**LECTURE TWO**

1. **Theoretical Background**

The CALL pedagogy found theoretical backgrounds in the concerns and the interests of a number of language learning theories. The latter include the cognitive theory, the interaction theory, the sociocultural and the sociolinguistic theory.

* 1. **Cognitive Theories**

Cognitive Theories are for the view that SLL process can be better understood through understanding how the brain processes and learns new information. Their central issues are how learners access linguistic knowledge, the strategies they employ, and why some learners are substantially better than others at learning second languages (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

From the cognitive perspective, among the most prominent [interests] are L2 comprehension, planning and production; motivation; and attention to, and awareness of, L2 meaning and form (Pica 1997 cited in Chapelle, 2005 p. 747)

CALL attracts learners’ attention to the material presented, increases their motivation to learn, and decreases anxiety. Online tools have been proved to allow for more contribution and participation of shy learners. Consequently, more comprehension and awareness of L2 forms and meanings would take place. Besides, CALL helps learners in the process of planning and production providing necessary feedback when needed since CALL technologies “are very good at storing, manipulating and retrieving large amounts of information, making them particularly useful in the area of ‘data-driven learning’” ( Warschauser & Healy 1998 cited in LeBaron-Earle 2013p. 63).

* 1. **The Interaction Theory**

Long (1981-1983) argued that to fully understand the nature and the usefulness of SLL input, greater attention should be paid to ‘interactions’ in which learners are engaged. He explained that interaction is not a direct source of TL but it helps in increasing input comprehensibility because after being recycled and paraphrased, it should become increasingly well-targeted to the developmental needs of learners (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

Over time, researchers in SL interaction became more responsive to the development of both the linguistic and information processing theory within SLA studies. Hence, Long (1996) reformulated the ‘interaction hypothesis’, and placed more emphasis on linking features of input and linguistic environment with ‘learner- internal factors’ explaining how these linkages facilitate language development. This new version highlighted the relevance of the feedback derived from the environmental language (negative evidence) to SLL, on the one hand, and the notion of ‘selective attention’ as the process through which input becomes intake (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

Within the same vein, Chapelle (2005) posited three main types of interaction:

1/Interpersonal interaction; it takes place between human individuals and it helps in SL acquisition through meaning negotiation, it may take place with the help of technologies (CMC).

2/Human-computer interaction; the computer provides the input or its simplified versions together with means of help (e.g. dictionaries) to clarify meaning. 3/Interapersonal interaction; it takes place within the person’s mind and through which learners process linguistic forms.

Focusing on interaction, Chapelle (2005) discussed the benefits of three types of interaction within three different perspectives; the interaction hypothesis, the sociocultural theory, and the processing theory. These benefits are summarised in the following table:

*Table 01. Benefits of three types of interaction from three perspectives (Chapelle, 2005 p.750)*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Perspectives on the value of interaction | | | |
| Basic types of interaction | Interaction Hypothesis | Sociocultural Theory | Depth of processing theory |
| Inter between  people  between person  and computer | Negotiation of meaning  Obtaining modified input | Co-constructing meaning  Obtaining help for using language | Prompting attention to language  Prompting attention to language |
| Intra within the  person’s mind | Attending to linguistic form | Stimulating internal mental voice | Cognitive processing of the input |

* 1. **The Sociocultural Theory/ Constructivism**

Vygotsky (1896- 1934) is a Russian developmental psychologist who brought new influential ideas to which new modifications were added with time (Neo-Vygotkyan). The sociocultural theory.

Proposes that humans attain the capacity to voluntarily control or regulate their memory, attention, perception, planning, learning, and development, as they appropriate mediating artifacts, including language, as they are brought into culturally specified and organized activities (Lantolf, 2005 p. 335)

In other words, cognitive development and knowledge is constructed through social interaction not transferred from teachers to learners. Therefore, online foreign language education, including public discussions and collaborations, provides learners with interaction and practice opportunities with other classmates and tutors. They deal with different subjects, they discuss and reflect on each others’ views rather than publishing lectures and class notes only (Dooly,2007).

For Vygotsky, learning is an “assisted performance, whereas development is the ability to regulate mental and social activity as a consequence of having appropriated, or internalized, that assistance” (Lantolf, 2005 p 336). Vygotsky’s idea of assisted learning or scaffolding i.e. to learn in collaboration with adults or more capable peers, was recently extended to include “collaboration with the equal peers” (Dooly, 2007 p.216) where learners support each other, and share resources that help them in the learning process. This idea is reflected in the wide use of technologies these days, mainly social media, to share content and comments. It is also reflected in telecollaboration since the latter requires groups of students to work together on different tasks to attain a common goal. It combines both ‘group goals’ and ‘individual accountability’ i.e. members of the group share with the others the knowledge they have learned to help achieve the group goals (Dooly, 2007).

Furthermore, Vygotsky’s theory posited that collaborative learning helps learners to intellectually perform better, especially if there is a diversity within the group members because “different interpretations, explanations or conceptualizations about what they are studying[…] force them to ‘re-think’ their own viewpoints” (Dooly, 2007 p.215). Hence, CALL represents a rich atmosphere for exchanging viewpoints, and rethinking ideas. Research in the fiels of language teaching and learning (e.g. LeBaron-Earle 2013; Bennacer, 2019) has shown that CALL can help learners develop their intercultural communicative competence.

* 1. **The Sociolinguistic Theory**

Lave and Wenger (1992) proposed the concept of ‘the community of practice’ which is defined as a ‘social construct’ where “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour […] practices emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour” (Eckhert and Mc Connell-Ginet, 1992 cited in Mitchell and Myles, 2004 p. 241). A community of practice has three main features: 1) mutual engagement of members 2) members’ jointly negotiated enterprise, and 3) members’ shared repertoire. However, different members, be they core or peripheral members, have different access to the repertoire as they engage in the joint enterprise in different degrees (Mitchell and Myles, 2004; Corder and Meyerhoff, 2007).

The concept of communities of practice focuses on the mutual engagement and constructive nature of individuals and groups. Communities of practice can be built and take place online or through text messaging (Corder and Meyerhoff, 2007). Individuals can actively create and share knowledge; knowledge is not always pre-existing, but constructed from the practices of the group, and knowledge is always ‘situated’, not necessarily within a specific location, but always within a culture and a background (Jordan et.al, 2008). Hence learning is socially situated and is affected by participation in communities of practice i.e. learning possibilities would increase if members tend to establish more relations and participate more within the community of practice (Mitchell and Myles, 2004). Within this view, Byram (1997) explained that learners’ view of themselves as social actors, not imitators of native speakers, and interlocutors with different roles but with equal power and significance, are the advantages of an educational approach that focuses on social interaction.

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