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THE MODEL OF MUTUAL DETERMINISM OF SOCIO-COGNITIVE LEARNING AND ITS FUNCTION IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Pappas G.

1. The model of mutual determinism of socio-cognitive learning and its function in the foreign language classroom

Since school is the centre of institutional educational relationship, which means that school reality is inseparable from everyday educational process, we can claim that we should be interested in whatever happens in the classroom during the lesson.

At the same time that learning is achieved in the classroom, there are also relationships between the participants in the educational process that are being formed. Every participant possesses his/her own individual factors and manifests his/her own behaviour through the existence of environmental situations which are composed of the rest of the learners (individually, in groups, as a whole), the teacher and the shaping of the classroom.

The above participants are in constant interaction, they affect and they get affected, thus creating communication in the classroom¹. In order for the teaching model of the socio-cognitive learning to be successful, all learners have to consciously believe that they are members of a team and that in the dynamics of the team they have their own deed to accomplish; they should also have common targets and values so that coherence and unity is achieved.

The interaction between members of the class is also the essence of communicative teaching. We give and receive messages we codify and decodify, we shape our attitudes according to the facts of a particular environment but we also affect and shape the attitudes of others.

The result of interaction is the learners' practice in the creative use of the skills they have acquired as well as the grammar rules and the vocabulary they have mastered, so that they can cope with the real communicative needs that the teacher skillfully creates through dramatisation of different situations and allocation of various roles to the learners.

The teacher operates as an equal participant in the educational process; he/she functions as a model, helping learners to become familiar with the socio-cultural events of the country where L2 (second language) is spoken as a native language; he/she cultivates an atmosphere of familiarity and safety; he/she tries to construct the desired behaviour through indirect internal reinforcement², so that learners can handle reinforcement in their thought beforehand, that is before they adopt some particular behaviour.

By operating in this way the teacher ensures beforehand the following adequate and necessary conditions for the efficiency of the team³:

¹ The term "interaction" in language teaching means exchanging views, ideas, thoughts and feelings between two or more individuals/members of the classroom, which has mutual character and contributes through feedback to enriching and improving the participants' language efficiency. See Brown, D. H. (1994). Op. cit. p. 157-69.

² For indirect internal reinforcement of the socio-cognitive theory of learning see Danassis-Afendakis, Ant.K.(1996). *Educational Psychology. Learning and Development*. Vol. A'. 3rd edition. – Athens. – Pp. 216-9.

³ Seidelmann, K. (1975). *Gruppenpädagogik im Schulunterricht*. – München. – P.17.

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- The members of the team should be related with mutual understanding and respect for each other.
- They should develop a network of direct inter-personal communication, in which they should participate “de facto” without having any difficulty in following it.
- They should take on initiatives, enrich model behaviour, plan activities, encourage individual action.
- They should distribute activities in such a way that every member takes on a responsible role.
- They should co-operate efficiently and be emotionally related to each other.

At the same time the teaching-learning in work groups aims at helping learners express their thoughts clearly and accurately, think logically and develop their intellectual skills at the maximum. In the emotional level it aims at accustoming learners to work conscientiously and reliably, to co-operate in co-ordination, to help each other, to exchange their views freely, to respect others' opinion, to acknowledge well-meant criticism and to learn moved by self-motivation.

The educational value of teaching-learning becomes essential when the teacher creates work groups. The shy and awkward learner (observer) works beside the efficient one (model), takes advantage of his/her skills, receives positive reinforcement beforehand and manages to offer as much as he/she can to the common work developing the team spirit. Besides, the skillful and courageous learner becomes aware of his/her skills, has the satisfying opportunity of supporting the weaker learners, practises cooperation and gets accustomed to mutual aid in practise.

All learners profit from group experiences, they get social experience and increase their creative forces. They are taught the way of learning, they understand the importance of exchanging opinions, they get accustomed to inner discipline and to eagerly taking on individual and collective responsibility.

Inside the team – which is a small society – individual activity and group cooperation are harmoniously combined. The learners become capable of planning their activities and envisaging their results and of creating self-generated motives in the context of team spirit.

1. Prerequisites of success.

1.1. The classroom

The classroom is the place where teacher and learners co-exist and work. The better the condition of this place is, the more efficient the teacher and learners' will be. An ample classroom, well-lit and well-aired, decorated with taste, is a healthy and pleasant environment; it has beneficial influence on the mental state of those that stay in it⁴. The decoration of the classroom can be done following a discussion and exchange of views between teacher and learners.

