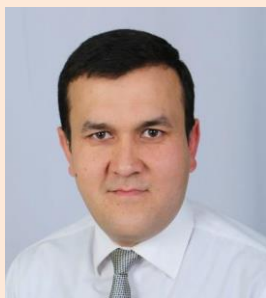


LEARNING THEORIES AND LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION



Khikmatullo URAZBAEV
Senior Teacher
Gulistan State University
hikmatullo84@gmail.com

Аннотация

Мақолада ўқитишга оид назариялар ва ушбу назарияларнинг хорижий тил ўқитувчиларини тайёрлашга татбиқ этилиши масаласи муҳокама қилинган. Муаллиф ўқитишдаги ижтимоий-маданий, когнитив, бихевиористик каби назарияларни чет тили ўқитувчиларини тайёрлашда фойдаланиладиган турли хил топшириқлар мисолида таҳлил этади.

Аннотация

В статье обсуждаются теории обучения и применение этих теории в подготовке преподавателей иностранных языков. Автор приводит анализ социокультурной, когнитивной и бихевиористской теории обучения, приводя различные задания, используемые в подготовке учителей иностранных языков.

Abstract

The article presents the discussion of various learning theories and their application in foreign language teacher education. The author analyzes the learning activities by presenting tasks based on learning theories as an example of each perspective.

Калит сўзлар: ўқитувчилар тайёрлаш, ўрганиш назариялари, ижтимоий-маданий ёндашув, бихевиоризм, экспериментал ўрганиш назарияси, бихевиористик ўрганиш назарияси.

Ключевые слова: подготовка преподавателей, теории изучения, социокультурный подход, бихевиоризм, экспериментальная теория обучения, бихевиористская теория обучения.

Keywords: teacher education, learning theory, sociocultural perspective, behaviourism, structuralism, experiential learning.

In high quality teacher training it is crucial for future teachers to understand how people gain knowledge, how information is received by people, how it is recycled and stored in the process of education. Explanation to these processes is given by learning theories and each of these theories has its own theoretically proved approaches and strategies to the implementation of them depending on contexts and subjects of education. These theories also give us an ongoing system of evaluation of what is happening in the process of learning in classes and suggest some rational justification to them.

History of investigating the theories of learning dates back to far past when people started to question origins of knowledge and discussing it philosophically (10). Thus modern approaches to the study of learning theories are not new and they reflect on peoples' desire to understand themselves, others and the world around them(10, 4). Foundations of learning theories were laid on two trends in explaining the origins of knowledge: rationalism and empiricism (10). According to Schunk(10) rationalists understand knowledge as something achieved by reasoning e.g. reflecting about something which is sensed, while empiricists see the origins of knowledge in experience e.g. learning about something by doing something. These two early forms of understanding how knowledge is acquired later developed into more sophisticated theories of learning, which play a central role in all areas of education especially in teacher education.

Roberts(7) distinguishes four main theories of learning, which are behaviouristic view of learning, humanistic view, constructivist theory and social or sociocultural perspective of learning. However, these learning theories may overlap and fulfill each other to some extent.

As Roberts(7) explains, behaviourist theory of teacher learning sees a person as an input-output system and the input can change human behaviour under certain well-planned and well-developed circumstances or conditions.

Unlike behaviourism, humanistic theory of learning identifies a person as an independent self-agent where person's own individual psychological peculiarities, emotions and strive for self-development may trigger learning(7). Proponents of humanistic approach suggest that person's learning should be internally driven rather than externally controlled by others(7).

In constructivism learners' inner representation and construction of external world is emphasized. Constructivists explain that learners' prior knowledge and expectations from the new input plays an important role in construing new knowledge or meaning. Thus, new knowledge is acquired or constructed based only on previously obtained knowledge or experience which is constantly reconstructed and rebuilt.

