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## COGNITIVE PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

**Abstract.** This article represents an attempt to draw together findings from a range of language learning in order to formulate a set of general principles for language pedagogy. These principles address such issues as the nature of language leaning competence (as formulaic and rule-based knowledge), the contributions of both focus on meaning and on form, the need to develop both implicit and explicit foreign language knowledge, the roles of input, output and interaction in learning, the importance of catering to individual differences in learners. The principles draw on a variety of theoretical perspectives and are offered as 'provisional specifications' for learning-centered language pedagogy.

**Key words:** Cognitive, techniques, intrinsic motivation, Anticipation of Rewards.

The word "methodology" is usually given lip-service as an explanation for the way a given teacher goes about his/her teaching, a sort of umbrella-term to describe the job of teaching another language. Most often, methodology is understood to mean *methods* in a general sense, and in some cases it is even equated to specific teaching *techniques*.

According to the H. Douglas Browns Language learning principles are generally sorted into three sub-groupings: *Cognitive Principles, Affective Principals* and *Linguistic Principles*.

The first set of principles is "Cognitive" because they relate mainly to mental and intellectual functions and it has five Principles.

1. Automaticity. The Principle of Automaticity may be stated as follows: Efficient second language learning involves a timely movement of the control of a few language forms into the automatic processing of a relatively unlimited number of language forms. Overanalyzing language, thinking too much about its forms, and consciously lingering on rules of language all tend to impede this graduation to automaticity. What does this principle, which ordinarily applies to adult instruction, say to you as a teacher? Here are some possibilities: (1) Because classroom learning normally begins with controlled, focal processing, there is no mandate to entirely avoid overt attention to language systems (of grammar, phonology, discourse). However, that attention should stop well short of blocking students from achieving a more automatic, fluent grasp of the language. Therefore, grammatical explanations or exercises dealing with what is sometimes called usage have a place in the adult classroom, but you could overwhelm your students with grammar. If they get too heavily centered on the for-

mal aspects of language, such processes can block pathways to fluency. (2) Automaticity isn't gained overnight: therefore, you need to exercise patience with students as you slowly help them to achieve fluency.

2. Meaningful learning. Principle Meaningful learning creates new information into existing structures and memory systems resulting to create stronger retention. Acquirers of language have meaningful learning because the teacher associate sounds, words, structures and discourse elements, that is important in daily quest and survival.

– Whatever a new topic or concept introduced, attempt to anchor it in students existing knowledge and background.

– Avoid too much grammar explanation, abstract principles and theories, drilling/memorization and activity that purpose is unclear.

3. Anticipation of reward. According to B.F Skinner, principal the anticipation of reward is the most powerful factor in directing one's behavior.

The principle behind Skinner's operant conditioning paradigm can be stated: Human beings are universally driven to act, or "behave." By the anticipation of some sort of reward-tangible or intangible, short-term or long-term that will ensue as a result of the behavior.

You can perceive the importance of the immediate administration of such rewards for correct responses (very good), appropriate grades or scores to indicate success. At the end, it behooves you to help students to see why they are doing something and its relevance to their long-term goals in learning English.

On the other hand, it has shortcomings such as;

a. It can lead learners to become dependent on short-term rewards;

b. Coax them into a habit of looking to teachers and others for their only reward;

c. Forestall the development of their own internally administered, intrinsic system of rewards.

Considering all sides of the reward principle, the following constructive classroom implications may be drawn: Provide an optimal degree of immediate verbal praise and encouragement to students as a form of short-term reward. Encourage them with compliments and supportive action. Short-term reminders of progress may help students (in low motivation) to perceive their development.

Display enthusiasm and excitement yourself in the classroom. Try to get learners to see the long-term rewards in learning English by pointing out what they can do with English where they live and around the world.

4. Intrinsic Motivation. The most potent learning “rewards” to enhance performance are that come from the needs, wants and desires within the learner. Because the behavior stems from needs, desire or wants within oneself, the behavior itself is self-rewarding. Therefore no externally administered reward is necessary at all.

5. Strategic investment. The language-teaching profession in a few decades ago is contrasted with recent year. The “methods” that the learner employs to internalize and to perform in the language are as important as the teacher’s methods, is called the principle of strategic investment.

*Successful mastery of the second language will be due to a large extent to a learner’s own personal “investment” of time, effort, and attention to the second language in the form of an individualized battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language.*

The variation among learners poses a thorny pedagogical dilemma. Learning styles alone signal numerous learner preference that a teacher needs to attend to. For example, visual versus auditory preference and individual versus group work preference are highly significant factors in a classroom. A variety of techniques in your lessons will at least partially ensure that you will “reach” a maximum number of students. A teacher’s greatest dilemma is how to attend to each individual student in a class while still reaching the class as a whole group.

Although the cognitive approach is not a method in the sense of a “specific instructional design or system”

(Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 245), cognitive theory does suggest certain learning activities and principles. Many of these activities have been commonly used in foreign language classrooms and textbooks since the 1970s. Among them are the following:

Chastain (1971) insisted that grammar be taught deductively, with explanations of rules preceding examples of their usage;

Carroll (1971), however, maintained that “it hardly matters whether one starts with the rule or the example, as long as this alternation [between rules and example] exists” (p. 112).

In order to develop automaticity in language use, students need extensive practice using language skills. Often this practice is organized so as to progress from highly structured to more open-ended activities (Rivers, 1981).

In as much as language use involves the application of a complex system of rules, students need opportunities to apply these rules to express their own meanings in communicative situations. In addition, students need feedback on their language use to help them understand how to apply rules more effectively (Hadley, 2001).

Teachers can facilitate reading and listening comprehension by conducting pre-reading or pre-listening activities that help activate students’ background knowledge about the topic of the text (Hadley, 2001).

Students can benefit from instruction in language learning strategies, including cognitive strategies that help them plan, organize, and monitor their learning. (McLaughlin, 1987; Oxford, 1990).

All and all teaching is not only to have many strategies for the classroom; we have to choose such strategies, techniques, activities, episodes, or methodology from a certain catalogue stored in our minds, internet, books, and many sources teachers have at hand nowadays. Eliciting which technique or strategy to achieve certain goal is based on our personal criteria and experience but, do the strategies work for all people, groups, levels, ages, or classrooms? Of course not, if teachers decide to include a strategy, we must know why they are doing it; it has to be according to the students, to the objective, to the purpose, and the function they are teaching. Teaching by principles (Brown, H. Douglas. 1994) is a useful set of principles that could lead us to proceed in a logical way in language teaching.

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