1.2. The arrangement of furniture and communication

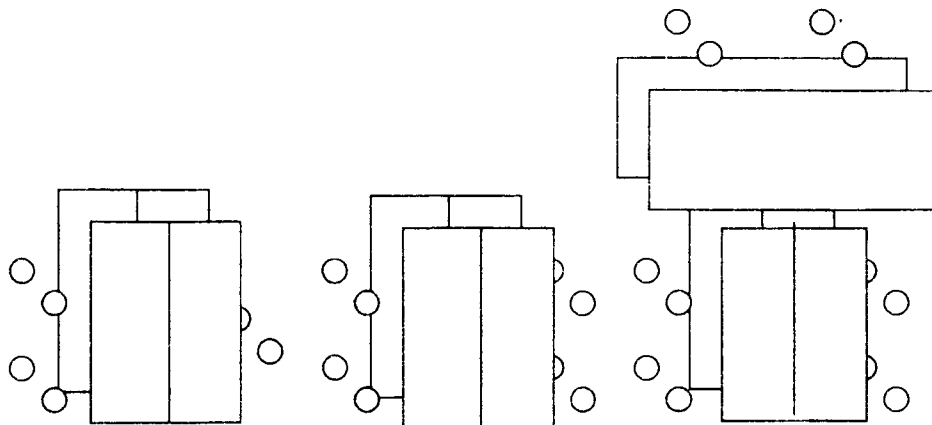
The furniture is arranged in such a way that they facilitate learners' free movement in the classroom and inter-personal communication. The bookcase and cupboards for teaching aids and material are accessible during lesson time, so that learners can use them whenever they need to. The teacher's desk, without perch, is placed at one end of the classroom, since the teacher is the “primus inter pares” (the first among the many), he/she walks around the class and coordinates their activities. The portable desks and chairs which are available can be arranged each time according to the particular activity. The teacher should help learners understand that various arrangements of the desks and tables are possible, each of which determines the particular sort and quality of communication that exists between teacher – learners and among learners. Thus, the front arrangement (desks in line, one behind the other) allows learners to follow what the teacher says and copy from the board. However communication is one-way, from the teacher to the learners. Even when some learners talk with the teacher, two-way communication is usually in the form of questions and answers; it rarely develops into an essential dialogue while learners' communication with one another happens only through the teacher's intervention. In contrast, amphitheatrical semi-

⁴ Petroulakis, N.B. (1981). *Schedules. Educational aims, Methodology*. – Athens: Phelekiis. – P. 438.

circular arrangement or arrangement in the form of **T** favours conversation with all learners, better communication among them and coordination of conversation by the teacher⁵.

Furthermore, separation in individual desks helps individual activities. Finally, when learners sit in groups of three, four or six, they communicate and cooperate better.

School desks can take the following forms in such case:



The learners sit face to face, so that visual contacts, direct exchange of opinions, two-way inter-personal communication and cooperation are best ensured. The arrangement of school desks in groups could be permanent or alternate with other forms. However, before choosing the permanent arrangement in groups, it is necessary for the learners to get used to amphitheatrical semi-circular arrangement and to practise the rules of constructive conversation.

2. The role of teaching aids in foreign language teaching

1. The meaning of “epopteia”.

Originally the term “epopteia” means the image of an object created by observation which is based on perception. This etymological meaning of the term is not the same as its educational or psychological meaning. In Educational Psychology the term has a broader sense since the object image created by all of the senses. Apart from the object images created by objects and phenomena which have a direct impact on our senses in Educational Science the term “epopteia” also includes intellectual images, that is images – created by teaching – of objects and phenomena which we do not directly perceive of.

According to Albert Bandura’s socio-cognitive theory of learning⁶, the person is not a passive recipient of messages through his/her organs of perception; he/she interferes actively with the impressions created by these messages and, as a result, he/she transforms these impressions by analyzing, elaborating, associating, evaluating, estimating and forming a complete image.

Consequently in Educational Science and Psychology the term “epopteia” means the whole of direct and indirect object images together with all the elements that make it up appear through the complex of their components their extensions and their associations.