Social perspective explains learning as a socialization or selective acquisition of knowledge from a group of people to which s/he belongs to. According to Richardson (in 4) person's individual development originate from interactions with other people who belong to the same social group and share the same cultural meanings and which is ultimately internalized by the individual. In other words learning occurs within a social group where people share the same values and attitudes. Social perspective explains teacher education as not only a cognitive process but also as a process of adopting a social role(7).

According to the results of recent research on students' choice of learning format(1) there are personal factors of students' choice of instructional format. The research suggest that students' who have experienced good results in online learning are motivated to take distance learning course, whereas students with higher task values and students who value the importance of the content of a course would rather prefer traditional classroom learning(1). Task value is students' expectations from the task or a subject in terms of goal orientation and motivation. Task value is closely related with the issues of goal orientation in a certain subject or a field of studies and in the same way task value beliefs of students can be specific and general (Weiner, 2003). Moreover, classroom is a site where social interaction takes place frequently. In this term, classroom teaching is based on the sociocultural or social interaction perspective of teacher learning, which sees learning as a social activity and building identity of an individual through interacting with other members of the community who share same beliefs. According to Singh and Richards (2, 201) sociocultural theories of teacher learning center on the concept of learning as situated social practice, which is realized through discourse, mediation and participation and which is provided by classroom teaching experience. Additionally, classroom being a site of social participation inhibits learning opportunities(2). Singh and Richards (2) describe teacher education classroom as a community of practice where teacher identity is constructed through various discourses, activities, mediation and artifacts. For instance, students by participating with their classmates in group or pair discussions during the course can exchange ideas and views on teaching beliefs and this may help them to realize the concept and essence of foreign language teaching in different cultures and contexts and understand what is to be an English teacher from different perspectives. Johnson(5, 17) believes that teacher cognition is shaped by the specific social activities in which teachers engage. In this sense classroom where learning teaching takes place is a site where there is a group of people who share same beliefs, experience and desires in becoming a teacher, which creates a micro community of people who can construct each others' knowledge about teaching.

In addition, collaborative working opportunities with classmates in the classroom make it easier for student teachers to overcome difficulties in understanding difficult concepts and completing assignments. Singh and Richards (2) define it as a classrooms ability of creating social relationships, which conditions relative success of learning.

It is suggested that face-to-face teaching provides wider opportunities to develop one's language, academic, interpersonal, communication and transferable skills. Face-to-face teaching and learning to some extent based on the principles of

model based teacher education. According to Roberts(7, 14) model based teacher education derives from the principles of behaviourism, which defines content of the teaching as an inventory of discrete behavioural skills presented in the form of visual and written representations. For instance, by participating in sessions students can take examples or models of teaching from their tutors in classes. Their classroom language, error correction, feedback giving strategies, and other instructional strategies may serve as a model for them to adopt in the future.

According to sociocultural approach to learning developed by Vygotsky a language has three main functions. They are language as a cognitive tool, social or cultural tool and pedagogical tool (in Kovalainen, 2013). In the area of teacher education the third function of a language which defines a language as a pedagogical tool plays a pivotal role, as language performs the function of a medium through which other people’s intellectual development is guided and supported. In this term the notion of dialogic teaching comes into light of teacher education. Dialogic teaching and learning takes its origins from sociocultural perspective of learning and developed by Alexander (2006). Dialogic teaching concept is used to define how teachers and learners co-construct knowledge through discussing shared ideas and presenting arguments and counter-arguments to each others’ opinions (Kovalainen 2013). In this process language plays an important role performing the function of a pedagogical tool. During the course sessions student teachers as learners try to co-construct knowledge related to issues in teaching English. Thus it is beneficial for teachers to hold activities in the form of pair or group discussions where students can share their views on the topic and present arguments where necessary. Tutors, in this process, are advised to listen to students’ negotiation carefully, providing scaffolding when needed.

