviorism. For example, children produce utterances that they could not have heard in the input, like Don't giggle me and I love cut-upped eggs (Pinker, 1994). They also acquire very complex rules that could not have been learned through mere imitation or analogy. "Children can interpret the questions such as When did Billy say he hurt himself? as having two possible answers (while he was skateboarding or He told us while we were eating dinner), but How did Billy say he hurt himself? as having only one (skateboarding)" McLaughlin, B. (1987). Furthermore, they seem to acquire grammatical features in fixed orders that do not vary according to child, context, caregiver behavior, or any other external influence, as behaviorist accounts would predict. Finally, research documented learners' passage through these predictable stages in the acquisition, making only certain kinds of errors and not the full range of theoretically possible errors. For example, one might expect a child to make an error such as He did his homework → *He didn't his homework. This utterance might be constructed on the analogy of other utterances in which did is negated with the form didn't. Yet, children do not make this error. Neither is simplicity an adequate explanation. In forming a question from the sentence: That girl who is in your kindergarten class is coming over to play tomorrow, several possibilities present themselves. If we assume that in sentences containing the verb be, question formation involves moving the verb to the front, which is should be fronted? The simplest solution would simply be to move the first one: Is that girl who in your kindergarten class is coming over to play tomorrow?*

However, children never make this error. From an early age, they unerringly choose the correct verb to front in forming a question.

Introduction

How do they know this? McLaughlin, B. (1987) came to believe that much of this knowledge is innate and that language learning is guided by a specific mental faculty. In this way, language learning came to be viewed as unique, different from other kinds of learning. These insights influenced researchers in SLA, and similar work with L2 learners soon followed. The results demonstrated that neither behaviorism nor Contrastive Analysis could fully predict or explain learner errors. They also suggested that L2 learners acquired many grammatical structures in relatively consistent sequences and furthermore, that many of the errors that they made were similar to those made by children learning their mother tongue. These findings led researchers to claim that all language acquisition is internally driven and that SLA is largely unaffected by the L1. In short, they claimed that SLA is very much like first language acquisition. This view has been referred to as the Creative Construction Hypothesis (Dulay & Burt, 1975). In direct contrast to behaviorist claims, the Creative Construction Hypothesis maintained that language learning is a creative process in which the learner makes unconscious hypotheses on the basis of input. The processing of input is, in turn, controlled by innate mechanisms, the same ones that operate in first language acquisition. This idea would form the cornerstone of Monitor Theory, to which we now turn.

Monitor Theory

One of the most ambitious and influential theories in the field of SLA, and one that is probably the most familiar to language instructors, is Monitor Theory, developed by Stephen Krashen in the 1970s and early 1980s. It was the first theory to be developed specifically for SLA. It has been particularly influential among practitioners, and it has also laid the foundation for important ideas in contemporary theorizing within SLA. Its broader success rests, in part, on its resonance with the experience of language learners and language teachers.

An understanding of this theory is crucial to understanding the field of SLA theory and research as a whole.

“The Theory and Its Constructs Monitor Theory was the first in the field that was broad in scope and attempted to relate and explain a variety of phenomena in language learning, ranging from the effect of age on SLA to the apparently uneven effects of instruction” (Selinker, L.). Unlike behaviorism, it proposes a language-specific model of language learning, though the actual processes involved in learning are not explained; thus labeling the Monitor Theory a theory of learning may be somewhat overstated. Though not articulated in Krashen’s writing, Monitor Theory seems to be connected to Chomsky’s theory of language, which states that humans are uniquely endowed with a specific faculty for language acquisition. Much of what we consider linguistic knowledge is, according to this view, part of our biological endowment. In other words, children come to the task of language already knowing a great deal; they simply need the triggering data in the input for language acquisition to take place. Krashen maintains that a similar process occurs in SLA, that is, that child and SLA processes are fundamentally similar. Within Monitor Theory, the driving force behind any kind of acquisition is the comprehension of meaningful messages and the interaction of the linguistic information in those messages with the innate language acquisition faculty. According to Krashen, Monitor Theory can explain why what is taught is not always learned, why what is learned may not have been taught, and how individual differences among learners and learning contexts is related to the variable outcome of SLA. Monitor Theory consists of five interrelated hypotheses. These, in turn, rest on several important constructs, key concepts that are inferred but are not directly observable.

Perhaps the most important hypothesis in Monitor Theory is the acquisition learning distinction. Krashen maintains that acquisition and learning, constructs within the theory, are two separate ways of gaining knowledge. Once gained, these types of knowledge are stored separately.

