

## **Psychology of Language Acquisition and EFL Teaching Methodology: A Critical Overview**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims at scrutinizing the psychological background of language acquisition theories with particular reference to English as a second/ foreign language teaching methodology. It is hoped that this would provide foreign language teachers with key issues in psychology that will help them to understand better the ways in which their students learn and to provide a source of knowledge that may help them to improve their classroom practice. The descriptive analytical method will be adopted to conduct this investigation. Two conflicting schools of thought in psychology; namely, the behaviorists' and the mentalists' school, have been discussed and their views about language learning have been presented. The behaviorists assume that people learn language both native and second, as they learn everything else. Language, according to this approach, is "a set of habits" which can be taught by providing the appropriate stimuli and response until an automatic response to a certain stimulus is attained. The mentalists reject this explanation of language learning as too native asserting that much of the capacity for language learning in humans is "innate" and that language learning entails insight, thinking and reasoning using complex deductive and inductive procedures. These conflicting schools of psychology have generated a sizeable number of language teaching methods. Eight of these methods have been thoroughly discussed, compared, and their merits and demerits highlighted. It is clearly demonstrated that none of these methods is perfect or without drawbacks, and that none of them could be used successfully if applied in its pure form. Hence, the researcher suggests an eclectic approach to EFL teaching. However, in order to use this eclectic approach successfully, a teacher must have a detailed knowledge of all methods. This will help him/her to select the most appropriate elements to present his/her lessons. The study has also hint that the use of modern technology has boosted foreign language teaching and made its learning less cumbersome and more interesting.

**Keywords:** *teaching methods, language acquisition, inductive procedure, eclectic approach, communicative language teaching, and suggestopedia.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the last century, a variety of methods has been developed for teaching modern foreign Languages. Yet, there has been little agreement among language teaching practitioners as to the best method. Wide scale research in the field of language acquisition and foreign language teaching methodology and closely related fields such as psychology and applied linguistics, has not settled the matter. Rather, it has led to further diversities in teaching methods. Stanley (2002) assumes that differences in methods originate from claims and counterclaims of conflicting schools of thought in psychology. Indeed, psychology has deeply influenced linguistic thinking and, consequently, the outcome of language acquisition theories.

This paper aims at studying the impact of psychology on language acquisition theories and assessing their implications for foreign language teaching methodology. More specifically, this study aims at providing a critical review of the main methods used to teach foreign languages in their relation to language acquisition theories in psychology. Another objective of this paper is to acquaint EFL teachers with relevant key issues in psychology in their relation to different trends in language teaching Methods. It is hoped that this would help teachers to understand better the ways their students learn language, and to provide a source of knowledge from which EFL teachers can draw to promote their classroom practice.

To realize the above objectives, this paper is divided into three parts: the first part, discusses the schools of thought in psychology and their assumptions about language acquisition and language learning. The second part analyzes the principal language teaching methods and techniques and highlights their points of strength and weakness. The last section provides the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

### **Psychology and Language Acquisition Theories**

A sizable number of theories regarding language development in human beings have been proposed. These theories stem from two conflicting schools of thought in psychology; namely, the behaviorists' and the mentalists' school. Claims and counterclaims posed by the proponents of each doctrine with regard to language acquisition will be discussed and their implications for foreign language teaching will be highlighted.

### **The Behaviorists' Approach**

The proponents of this approach are sometimes referred to as the 'empiricists', the 'naturalists' or even the 'environmentalists'. These hold that an organism's nurture or experience is of more significance to the development than its nature or inborn contributions. Behaviorists' stimulus-response learning theories (S-R) are the best known examples of this school of thought. This approach is largely associated with names like Bloomfield, Jespersen, Moulton, Palmer, and Twaddle. However, it is B.F. Skinner who articulates the behaviorist theory of language learning (Umar. 2012).

The behaviorists have based their doctrine on experiments carried out on animals in laboratories. By presenting an animal with a series of stimuli and by reinforcing the desired behavior, the experimenters have managed to condition the animal's response. The classical example of this form of conditioning is that of Pavlov's dog which learns to salivate when the meal-time bell rings. Another example, though slightly different, is that of the rat in the so-called Skinner box. When a hungry rat is put in that box, it emits a wide range of responses or "operant". Eventually, more or less by chance, it presses the lever. Then a pellet of food drops into the tray, the rat sniffs the food and eats it. Later, the rat presses the lever again. After each lever-pressing response, it gets another pellet of food. Obtaining the reinforcement is contingent

upon pressing the lever. What has been found is that the rate of the rat's lever- pressing responses increases (Gage and Berliner, 1979). This form of conditioning has also been demonstrated in the behavior of many animals, e.g., a pigeon pecking a key, a dog raising its paw and a horse nodding (Cook, 2005).