2. The importance of teaching aids in teaching.

“It is widely believed that people born better through their senses, particularly through sight and hearing”⁷. As a result Educational Science gives particular importance to the use of teaching aids in the process of learning.

⁵ Leontiou, N. (1978). Communication. *New Education* 5. – P.25.

⁶ For the socio-cognitive theory of Albert Bandura see Danassis – Afendakis, Ant. K. (1996). *Educational Psychology. Learning and Development*. Vol. A’. – 3rd edition. – Athens. – Pp. 201-30.

⁷ Cross, A. and Cypher, Ir. (1961). Audio-Visual Education. *New York University*. – N. York. – P.8.

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Education has to satisfy and cultivate learners' supervisory abilities as "epopteia" is an essential operative part of education. According to the sociocognitive theory of learning, model behavior is best assimilated when we use symbolic patterns and oral instructions.

Therefore, it is absolutely essential that we "should use epopteia when teaching" by evaluating the use of teaching aids at the maximum taking advantage of their multiple applications in teaching: they, for instance, allow us to interrupt the viewing of a videotape in order to emphasize and comment on certain aspects of a model behaviour the learner has to notice, like an appropriate word to comment on its pronunciation. On the other hand, teaching aids also give learners the opportunity to go beyond the limits of their own social life by succeeding an intracultural exchange⁸. Thus learners become familiar with the socio-cultural reality of the country where L2 is spoken as a native language.

3. The importance of teaching aids in learning a foreign language through pattern imitation.

3.1. Teaching aids and perceptive-memory process.

During the stage when the person forms some behaviour through pattern imitation he/she observes and assimilates the pattern behaviour according to his/her knowledge and abilities; then he/she forms some behaviour corresponding to knowledge and abilities and acquires leading patterns which he/she codifies in the form of images, notions and models.

Teaching aids greatly contribute to the accomplishment of learning at this stage, as they stimulate learners' interest to a satisfying extent since they provide them with the suitable opportunity to observe and "take notice" of the lesson. Teaching aids not only stimulate learners' interest but they also keep it sustained through teaching, as they offer clear explanations, specific and realistic information and they create an atmosphere corresponding to reality, thus helping learners to approach the socio-cultural reality of the country whose language (L2) they are taught. Teaching aids help learners focus on the lesson by making teaching more effective since the realistic teaching-aid material and the vividness of impressions and stimuli contribute to stimulation and focus on attention.

Moreover, teaching aids play an important role to the creation of clear and appropriate intellectual representations. Very often learners form different representations on the same topic, although this is taught by the same teacher. This happens because learning is affected by the person's sociocultural, philosophical and encyclopaedic education, since new representations are created on top and with the help of previous ones. Furthermore, learners form different representations on the basis of various thoughts and impressions they may have during the course of teaching.

Therefore, it is only natural that a substantial number of misreadings and wrong representations is noticed in the teaching that does not use any teaching aids. Only through the use of the senses do we create clear and appropriate representations which are, moreover sustained for a longer time. We remember best and for a longer time what we are taught with the help of teaching aids. Besides, visual representations are recalled more easily and more accurately.

There are times when L2 teachers cannot offer the appropriate model behaviour or explain some aspect of the lesson or even show the existing associations between teaching objects. The inadequacy of oral teaching created by the self-same nature of teaching L2 makes comprehension questionable both for the teacher who questions the result of his/her own teaching and for the learner who doubts whether he/she understands right. Teaching aids effectively contribute to dispelling any doubts or misunderstandings, to comprehending teaching and to assimilating objects as well as their existing associations.

⁸ Koliades, Emm.A.(1977). *Theories of Learning and Educational Action. Socio-cognitive theories.* Vol.B. – 4th edition. – Athens. – P.129.

Referring to teaching aids⁹ Professor Rumph stresses:

“They connect and relate various objects. They specify the extent of their relationship. They make comparison easier. With their help we can compare known to unknown ones. They enable us to compare size, shape, result”.

3.2. Promoting “self – action”.

Gaudich defines self-action as “self-motivated action moved under one’s steam to directions chosen by the self-same individual”¹⁰.

Self – action is a major teaching principle according to which the learner is not a passive recipient of new educational data but an active participant. According to trinitarian bilateral determinism¹¹ the person’s manifestly active behaviour is a result of the continuous interaction between such behaviour, his/her interpersonal features and the social circumstances of his/her environment. As a result the learner’s role is not static but dynamic, since he/she controls as well as masters the state of his/her environment.

