

LEARNING THEORIES AND THE TEACHING PROCESS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: FINDINGS FROM A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The teaching and learning processes of English as a foreign language have been studied mainly based on the assumptions that the foreign language context resembles a second language one. Nevertheless, differences have been found in relation to the context and the people who apply the teaching and those who study the language. This study focuses on a historical analysis of the application of learning theories that formed the basis for the development of English teaching methods. Some interviews were carried out with professors and alumni from the Modern Language Department at the University of Nariño to examine whether professors knew about the psychological theories underlying the teaching methods of languages. The period of study was comprised between 1966, the year of the foundation of the Department, and 1998, the year in which the accreditation processes started at the Department.

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KEY TERMS: Behaviorism, cognitivism, humanism, foreign language, second language, learning theories.

RESUMEN

Los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera han sido estudiados principalmente basándose en la creencia de que el contexto de lengua extranjera es el mismo que aquel de segunda lengua. Sin embargo, se han encontrado diferencias en relación con el contexto y las personas que aplican la enseñanza y aquellos que la reciben. Este estudio hace énfasis en un análisis histórico de la aplicación de las teorías de aprendizaje que han servido de base para el desarrollo de los métodos para la enseñanza de inglés. Algunas entrevistas se desarrollaron con profesores jubilados y ex alumnos del Departamento de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad de Nariño con el fin de averiguar si los profesores conocían las teorías psicológicas que subyacen en los métodos de enseñanza de los idiomas. El periodo de estudio tuvo lugar entre 1966, año de creación del Departamento y 1998, año en que los procesos de acreditación empezaron en el Departamento.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Conductismo, cognitivismo, humanismo, lengua extranjera, segunda lengua, teorías del aprendizaje.

The teaching and learning processes of foreign languages have been traditionally developed based on the different methods designed in countries where English is taught as a Second Language as opposed to those where English is taught as a Foreign Language. Although those methods have different linguistic, psychological and pedagogical theories on which authors based their design, teachers of English have devoted their practices to applying the activities and techniques these methods depict. These practices have caused them to forget about all the theories implied in those methodologies and apply the same traditional psychological theories proposed in traditional methodologies such as the Audiolingual method forgetting that new methods are based on new underlying theories. This paper presents

some conclusions based on historical research of the use of learning theories in the teaching and learning processes of English as a foreign language in higher education. In the first section of the paper, a summary about the incidence of learning theories in education is presented and the implications of learning theories on language teaching methods are addressed. In the second section, the findings related to the application of learning theories in the teaching of English as a second language during the period 1965 to 1998 will be presented.

Knowledge and its relation to learning can be focused on knowledge that is highly specialized or on knowledge that is more general and that makes reference to competencies such as “analysis, synthesis, argumentation, conceptualization, abstraction, planning, prevision, investigations and relating complex problems, decision making, communicative and interactive capacities, among others (Reich, 1993, p.171). It is in this kind of knowledge that teaching intervenes. From this teaching, a learning process is obtained. This learning process can be of different kinds. It is this learning process that is taken care of by the different learning theories developed through the years by psychologists.

What happens in real life when an organism learns is not easy to explain, that is the reason why many different studies have been developed to come up with theories that try to explain human learning processes. One of them is based on behavior (Skinner, 1975). This theory establishes that learning means adapting or adjusting to a situation. Another theory places emphasis on the knowledge acquired by means of the learning process that has its origins in the mind of the person. This theory is referred to as cognitivism (Ausubel, 1986). Another theory gives importance to the learning process that takes place thanks to the interaction of the consideration of the human being as a whole. This theory is known as humanism (Rogers, 1969). These theories related to the acquisition of knowledge through learning processes are the ones that relate to teaching processes.

BEHAVIORIM IN EDUCATION

Behaviorism has had a great influence in the educational processes through the different epoques since the date it originated. It is possible to cite as an example of the application of behaviorism in education the use of reinforcement programs that have it made it possible to perfect the behavior of students (Bruner, 1966). This aspect has facilitated the traditional task of the teacher who was always expected to produce changes and orient the student in a determined way. Memorization use in teaching is another aspect that was taken from this psychological theory. The applications of this theory in education have been observed through the time and are still observed today. Some computer programs present learning situations in which students look for an answer that is chosen from a list of different stimuli that is shown on the monitor screen. Once students select the item an association sound, text or signal feedback is presented which shows the students if they have answered correctly or if, on the contrary, they have committed an error. Here, it is possible to observe the influence of behaviorism in education in its totality. It is also necessary to take into account other examples that have been present in education although they have been widely questioned. One of these is the use of prizes and negative feedback in situations in which the student behaves in such a way that he/she competes for prices and avoids getting chastised. All of the memorization forms of contents that are still used nowadays such as, reciting sequences of nouns, the multiplication tables, the chemical elements, adverb lists, etc, are used to learn, and are an integral part of behaviorist learning.