In principle, any operant behavior can be made more frequent by being reinforced soon after its occurrence. In human beings, according to the behaviorists, the same model applies. They hold that all variety of human behavior including language (verbal behavior) can be made more or less frequent or probable by the occurrence or non-occurrence of reinforcement, contingent upon some response (Rivers, 1980). The behaviorists; therefore, have equated language learning in human beings with animals conditioned responses triggered off by stimuli. Lakoff (1972) describes this theory saying: "*it was assumed that people learn language, both native and second, as they and rats learn everything else*". (Lakoff, in Allen and Campbell, 1972, p.61)

Gage and Berliner (1979:p.268) explain how speech in children is mainly formed through reinforcing successive approximation to the desired sound pattern saying:

*In teaching children to talk, we first reinforce babbling. Soon we reinforce approximations to words. Eventually, the magic day comes when the child utters 'mama' or 'papa'. Typically, this brings a massive amount of reinforcement to the child, including visits from grandparents, who convey to the child their conviction the he (or she) is a genius*

The behaviorists claim that both L1 and L2 acquirers receive linguistic input from speakers in their environment, and positive reinforcement for their correct repetitions and imitations. When language learners' responses are reinforced positively, they learn the language relatively easily (Kizmazarslan, 2004)

From the above, it becomes obvious that the behaviorists regard language as no exception to other human behavior. It is a 'set of habits' which can be taught by providing the appropriate stimuli and responses until an automatic response to a certain stimulus is attained. Reinforcement in language learning situation comes in the form of the teachers' approval or the learners' satisfaction of being understood, and according to Frost (1980: p.11), "*a rewarded response is likely to recur and with continuous reinforcement becomes established as an instrumental response.*".....

With reference to language teaching, Rivers (1980) observes that it is common to find that methods and techniques based on this approach provide plenty of opportunities for the students to acquire foreign language habits by pattern drills, mimicry, memorization and dialogues which involve a lot of imitation and repetition.

Concerning the teaching of grammar, the behaviorists assume that the task is to teach a set of rules. Diller (1978) explains: "*We know that a rule of language is the analytical statement of one of the habitual aspects of that language. We know that the habit is the reality and the rule is the mere summary of the habits.*" (p.16)

Along the same line, the behaviorists see errors as a matter of first language habits interfering with the acquisition of second language habits. The basic assumption is that if there are similarities between the languages, the language learners will acquire the target structures easily. On the other hand, if there are differences, acquisition is likely to be more difficult. This approach is widely known as 'Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis' (CAH) (Al-Matrafi, 2011). According to this hypothesis, "*the differences between languages can be used to reveal and predict all errors, and the data obtained can be used in foreign/second language teaching for promoting a better acquisition environment*" (Kizmazarslan,2004,p.4).

Methods derived from this orientation are the Aural-Oral, the Audio-Lingual, and the Audio-Visual methods. This approach dominates the scene during the nineteen fifties. In the nineteen sixties, the behaviorists' approach is subjected to a wide range of criticism. For instance; there is a growing concern about the ethics of teaching by such process as conditioning. The claim is that these techniques are extremely manipulative and controlling (Cook, 2005). The behaviorists' is seen as a dehumanizing approach which reduces the human to an animal level and ignores certain basic capacities particular to mankind (Chomsky, 1959).

Although this approach has lost much of its popularity as a result of Chomsky's critical review of Skinner's 'Verbal Behavior', its effect cannot be overlooked or ignored in present day approaches. In fact, the current 'Cognitive Approach' is seen, by many, as a legitimate off-shoot of behaviorism (El- Nour, 2013)

### **The Mentalists' Approach**

The mentalists are sometimes referred to as the 'cognitivists' or the 'rationalists'. Their approach is based on psychological assumptions contrary to the behaviorists'. The proponents of this approach reject the stimulus-response analysis of behavior as obscuring the real nature of a particular behavior. Each behavior, according to this theory, "*constitutes a whole, a unity which gives the meaning to its components, and therefore studying each component of behavior separately as a stimulus-response unit without reference to the whole form is useless*" (Frost, 1980, P.15)

The mentalists view learning as a cognitive process which entails 'insight', 'thinking' and 'reasoning', using deductive or inductive procedures. 'Cognition' and 'insight' occur in very complicated ways that are not simply "*reducible to the atomistic conceptions of behaviorists*" (Gage and Berliner, 1979, P.247)

Cognitive psychologists stress the importance of meaning, knowing and understanding. According to this approach, 'meaning' plays a significant role in human learning and , therefore, learning should be a meaningful process of relating new events or items to already existing cognitive concepts (Brown, 1997).