Teaching aids promote and facilitate the above teaching principle. They stimulate, sustain and promote self-action in the best possible way, since they awaken and stimulate learners’ intellect, perception, attention as well as feelings.

3.3. The making of up-to-date teaching.

Professor W.B. Jones indicates: “Relate school syllabuses with the learner’s everyday life. In other words, show him/her the existing relationship between what he/she does in school and his/her life both present and future”¹². Therefore, it is essential to relate school teaching with the learner’s environment and everyday life.

If we apply the above principle to the teaching and learning of L2 we realize that we need to carry into the classroom all the socio-cultural elements as well as all everyday life manifestations of the country where L2 is spoken as a native language.

With the help of teaching aids we manage to make the teaching of L2 interesting and up-to-date. At the same time we achieve the learners’ approach to L2 mentally, locally and temporally. In this way we manage to relate teaching with everyday life and theory with practice finally promoting the communicative approach of L2.

3.4. Relating teaching with the senses and channelling of knowledge.

According to the socio-cognitive theory of learning, an essential prerequisite for learning and the subsequent imitation of some model behaviour is its clear presentation by the model, so that it becomes noticeable by learners¹³. Through the teaching aids the teacher achieves the noticeable (clear and tangible) representation of the teaching object and he/she “transforms a mental form into an intellectual ingredient”. With the above aids we manage to stimulate more than one senses and to render learning more appropriate and clearer.

Furthermore, through the appropriate evaluation of audiovisual teaching aids we complement and improve knowledge conveyed through oral teaching; we best analyze complex topics, we anticipate misunderstandings in teaching, we give size and shape, meaning and content to words and phrases and, as a result, learners become more efficient in learning whatever teaching offers them. In addition through the use of audio-visual aids we manage to combine the skills of listening and speaking with grammar and vocabulary, in this way transforming knowledge of K2 elements from insufficient and incomplete to sufficient and complete.

⁹ Rumph, Os. *The Use of Audio – Visuals in the Church*. – Philadelphia, Pa. – P.13.

¹⁰ Herder, (1967). *Ellinika Grammata. Great Educational Encyclopaedia*. Vol 2. – Athens. – P.665.

¹¹ Danassis – Afendakis, Ant. K. (1996). *Op. cit.* – Pp. 219-25.

¹² Jones, W. *Problems in Teaching Industrial Arts and Professional Education*. – Athens. – P. 23.

¹³ For face features and the important role they play in the process of imitation model behaviour by the observer see Kapsali, Achil. G. (1996). *Educational Psychology*. – 3rd edition. – Publishing House Kyriakides Bros, Salonica – Athens. – Pp.294-6.

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The combination of theory and practise – due to a great extent to the use of audiovisual aids – creates the best prerequisites for successful teaching and offers learners the opportunity for self-criticism, self-improvement and efficiency in enacting the model behaviour. Through the combination of knowledge and skills, presentation and application, listening and observation, teaching becomes from abstract and theoretical, concrete, original, powerful and convincing.

Finally, through the use of audiovisual aids we manage to create an excellent teaching environment, to present and explain new teaching topics, to entertain, to broaden learners' activation, to inspire action and to mentally sustain the knowledge conveyed in the best way and for a longer time.

It is remarkable that although the use of teaching aids is necessary for successful teaching-learning L2 according to pattern imitation, we must be careful not to overuse the above aids so that we sustain their effectiveness¹⁴. Overuse of teaching aids or lack of careful planning for their proper use in the classroom may run the risk of turning the learner into "a passive puppet" and, thus, lose our main target which is the assimilation of L2 offered knowledge.

3. Teaching of oral speech in the second communication code (L2)

Through the individual and cooperative acquirement and evaluation of knowledge in L2 the teacher pursues the harmonious, full-scale and balanced development of the students' intellectual and psychosomatic forces. S/he has to try to develop the linguistic potential into a linguistic skill and to cultivate the acquirement of linguistic fluency and the consummation of their linguistic function. S/he pursues in a natural and unaffected way the learning of the second language system, development and organization of the students' language material, which has to be consciously assimilated by the students themselves. Further-more, the teacher seeks:

To teach the students to get used to listening, asking and expressing themselves fluently and naturally in the various forms of oral communication and, particularly, in conversation.