According to Rogers (7) humanistic theory recognizes the autonomy of people and their individual needs. Furthermore, humanistic theory in teacher education views teacher-learner interaction as co-operative rather than teacher dominant process and emphasizes students’ self-determination and self-agency in identifying their pace and extent of learning. For instance, during the classes students can be counseled rather than taught and their ideas and views are as valuable as teachers’ opinions.

Microteaching is one of the teacher training techniques which employs real teaching situation for developing teaching skills and facilitates getting deeper knowledge about teaching(9). Micro-teaching derives from the behaviouristic principles of teacher education. According to Roberts (7) in behaviouristic approach to curriculum and task design model of a target behaviour is divided into discrete sub-behaviours. While doing the micro-teaching task students are required to decide on the teaching approach and materials, plan the lesson, teach the lesson,

and reflect on the taught lesson, which contributes to habits formation in terms of further professional development. And the last but not the last purpose of the microteaching was to transfer the skills students practice during their microteaching into their future teaching repertoire(7). However, Griffiths (3) suggests constructivist view on the role of micro-teaching in teacher education and explains that there occurs a reconstruction of schemata which were existent in teacher learners prior to micro-teaching.

In the effective reflection video-recording of one's teaching has many advantages. MacLeod (9) mentions that the modern-day technology such as audio or video recording devices play an important role in the teacher learning process especially during microteaching. With the help of video-recording one's own lessons, which is one of the self-observation techniques (8), teachers can set up a self-monitoring of their teaching behaviours and develop them accordingly.

Additionally, micro-teaching and focus group sessions also employ some elements of Kolb's experiential learning theory. Kolb's experiential learning suggests that learning takes place through concrete experience and one of the components of promoting experiential learning is reflective observation(7). Furthermore, Kolb's experiential learning theory emphasizes the importance of dialogue in learning. For instance, after the micro-teaching session teachers or mentors can have a focus group sessions where they may reflect on their and peers teaching and give feedback to each other in the form of dialogues. In addition, students can hold a personal dialogue in order to understand the decisions they made in planning and teaching stages of the microteaching.

The next efficient classroom activities or tasks students in preparing future English language teachers are structured classroom observations. Good (11) claims that among the main purposes of classroom observation in teacher education is to prepare beginning teachers with enough skills and knowledge to improve their teaching with the help of continuous analysis and reflection. Schunk (10) ascribes observational learning to the social cognitive learning theory and identifies observational learning as one of the components through which modeling occurs. Prior to the observation tutors are advised to have several sessions on topics related to lesson planning and delivering lessons, which can give students an opportunity to build a meaningful framework for the purposes and tasks they have to fulfill during structured observations. Schunk (10) divides observational learning into four processes: attention, retention, production and motivation. Before each observation students need to be assigned an area of interest on which they have to emphasize during the observation of lessons, which enables meaningful perception of events that are observed (10). In the next stage during/after each observation students are asked to transfer their observations to cognitive organization through

coding, describing or taking notes. For the purpose of describing and coding the events observed it is advised to provide students with observation tools (tables, templates), which also set a clear framework for observation. According to Schunk (10) this process is termed as retention, through which observed modeled events are transformed for memory storage. In the next stage while attending the observations students need to be asked to reflect on the interactions between teachers and students, use of approaches, methods and materials during the observed classes and design their own lesson plans thinking of the same observed group of learners. Schunk (10) defines these stages as rehearsal and production. In rehearsal process observed events are mentally reviewed and in the production process the observed materials and other relevant knowledge are transformed into overt behaviours. Thus by suggesting their own lesson plan students can turn the things they have learned during the observation into overt behaviour.

To some up, teacher education and learning employs various learning theories which usually come in an integrated way. Proper identification of appropriate learning theories suitable for group of learners and directing in a desired way may yield effective outcomes. In teacher education knowledge of learning theories provide foundations for intellectual and motivated selection of proven instructional strategies and conceptual frameworks which enable us to solve problems related to learning. Moreover, knowledge of these theories helps us to be more professional teachers, who understand underpinning principles of their actions and able to integrate selected strategies to a definite learning context.

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