With regard to language learning, the mentalists reject the behaviorists' view as naive and unconvincing. Chomsky (1966:P.43), as a leading mentalist, argues that it is impossible to accept the view that "*linguistic behavior is a matter of habit that is slowly acquired by reinforcement, association, and generalization.*"

The mentalists assert that much of the capacity for language in human is 'innate'. It is part of the genetic make-up of human species and almost independent of any particular experience which may occur after birth. Confirming this theory, Chomsky (1966), maintains that each human comes into the world equipped with an innate language learning ability which enables the child to understand and generate utterances that he has never heard before. Such in-born ability is commonly known as '*Language Acquisition Device*' (LAD) and it proceeds by hypothesis testing. Gittner (1980: P.43.) explains this as follows:

*Children make hypotheses about the form of the grammar of the language they are learning and compare this with their innate knowledge of possible grammar based on the principles of universal grammar. In this way, the individual's competence, or internalized knowledge of the grammar of the language, is built up and this competence makes language use or performance possible.*

The mentalists' approach to foreign language teaching stresses the importance of creating a learning situation in which students are given an explicit grammatical rule and asked to apply this rule in appropriate experience. Chastain (1978: P.48) explains this saying: "One *basic tenet*

*of this approach is that students should never be expected to meet new structures prior to the explanation of these forms."*

It is also stressed that language learning process should involve thinking in that language. Diller (1978) states "*we cannot say we know a language until we can think in it.*" (p.34). Of course, this is totally opposite to the behaviorists' whose ultimate goal in language teaching is an automatic, non-thoughtful response to the stimulus.

Broadly speaking, the cognitive psychologists see second language learning "*as a building up of knowledge systems that can be called upon automatically for speaking and understanding*" Light own and Spada, (1993, p.25).

To that end, language learners pay close attention to all aspects of the language that they are attempting to understand and produce. Then, step - by- step, they internalize the grammatical system of that language and hence become able to use certain parts of their knowledge to create new utterances which conform to the rules they have internalized.

The mentalists' explanation of language acquisition is widely accepted among applied linguists now and a number of leading methodologists have based their methods upon the mentalists' views. These methods will be discussed in more details later.

### **Behaviorist or Mentalist: A Problem of Choice**

So far, it has become clear that different schools of thought in psychology have generated conflicting theories and assumptions about language learning. This state of affairs may put language teachers in a dilemma; not knowing which to accept.(Umar. 2012) comments on this situation and suggests that at present the teacher should try to avoid the temptation to say this is the right way. Some time earlier, Frost (1980) reports that both experiments and teachers' practice have revealed that neither of these two approaches could be used successfully if applied in its pure form.

Indeed, language learning is, by all means, more than just mechanical repetition, or just rule mastery. Such understanding leads to a conciliatory approach which admits that children do imitate much of what they hear, but that they can also generalize what they have learned in order to create original utterances due to an inborn ability which exists only in human beings (Brown, 1997).

Fortunately, there is an increasing awareness today that both approaches can be helpful for language teachers; and that each theory is important for its implications for language teaching and provides invaluable information as to how language teaching should take place. This conviction will become more acceptable if one takes into account that not all learners learn things in the same way. Some may learn better with methods involving mimicry-memorization and pattern drills, while others may benefit more from cognitive code learning. In the classroom, such diversity is common and the teacher should not depend on only one approach.

### **Methods of Foreign Language Teaching**

The above section has discussed the two main psychological theories of language acquisition and language learning (the behaviorist and the mentalist approach). It has already been hinted that a variety of language teaching methods has been based on these approaches. In this part, a selected group of these methods will be discussed and their merits and demerits highlight.

### **The Grammar-Translation Method**

In the western world back in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, foreign language teaching was very much associated with the learning of Latin and Greek, both supposed to promote their learners' intellectuality, at that time. "*It was of vital importance*", say Thanasoulas & Lapkin (2002: p.6), "*to focus on grammatical rules, syntactic structures, along with rote memorization of vocabulary and translation of literary texts*".

There was no provision for the oral use of the language studied. After all, both Latin and Greek are 'dead languages' based on the fact that people no longer speak them for the purpose of interactive communication. Late in the nineteenth century, this classical method of teaching came to be known as 'The Grammar-Translation Method,' which offers very little beyond an insight into the grammatical rules attending the process of translating from the second to the native language (Kelly,1969). Nevertheless, this method has enjoyed worldwide popularity for many years and it is still used in many countries with varying degrees of modification.