A very interesting argument is presented by Hernandez Rojas (1998) who highlights the empiricist heredity of behaviorism by basing the theory in environmentalism, associationism and anticonstructivism. Hernandez Rojas says that behaviorism is environmentalist due to the big reference it makes to the social and physical environment that determines learning. Associationism is observed in the relationship established between the mental phenomena and the idea association laws. Anticonstructivism is

observed in the argumentation against the developmental processes that are a part of the internal structures of the being or are due to mental or organizational processes (Campbell and Bickhard, 1987). For behaviorists, knowledge happens as a set of relations or associations between stimulus and response without assigning validity to the existence of a structured organization within it.

In this case, learning happens due to imitation and in the case of language learning situations, knowledge occurs thanks to imitative processes to which students listen. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that everything we say has already been heard. This is the process which children follow when learning their first language. They copy and reproduce everything they listen to. But what if something new is produced? Behaviorists explain this phenomenon through analogy. People generalize what they have learned previously.

Behaviorists, in the field of learning, consider that the majority of human behavior are learned and this happens due to environmental influence. Therefore, learning is a change of behavior. For this change in behavior to take place it is necessary to apply some processes such as a stimulus presentation, a produced response for the final application of a feedback process. This last step is considered as the most important part in behaviorist learning (Ramaprasad, 1983).

It is worth noting that behaviorism, as it is established by Maqueo (2004) is the learning theory that has been in the education field for the longest amount of time as a didactic model. In Language teaching, it is possible to say that behaviorism is being used in its components of repetition and memorization which have proven to be useful in the treatment of some language topics.

The great value assigned to repetition, memorization and comprehension processes make behaviorism a theory which focuses on reception of

information processes as a final product of knowledge and therefore, of learning without any consideration of the cognitive part every human being assigns to learning processes. The student is the tabula rasa that should be filled with knowledge. The students just receives but never collaborates in elaborating knowledge.

From these points of view about learning stated above, it is possible to infer a kind of totally programmed teaching. This teaching corresponds to those laboratory experiments on animal behavior developed by classical behaviorists. This programmed teaching has as its main characteristics the definition of clear and precise objectives. Here, the presentation of gradual information is considered (Conti, 1994). This presentation should deliver knowledge from the easy aspects to the most difficult ones with students' participation and reinforcement or feedback respectively. This process is not only objective but observable. It is also convenient for evaluation processes that have the same objectivity of those processes described above. In this way, the evaluation process is reliable since it is directly related to measurable reliable objectives. It is maybe due to this reason that this theory was widely accepted by teachers and educative authorities. It is an easy way to exert control on every aspect of the teaching and learning processes. Moreover, cognitive aspects of the student need not be included, just the productions based on a memoristic learning.

In relation to the student and his role in the educative process it is necessary to mention that he/she becomes a passive being that works as a specific habit, behavior, and content receptor. His/her behavior in the classroom should correspond to what is demanded by the teacher who always asked his/her students to behave properly and be quiet during the lesson. The best student is the one that remains silent, the one that respects the teacher above all, the one that is manageable, in other words, the one that follows the instructions of the teacher and accomplishes the tasks the teachers assigns since the tasks represent the mechanization of the knowledge imparted in class time.

The teacher develops a role as a director of teaching. He is the one that has the right answers and the knowledge. He/she is the only one who knows what the students need to know. The rigidity of the teacher is a reflection of the methodological work in the teaching process that is mainly based on repetition and memorization.

Behaviorism was the basis on which teaching methods based on the pure learning theory of behaviorism were developed. Therefore, methods that presented the sequence: Stimulus-response were emphasized. In language teaching, the methods developed on this basis were those that focused mainly on repetition exercises, translation and memorization of language structure and rules. Some samples of these methods are the Army Specialized Training Program, the Audiovisual method, and the Audiolingual method.

While behaviorism was used in psychology and education and new studies on human behavior were developed, a new theory emerged. For this new theory the center of human knowledge and learning is placed in the mind of every human being as well as in the information processing stage: Cognitivism.

COGNITIVISM IN EDUCATION

In Education, cognitivism presents as its main characteristics those established by Ausubel (1987), Bruner (1966), Piaget (1998) and Vigotsky (1988). According to Ausubel, learning should be meaningful for the student. This aspect means that everything that is presented to the student should have a meaning in the environment in which the student lives. An essential characteristic for learning to take place is that it should go from the general to the specific. The teacher should present first the rule and later the examples that apply to the rule. It is necessary to take into account that for learning to take place the student relies on some cognitive structures that are organized hierarchically. These structures determine the cognitive process of the student.

Cognitivism contributed to the study of memory and its role in the learning process. It provided great contributions to the different areas of knowledge. One of them corresponds to languages. Starting with cognitivism, which originated around the 30's and developed during the 50's, language teaching developed notoriously. From this point on, many different methods originated based on reasoning principles and the use of the sensorial memory, which is divided into the short term memory and the long term memory (Yates, 1966). It is possible to locate here the naturalistic approach from which many other methods such as the communicative approach develop.

