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## **COGNITIVE APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

The fundamental idea of the cognitive approach is that the learning process should be aimed at acquiring knowledge, structuring and systematically arranging its units, storing and applying them while getting adapted to the reality. Cognitive linguistics began as an approach to the study of language, but it now has implications and applications far beyond language in any traditional sense of the word. It has its origins in the 1980s as a conscious reaction to Chomskyan linguistics, with its emphasis on formalistic syntactic analysis and its underlying assumption that language is independent from other forms of cognition. Increasingly, evidence was beginning to show that language is learned and processed much in the same way as other types of information about the world, and that the same cognitive processes are involved in language as are involved in other forms of thinking.

Key concept of the cognitive approach is the distinction between meaningful learning and rote learning. According to Ausubel, Novak and Hansen, meaningful learning is that which is relatable to concepts that are already established in learners' cognitive structure, permitting the formation of mental links between new ideas and existing ideas. Rote learning, on the other hand, consists of relatively isolated concepts that are learned verbatim and are not integrated into the cognitive structure. Vocabulary words that are learned in a familiar context are learned more easily and retained longer than lists of words learned through rote memorization [1].

In order for new concepts to be stored in the mind, learners must impose some type of organization on the new information. Often new concepts do not fit

within learners' current conceptualization of the target language, forcing learners to revise their mental framework in order to accommodate the new information. This constant modification of organizational structures in the mind is called restructuring. Restructuring helps to explain why learners often appear to forget grammar principles that they previously seemed to have mastered; this "forgetting" or "backsliding" occurs when learners encounter new forms that cause a restructuring of the whole system [3]. In the long term, restructuring is seen as the process by which learners' interlanguage develops and grows closer to the target language.

Although the cognitive approach is not a method in the sense of a "specific instructional design or system" [6, p. 245], cognitive theory suggest certain learning activities and principles. Many of these activities have been commonly used in foreign language classrooms and textbooks.

Among them are the following:

- All learning must be meaningful to the learner. When presenting grammar concepts, for example, cognitive code theorists suggest that the teacher give explicit grammar explanations accompanied by multiple examples to facilitate understanding. Chastain insisted that grammar be taught deductively, with explanations of rules preceding examples of their usage; Carroll, however, maintained that it hardly matters whether one starts with the rule or the example, as long as alternation between rules and example exists.
- 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.
- Language usage 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 [2].
- New material should be sequenced in such a way that it can be integrated with students' previous knowledge. It should also be reviewed periodically [4].

- 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.
- Students can benefit from instruction in language learning strategies, including strategies that help them plan, organize and monitor their learning [5].

### **References**

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