It is worth looking, therefore, at the objectives, features and typical techniques commonly associated with the Grammar-Translation Method in order to understand how it works and why it has shown such tenacity as an "acceptable" language teaching methodology in many countries.

**According to Rivers, (1968, p.18)** this method usually:

*...aims at inculcating an understanding of the grammar of a language, expressed in traditional terms, and training the student to write the language accurately by regular practice in translating from his native language*

These aims are to be realized by **Learning long and elaborate grammatical explanations and demonstrations in the native language, followed by practice on the part of the student in the writing of paradigms, in the applying of the rules he has learned to the construction of sentences in the foreign language, and in the translation of consecutive passage of prose from the native language (Rivers, 1968).**

Mora (2002:P.13) describes the techniques of implementing this method in the classroom as follows:

*Classes are taught in the student's mother language, with little active use of the target language. Vocabulary is taught in the form of isolated word lists. Elaborate explanations of grammar are always provided. Grammar instruction provides the rules for putting words together; instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.*

Hindsight may reveal that the 'Grammar-Translation Method' has both advantages and disadvantages. As an intellectual discipline, it trains the mind by logical analysis, and the paradigms learned at school are often remembered years after. Wilkins (1978) assures that "*the learning of paradigms is a very effective device for memorization*" (p.44). Dodson (1967) adds that the written translation work could be of use to the students when they leave school, particularly if they join industry or commerce where correspondence, advertising literature, tenders and orders must be translated for export purposes.

It is also known that the use of translation is, in many cases, inevitable when the meaning of some English words and phrases like "go, quite, now, once upon a time, in spite of" cannot be conveyed except through direct translation (French, 1970). Swain and Lapkin (2000) point out that in newly adopted foreign language text-books in America, all grammar explanation, directions and cultural information are still held in L1. Lally (2000) confirms that with the tendency towards more communicative approaches, there simply aren't any American foreign language text-books currently on the market that use the L2 exclusively.

The first major weakness of the 'Grammar-Translation Method' is that it lays little stress on accurate pronunciation and the spoken language. Secondly, Language learning is not related to the normal functions and usages of the language learned; as artificial sentences unrelated to the text are used in grammar teaching. Thirdly, the extensive use of the mother tongue in the lesson leaves little room for the target language practice. Fourthly, the learner's role is rather passive as he is but a recipient of rules and vocabulary. In brief, it could be said that the contribution of this method to language learning has been quite limited, since it has shifted the

focus from the real language to a 'dissected body' of nouns, adjective, and prepositions, doing nothing to enhance a student's communicative ability in foreign language (Thanasoulas, & Lapkin, 2002).

### The Direct Method

This method is developed initially as a reaction to the 'Grammar-Translation Method' in an attempt to integrate more use of the target language structure. With growing interest in modern languages for communication, the 'Grammar-Translation Method' is proved inadequate and the 'Direct Method' appears on the scene.

The appearance of the 'Direct Method' coincides with a new school of thought that assumes all foreign language teaching should be done exclusively in the target language with no translation, and an emphasis on linking meaning to the language being taught (Hancock, 1997). The 'Direct Method' practitioners contend that: "*students learn to understand a language by listening to a great deal of it and that they learn to speak it by speaking it, associating speech with appropriate actions*" (Rivers, 1968. P.18).

According to this approach, says Umar (2012), a typical lesson begins with a dialogue using a modern conversational style in the target language. Language is first presented orally accompanied with actions or pictures. The mother tongue is **completely avoided**. This is followed by a series of questions in the target language based on the dialogue. Questions are answered in the target language. Grammar is taught inductively, i.e., rules are generated from the practice and experience with the target language. Advanced students read literature for comprehension and pleasure. Literary texts are not analyzed grammatically. The culture is considered an important aspect of learning the language.

From the above, it becomes apparent that the 'Direct Method' concentrates more on using the language rather than knowing about the language. Translation is intentionally avoided and where meaning is difficult to convey by concrete representation, the teacher resorts to miming, drawings, and sketches. Writing is not introduced in the early stages, whereas the new sound system is. Here the foreign language is taught in the same way as learners learn their mother tongue. To realize *this Chuwang*, (2012: p.76) says, "*The students are provided with a 'language bath' which tries to recreate the child's acquisition of his first language*".

Mackey (1965) outlines the main features of this method as follows:

1. The use of every-day language
2. Grammar is taught inductively and by situation
3. Use of many new items in the same lesson to make the language sound natural and encourage normal conversation
4. Most of the work is done in class; more class hours are, therefore, needed.
5. The first few weeks are devoted to listening and pronunciation.
6. All reading and writing material is presented orally.