Acquisition takes place naturally and outside of awareness; it emerges spontaneously when learners engage in normal interaction in the L2, where the focus is on meaning. Neither instruction nor the intention to learn is necessary. The theory claims that learners draw on acquired unconscious knowledge in spontaneous language use, and in this regard, Krashen would argue, SLA is much like first language acquisition. Typically, learners are not be able to articulate this knowledge and are said to operate “by feel” rather than “by rule.” Learning, conversely, involves gaining explicit knowledge about language such as its rules and patterns. It occurs when the L2 is the object, but not necessarily the medium, of instruction. Gaining and using this knowledge are conscious and effortful processes that are undertaken intentionally. The crucial and most controversial part of the distinction is that these two knowledge stores—the acquired system and the learned system—can never interact; that is, knowledge that is learned may not be converted into acquired knowledge via some kind of practice and become available for spontaneous use. For this reason, Monitor Theory is referred to as a noninterface theory. This is why learners may “know” rules; that is, they may be able to articulate them but may nevertheless be unable to use it in spontaneous production. Conversely, a learner may use a structure accurately and spontaneously yet be unable to verbalize the rule for its use. Both learners and teachers are all too familiar with this phenomenon, making the theory an intuitively appealing one. Thus, in Monitor Theory, even if learners formally study the grammar rules, they will not be able to draw on that knowledge in spontaneous communication because it has not been acquired. For this reason, Krashen argues, the effects of formal instruction on SLA, including feedback on errors, are peripheral, suggesting that such pedagogical approaches should be abandoned in favor of one based on the provision of copious input and the opportunity for meaningful interaction. The acquisition-learning distinction is the central hypothesis in Monitor Theory.

The Monitor Hypothesis Within Monitor Theory, learned knowledge is not terribly useful. Its primary function is editing acquired knowledge during

language production. What this means is that learners can draw on this knowledge—Krashen calls this construct the Monitor—when they have sufficient time to consult their rule knowledge, for instance, in an untimed writing assignment. Krashen maintains that this is only likely, however, when, in addition, the task requires the learner to pay attention to accuracy, as would be likely, for example, in a fill-in-the-blank exercise. Since these kinds of activities are relatively unimportant in overall language use and are arguably only language-like behavior, the utility of learned knowledge within Monitor Theory is negligible. It follows that it is not worth spending precious instructional time on developing it, as is typically the case in L2 classrooms.

The Natural Order Hypothesis As we have noted, research in both first and second language acquisition had demonstrated that learners follow sequences in their acquisition of specific forms, such as the grammatical morphemes -ing, -ed, -s, and others. In addition, they appear to pass through predictable stages in their acquisition of grammatical structures, such as questions, negation, and relative clauses. Collectively, these have been taken as evidence for the Natural Order Hypothesis. One study of the Natural Order is presented at the end of this section. It was claimed that these orders were independent of instructional sequences or even of the complexity of the structures to be acquired. For example, although the third person singular -s ending in English is relatively straightforward, it appears to be challenging for L2 learners, even those of fairly advanced proficiency. According to Monitor Theory, these regularities occur because all language acquisition is guided by the innate language acquisition faculty.

The List of Used Literature

Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. London: Longman. These three volumes expand on Krashen's views and the Monitor Theory introduced in this chapter.

Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. This is the most important single volume the behaviorist–Contrastive

Analysis tradition. It offers the insights of this perspective for second language learning and teaching.

McLaughlin, B. (1987). *Theories of second language learning*. London, England: Arnold. This volume contains an introduction to many of the early theories in SLA, some of them still connected to an active research agenda. Of particular interest is McLaughlin's critique of the Monitor Model.

Robinet, B., & Schachter, J. (Eds.). (1983). *Second language learning: Contrastive analysis, error analysis, and related aspects*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. This collection contains a variety of very early studies in the field, including several that demonstrate the use of Contrastive Analysis.

Schumann, J. H. (1978). *The pidginization hypothesis: A model for second language acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House. This volume is a book-length treatment of Schumann's idea about the role of social and affective factors in SLA.

Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 10, 209–231. This article was a pioneering attempt to establish learner language, which Selinker termed "interlanguage," as an independent linguistic system.

Tarone, E. (1988). *Variation in interlanguage*. London, England: Edward Arnold. This is a book-length look at explanations of variation within individual ILs. Tarone connects IL variation to theories of variation within sociolinguistics.