The main purpose of teaching oral speech in K2 is for the student to develop his/her linguistic and communicative skill, so that s/he communicates with his/her environment fluently. The above purpose is accomplished through the effectuation of the following separate targets:

1. Speaking

The point that initially has to be taken into consideration is correct speech and clear articulation and pronunciation of words. The teacher is the linguistic model who, by his/her correct voice, good accent and clear pronunciation, is a reference point for his/her students, who, due to their intensely imitating tendency, try to imitate him/her. The teacher ought to speak consciously slowly, clearly and with variations in his/her intonation depending on the content of the speech.

The teacher's good and clear oral speech, the nice, clear and descriptive exemplary reading of texts and his/her relative corrections and suggestions can greatly improve the students' phonetics and pronunciation. In the classroom students will be progressively taught to express their thoughts, impressions, experiences and feelings by correctly articulating, pronouncing and stressing them.

The development of the speaking skill which is an organic part of communication, is accomplished through communicative activities in which students take an active part as equal speakers, playing the role of receiver and receptor. In order to create real communication the teacher has to invent communicative activities, so that s/he creates the so-called "information gaps"¹⁵.

These gaps have to be filled in so that communication is accomplished. Therefore, learners receive and give each other information between them as well as between the various work groups by constantly alternating the roles of receptor and transmitter as a result information gaps are filled

¹⁴ Palau, Y. G. (1969). *Teaching Aids*. – Athens. – P.5.

¹⁵ Johnson, K. and Morrow, K. (1981). *Communication in the Classroom. Applications and Methods for a Communicative Approach*. Centre for Applied Language Studies. University of Reading. – Harlow: Longman. Great Britain. – P. 63.

in and new ones are constantly created, so that conversation becomes purposeful and serves communicative needs with the direct consequence of improving their communicative skill.

During the speaking activity we have three functions: phonetic, vocabulary and syntactic. By creating information gaps the teacher prompts his/her students to fill in their communicative needs by creating in advance positive reinforcements to imitate his/her own behaviors, while s/he uses phonetic, vocabulary and syntactical rules of K2 albeit with expressions adjusted to the prevailing socio-linguistic principles¹⁶.

2. Listening

It is natural to be able to understand much more than what we can express. Hence the great importance of listening in oral speech and communication is stressed.

The teacher has to teach his/her students to listen carefully, so that they strengthen the ego's attentive skill, to practice, to comprehend, to group the meanings by hearing and to hold the basic points of oral speech. A necessary prerequisite is the students' systematic practice to listening to K2 speech at a regular rate and speed. The teacher in order to train his/her students to the listening skill should make the appropriate choices, so that s/he stimulates their interest and they follow what is said with the relevant attention.

In order to accomplish his/her objective target the teacher has to:

1. Choose the texts and dialogues in such a way that on the one they meet with the students' interest and on the other they also entertain them.
2. Since according to the socio-cognitive theory the observer-student focuses his/her attention to the main points of the model's behavior, the teacher in advance guides his/her students to the main points of the dialogue and the texts that are going to follow.
3. Texts and dialogues have to be consistent with the students' perceptive skills and abilities.
4. The model behavior (in this case the presentation of the whole pronouncement) is best imprinted when presented separately if it contains separate functional units and must anyway be always accompanied of his/her members of the body.

Another objective target that the educator is after is the learning of various words that the learners will reproduce and use spontaneously, experiencing different situations with the systematic sound exercises of words, with the awareness of synonyms and words sounding the same, so that they become capable of fluently using oral speech to express themselves. To achieve the above purpose the educator can use various ways and methods, such as descriptions of objects and pictures, narrations of fairy-tales and stories, rendering of the meaning of texts through dramatization during which students play the roles of a text.

Oral speech in K2 is a contact and communication point among students. It is the means through which the student acquires his/her place in the team, socializes and learns to converse both with the teacher and with his/her classmates by combining words speech with action.

By achieving the above aims that have to do with teaching oral speech the learners develop their linguistic and communicative skill through the interaction of their personal factors, external events and environmental situations that are shaped in the classroom where K2 is taught.

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¹⁶ "A dynamic whole precedes sentences, while the sentence itself as a mental concept is determined and integrated through expression".

See Georgoulis, K.D. (1974). *General Teaching*. 2nd edition. – Athens Ed. Papadimes, Dim. N. – P. 398.