This method is generally credited for overcoming the major drawbacks of the 'Grammar-Translation Method'; it substitutes language contact for grammar recitation and language use for translation.

Still 'The direct Method' is not without its weakness. In the first place, this method is time-consuming as it depends on lengthy explanations of words and phrases. Secondly, it places too much stress on the teacher who is supposed to spend many hours of his spare time making sketches, collecting objects, and in class trying to do his best by acting to get the meaning across to his pupils without the help of the mother-tongue. Thirdly, just as this method demands so much of the teacher, it does so of the student; the pupil has to be highly intelligent and

imaginative to benefit from this method as it depends on association and induction. Fourthly, this method assumes that in learning the first and foreign language, the learner undergoes the same process. This analogy is rather misleading; the psychology of learning a foreign language differs significantly from that of learning the first language. Lado (1964) highlights this difference saying that: "*The child is forced to learn the first language because he has no other effective way to express his wants. In learning a second language, this compulsion is largely missing*". Strok, (1974:p.170) adds that:

*The native language is learned as part of the general maturation process and the child is able to develop his own grammatical system in his own time. Moreover, he has plenty of time for practice; the average output of a four-year-old child in his waking hours is something like 4000 words per hour and a teacher cannot hope to give this amount of practice no matter how many mechanical aids he has at his disposal.*

The fifth point of weakness of this method is that, due to its very nature, selection, gradation, and presentation cannot be done on scientific principles. Any attempt at gradation or selection is likely to spoil the spontaneity and naturalness of the conversation which this method seeks to present to the learner intact (Umar, 2012).

Regardless of all these points of weakness, the direct method continues to enjoy a popular following in many educational circles, and it is one of the foundations upon which the well-known 'Audio- Lingual Method' expands from starting half way through the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **The Audio- Lingual Method**

This method is based on the principles of behavioral psychology and on the work of structural linguists. It adopts many of the Direct Method's features and incorporates the concepts of teaching 'linguistic patterns' in combination with 'habit forming'. Brown (1994:p.57) claims that this method is one of the first to have its roots "*firmly grounded in linguistics and psychological theory*".

It is interesting to note that the 'Audio Lingual Method' coincided with World War II when the American Army felt the need to learn foreign languages very quickly as part of its overall military operations. The 'Army Method' was then developed to establish communication competence in translators through very intensive language courses focusing on aural/oral skills. This, in combination with some new ideas about language learning coming from the disciplines of descriptive linguistics and behavioral psychology, went on to form the Audio Lingual Method. The Audio-Lingual Method is generally guided by the five slogans of Moulton (1968) who states:

- a. Language is a speech not writing
- b. Language is a set of habits.
- c. Teach the language, not about the language.
- d. A language is what its native speakers say and not what someone thinks they ought to say.
- e. Languages are different.

According to this method, a new material is presented in the form of a dialogue. Based on the principle that language learning is habit formation, the method fosters dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrases and over-learning. Structural patterns are sequenced and taught one at a time using repetitive drills. Little or no grammatical explanation are provided (grammar is taught inductively). Skills are sequenced: listening, speaking, reading and writing and developed in order. Vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context. Teaching points are determined by contrastive analysis between L1 and L2. There is an abundant use of language

laboratories, tapes and visual aids. There is an extended pre-reading period at the beginning of course. Great importance is given to precise native-like pronunciation. Use of mother tongue by the teacher is permitted, but discouraged among and by the student. Successful responses are immediately **REINFORCED** and great care is taken to prevent learner errors. There is a tendency to focus on manipulation of the target language form and to disregard content and meaning (Mora, 2002).

The first stage of Audio-lingual teaching, which might extend well over two terms or semesters, is followed by a systematic introduction of reading and writing. Rives (1968: p.43) explains:

*After several sections of the language have been learned entirely orally without recourse to the text-book, the student is systematically introduced to the reading of the printed script... The student first reads what he has memorized and practiced orally in class, and his attention is drawn to the relationships between sounds and symbols.*

Writing is the last language skill to be taught. The writing is first imitative, with the students being asked to copy exercises and to complete words and sentences. This is followed by one sentence composition, paragraph writing and finally short composition. The purpose of this step-by- step procedure is to minimize mistakes as all errors are immediately identified and corrected before they become habits (Stanley, 2002).

Like all other methods, the Audio-Lingual method has its own points of strength and weakness. The major strength of this method lies mainly in the quick success it achieves in leading learners towards communicative competence. This is the direct outcome of its objectives being clearly stated, its material well designed and its techniques keeping the learners highly motivated and their auditory memory well trained. However, this method is not without faults; **Hassan, (2011:p.74)** reports on it saying that:

1. *Too much drilling can lead to boredom which in turn hinders learning.*
2. *It is found, in some cases, that students learning by this method may well be able to reproduce the structures without actually knowing their meaning.*
3. *Like the direct method, this one makes considerable demand on the teacher, expecting him (or her) to have a near-native articulation and intonation.*

This method can also be criticized for the time lag it advocates *between the presentations* of the foreign language material orally and the presentation of the same material in written form.

### **New Trends in Language Teaching Methodology**

Towards the end of the last century, the study of linguistics itself has undergone major changes, and the area of foreign/ second language teaching becomes an independent discipline. Cognitive psychologists have developed new views on learning in general and on language learning in particular, arguing that mimicry and rote memorization cannot account for the fact that language learning involves affective and interpersonal factors, and that learners are able to produce language forms and patterns that they have never heard before.

The Chomskyan revolution in linguistics draws the attention of linguists and language teachers to the "deep structure" of language, while psychologists take account of the affective and interpersonal nature of learning. Furthermore, and as result of the massive expulsion in the cyberspace and computer technology, traditional language teaching methods have been revitalized and new methods which attempt to capitalize on the importance of technology in language teaching are proposed. Some of these modern methods are discussed below:

#### **Suggestopedia:**

Lozanov, the founder of this method, believes that people are capable of learning much more than they think. Drawing upon Soviet psychological research on 'Yoga' and extrasensory

perception, he comes up with a method for learning that uses relaxation as a means of retaining new knowledge and material. It stands to reason, then, that music plays a crucial role in his method. Lozanov and his followers try to present vocabulary, reading, role plays and drama with classical music in the background and students sitting in comfortable seats. In this way, says, Thanasoulas & Lapkin (2002), students become 'suggestible' and, therefore, able to utilize their maximum potential to take in and retain new material.

The suggestopedia offers some valuable insight into the "super learning power" of the human brain claiming that the relaxed mind is an open mind which helps the student to learn better. However, this method is bitterly criticized on several fronts. For instance, what happens if the classrooms are bereft, and indeed they are in many parts of the world, of such facilities as comfortable seats and compact disk players? Furthermore, in the Moslem World, some teachers and parents may take exception to this method for religious and cultural consideration. Nevertheless, this method can be practiced from time to time, without necessarily having to adhere to all its premises, to break the routine and to create a relaxing positive atmosphere for learning a foreign language (Mieraf, 2013).

### **The Silent Method:**

The 'Silent Method' rests on cognitive rather than affective arguments and influenced by the problem-solving approach to learning. Gattengo (1992), the founder of this method, assumes that it is in the learners' best interest to develop independence and autonomy and cooperate with each other in solving language problems. The teachers are supposed to be silent, hence the name of the method, and must disburse himself of the tendency to explain everything to the students.

Mora (2002) explains that this method begins by using a set of colored rods and non-verbal commands in order to:

- a. avoid the use of vernacular.
- b. create simple linguistic situations that remain under the complete control of the teacher.
- c. pass on to the learners the responsibility for the utterance of the description of the object shown or the action performed.
- d. let the teacher concentrate on what the students say and how they say it, and, permit, from the start, a switch from the all alone voice of the teacher using the foreign language, to a number of voices using it.

According to Brown (2009). The complete set of material used as the language learning goes on includes:

1. a set of colored wooden rods.
2. wall charts containing words of 'functional' vocabulary.
3. a pointer to be used with the chart.
4. a color-coded phonetic chart.
5. tapes or compact discs .
6. films, drawings, and pictures.
7. a set of accompanying worksheets.
8. Transparencies.
9. a text and a book of stories.

As can be seen from the above 'The Silent Way' as a method of language learning is essentially based on cognitive code principles of learning and tries to make good use of the theories underlying 'Discovery Learning'. Some of its basic assumptions are that 'teaching should be subordinated to learning' and 'the teacher works with the student; the student works on the language' (Brown, 2009). Language learning is usually seen as a problem-solving activity to be

engaged in by the student, and the teachers need to stay "out of the way" in the process as much as possible.

In this sense, the ' Silent Method ' stands as a unique method and the first of its kind to really concentrate on cognitive principles in language learning. However, this method is subjected to some bitter criticism. More specifically, it is considered very harsh, as the teacher is distant and, in general lines, the classroom is not always conducive to learning (Thansoulas & Lapkin, 2002).

### **The Total Physical Response (TPR)**

'The Total Physical Response' is a method for teaching second/foreign language. It is developed by James J. Asher in the seventies of the past century and it is based on several insights in addition to the 'Trace Theory' which contends that memory is stimulated and increased when it is closely associated with motor activity (Mckay,2004). This method also owes much to some major principles of first language acquisition in young children. As such, the process of learning and comprehension in this method involves a considerable amount of listening and comprehension in combination with various 'Physical Responses' well before learners begin to use the language orally (Ramiro, 2011). It also stresses the idea that learning should be as fun and stress-free as possible and that it should be dynamic through the use of accompanying physical activities (Cook, 2005)

Asher, the founder of this method, in his book "Brain Switching" (2003) has much to say about right-brained learning (the part of the brain that deals with motor activity), claiming that it should precede the 'Language processing' element covered by the left brain.

As for the teaching of abstract, Asher (2003) proposes that these will come later, not necessarily by direct instruction, but in the context of discourse. He points out that when the children acquire their first language, they become fluent native speakers at a concrete level of discourse; then gradually acquire abstraction in context, or by asking question such as: "Mother, what does government mean?" Mother then, explains using simple language that the child understands.

The Total Physical Response Method is now widely recognized as a highly effective method at the beginning levels and also admired as a method accessible to a wide range of teachers and learning environments (McKay, 2004). Other critics, however, express doubt about the efficacy of this method when used with older learners (Salem, 2013).

### **The Communicative Language Teaching Approach**

The need for communication over the last few decades has been relentless, leading to the emergence of the 'Communicative Language Teaching' (CLT) which expands on the goal of enhancing 'Communicative competence' more than any earlier method. Teaching students how to use the language is considered to be more important than learning the language itself. Brown (1994: p.36.) Explains the objectives of this approach saying;

*Beyond grammatical discourse elements in communication, we are propping the nature of social, cultural, and pragmatic features of a language. We are exploring pedagogical means for "real-life" communication in the classroom.*

*We are trying to get our learners to develop linguistic fluency, not just the accuracy that has so far consumed our historical journey.*

At this point, it is important to note that communicative Language Teaching (CTA) is not a method; it is an approach, which transcends the boundaries of concrete methods and techniques. It is a theoretical position about the nature of language and language learning and teaching.

However, as an approach Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) at times seems non-specific in terms of how to actually go about applying it in the classroom in any sort of systematic way. There are, in fact, many interpretations of what CLT actually means and what it actually involves. This element of vagueness stands as a major point of weakness of this approach.

### **The Natural Approach**

This approach is developed by Stephen Krashen in the early eighties of the last century. It is obviously based on Krashen's theories about second language acquisition. This comprehension-based approach is founded on the assumption that there should be a lot of language 'acquisition' as opposed to language 'processing', and there needs to be a considerable amount of 'comprehensible input' from the teacher. Meaning is considered as the essence of language, and vocabulary (not grammar) is the core of the language teaching.

Krashen (1983), in his theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) suggests that adults have two different ways of developing competence in second language: acquisition and learning. 'Acquisition' is a subconscious process identical in all important aspects to the process children utilize in acquiring their first language. 'Learning', on the other hand, is a conscious process that results in knowing about the rules of language. Krashen maintains that the result of learning, 'learned competence' (LC), functions as a monitor or editor that is, while 'Acquisition competence' (AC), is responsible for fluent production of sentences; (LC) makes correction in these sentences either before or after their production. The way to develop (LC) is fairly easy: analyzing the grammar rules consciously and practicing them through exercises, but 'acquisition' can only be realized through intensive exposure to 'comprehensible input'. This input should be relevant, but not necessarily grammatically sequenced. The second/ foreign language teacher, therefore, should always send meaningful messages which can be manipulated to create opportunities for students to access 'input' structures to understand and express meaning. To that end, the teacher can lay more stress on listening and reading comprehension activities.

In his model of teaching, Krashen (1983) has also stressed the importance of the psychological state of the learner. He claims that the learner's emotional state is just like an adjustable filter which freely passes or hinders 'input' necessary to acquisition. In other words, input must be achieved in low-anxiety contexts since acquirers with low affective filter receive more 'input' and interact with confidence. The pedagogical goal in a foreign/second language class should, thus, not only include 'comprehensible input,' but also create an atmosphere that fosters a low affective filter.

In spite of its theoretical appeal, Krashen's model of language learning has been met with harsh criticism particularly around 'Acquisition-Learning' distinction, and also around recommendation of a 'silent period' that is ended when students feel ready to 'emerge' into oral production. Critics point out that, students may emerge at different times and this is likely to create a heterogeneous class which will be very difficult to manage unless the teacher is exceptionally skillful and talented (Lally, 2000). Nevertheless, Krashen's theory represents the first attempt at creating an 'overall' approach that naturally leads to the generally accepted norm for effective language teaching.

### **Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)**

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is an approach to language teaching and learning in which computer technology is used as an aid to the presentation, reinforcement and assessment of material to be learned, usually including a substantial interactive element (Davies, et.al. 2011).

Typical CALL programs present a stimulus to which the learner must respond. The stimulus may be presented in any combination of text, still images, sound, and motion video. The learner responds by typing at the keyboard, pointing and clicking with the mouse, or speaking into a microphone. The computer offers feedback, indicating whether the learner's response is right or wrong, and in the more sophisticated CALLS programs, attempting to analyze the learner's response and to pinpoint errors. Branching to help and remedial activities is a common feature of modern CALL programs (*Murray, 2013*).

Early CALL favored an approach that drew heavily on practices associated with programmed instruction. This was reflected in the term **Computer Assisted Language Instruction (CALI)**, which originated in the USA and was in common use until the early 1980s, when CALL became the dominant term. Throughout the 1980s CALL widened its scope, embracing the communicative approach and a range of new technologies, especially multimedia and communications technology. An alternative term to CALL emerged in the early 1990s; namely, Technology **Enhanced Language Learning (TELL)**, which provides a more accurate description of the activities which fall broadly within the (Lamy & Mortensen, 2011)

However, it is important to note that a computer is a medium used for the sake of helping people in learning. It is solely a tool and a medium. Hence, it is powerless and is totally dependent on the users. In this case, the computer is an intermediary; it is merely a part of the entire learning process. (Hartoyo, 2008:11).

## CONCLUSION

This paper has clearly demonstrated the intimate relation between psychology and language teaching methodology. Two conflicting schools of thought in psychology; namely, the behaviorist and the mentalist schools have been discussed and their views about language learning have been outlined. The behaviorists base their views about language learning on environmental factors while the mentalists hold that it is the innate factors that determine language acquisition. After a careful review of these approaches, it is concluded that both of them could be of some help for language teachers and that both approaches are important for their implication for language teaching.

Eight principal foreign language teaching methods that stem from the above psychological approaches have been thoroughly discussed and their merits and demerits outlined. Though it is clearly demonstrated that none of these methods is absolutely perfect or without its drawbacks, most teachers usually find themselves more comfortable using one or another of the methods listed above. Of course, there is nothing wrong with this, but it must be remembered that foreign language learners differ greatly, not just in age, but also in mentality and capacity. Thus, they may respond differently to any given method of language teaching.

Furthermore, since teaching is deeply rooted in the local philosophy, culture and basic concepts of education, the students' learning styles and habits in language acquisition must be taken into consideration. For instance, although the 'Grammar-Translation Method' has lost much of its popularity now, students accustomed to this method may still derive benefit from it. Arab learners of English, influenced by their Arabic linguistic background, for example, show great interest in language structures and grammatical details when learning another language. Therefore, in teaching English to such learners, appropriate grammar analysis is essential especially for adults.

Vocabulary work and pattern drills are also ways of familiarizing the students with the sentence structure. However, language structure practice should be used in contexts that involve

some basic principles of appropriateness. This is the area that the tradition of EFL teaching in the Arab world has long overlooked, that is English for "communicative" purposes.

Along the same lines, 'Discovery Learning' should be encouraged and language learning should be seen as a problem solving activity to be engaged in by the student, and the teacher needs 'to stay out' of the way in the process as much as possible (see silent method).

In response to the Audio-Lingual Method, language teachers should remember that positive reinforcement of students' correct responses could make the foreign language learning process more enjoyable and fruitful. Use of language labs and Computer Assisted Language Learning techniques is bound to revitalize the teaching process and make it less cumbersome (see the CALL approach).

No matter what method the teacher decides to adopt in teaching a foreign language, he or she must remember that memory can be stimulated and increased when it is closely associated with motor-activity, and they should also focus on the ideas that language learning should be as fun and stress-free as possible (See Total Physical Response).

Certainly the "Suggestopedia" is insightful and constructive and it can be practiced from time to time, without necessarily having to adhere to all its premises, to provide mental relaxation and self-confidence.

In the end, the teacher may discover that the best method for teaching a foreign language is **eclectic** in nature and includes bits of this and pieces of that. However, in order to use this **eclectic** approach successfully, the teacher must have a detailed knowledge of all other approaches and methods. This **detailed knowledge** will help him/her to select the most appropriate elements to present his/her lessons.

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