This theory, according to the psychologists, is the one that has influenced at the deepest level the educational field and it also has projected in time. This assertion is understandable if we consider that cognitivism has been in charge of the analysis of mental representations (attention span, remembrance, memory, perception, intelligence, thinking, ideas, concepts, plans and language) among other factors such as the study of human actions and behavior which also comprise learning (Anderson, 1983). The cognitive aspect of the human being is related to social and cultural aspects better than to biological ones.

In education, this model had a great influence since for cognitivism the center of the process of education is the person since he/she elaborates the internal representations and entities (ideas, concepts, plans, etc) in such an individual way. Such mental representations are developed by the human being (Piatelli-Palmarini, 1983). As opposed to behaviorism, in cognitivism the actions and mental representations are the factors which determine behavior. It is not the environment the one that regulates them. Although cognitivism does not deny the influence of the environment on behavior, it does not acknowledge a determinant role of it in the behavior of people as behaviorism does.

In education, the student is considered as the cognoscent agent that when in any activity can elaborate internal processes that are developed thanks

to the contact and relation of the student with his/her social and physical environment. It was in the 1980's that Ausubel and Cogné studied the learning process in depth. For Ausubel (1986) different kinds of learning exist of these types of learning. He locates those that are developed in the classroom setting. Here, he distinguishes two dimensions. In the first dimension he locates new information that the student incorporates in his/her cognitive schemas or structures. In the second dimension, he locates the kind of teaching methodology that the student is faced with.

In the first dimension it is possible to locate two kinds of learning. One kind corresponds to the learning that is achieved through repetition and that is memoristic. The second kind of learning deals with the learning that is meaningful. In the second dimension which deals with the methodology, the learning process that happens through perception and discovery is located. In the receptive learning the student internalizes the information the teacher provides. This kind of learning can be memoristic or meaningful. Another kind of learning which relates to methodology corresponds to the type which is developed through discovery. In this kind of learning, the student receives some clues so that on his/her own he/she discovers or finds the content to be learned.

In education, cognitivism is directed towards the development of meaningful learning and the development of general and specific strategic skills. This theory also takes into consideration that education is a process in which cultural knowledge and contents are conveyed. This kind of learning is also meaningful; therefore, the student should interpret his/her sociocultural environment and assign the corresponding meaning and value to it.

It is worth noting that this sociocultural aspect depicted in the cognitive theory is a very important aspect in any teaching context of languages. It acquires greater importance if the field of teaching is related to foreign languages. Cultural learning should be developed when learning a

foreign language. Culture clarifies the use of language aspects in social interaction. For communication to take place sociocultural aspects should be incorporated and therefore practiced in classroom contexts.

In cognitivism, the student becomes an active being during the learning process since the main purpose is for him/her to develop his/her cognitive potential. Therefore, it is very important for the student to count on his/her background knowledge. In this way the previous knowledge is a constituent part of the new knowledge. It is in this form that the student finds meaning in the new contents of class. The experience, age, interests of students play an important role for this meaningful learning to take place. The cognitive capacity of the student should be developed to a maximum degree. This capacity is developed when the student develops basic learning processes such as retention, synthesis and memory, among others. It is also developed when the student is able to apply facts, concepts, and skills to his/her daily activities.

In summary, Ausubel's argument in relation to learning is that it happens through different discovery processes. Bruner (1972) agrees with Ausubel in this respect, and although for Bruner it is the ideal learning process, he points that it is not always possible. Therefore, it is necessary to recur to the professor and his/her work as it is stated in classical pedagogy. Ausubel identifies various kinds of learning:

1. Representational knowledge: This kind of learning is related to concrete information such as names and the meaning of words. This kind of learning is the one that Ausubel recognizes as the one people use when studying languages.
2. Conceptual knowledge: In this category, the learning process of values, needs and concepts from different areas are located. This level of learning is deeper.

3. Propositional Knowledge: This category refers to the learning process of the capacity to relate concepts to hierarchies. In this kind of knowledge a formal way of thinking is necessary and learning is located at a superior level.
4. Knowledge through discovery and problem solving: This is the highest level of learning, therefore, the lengthiest to achieve. It deals with the social environment and it is also applied in this environment. The level of learning is superior to all of the above.

In cognitivism, the learning process that takes place in the classroom is meaningful. The teacher should facilitate it by means of the relation the student should establish between his/her background knowledge and the new knowledge. For discovery learning to be meaningful it is also necessary for the student to establish the relation to different solutions assigned to different problems (Hume, 1995). Memoristic learning is passive and receptive as a norm, but it can be accommodated to become a significant one by means of the relation established among other kinds of learning, therefore, this kind of learning cannot surpass the level of the student and it should always appear in a specific context (Varela, 2003).

Ausubel (1986) proposes some fundamental principles a teacher should consider in the teaching processes. It is important to start teaching with easy knowledge to go on to more specific and complex knowledge. The information presented to the students should be logical and organized, never isolated. It is necessary to synthesize, classify and clarify the contents to be taught to students. He proposes as a class process first to talk about the topic for class, enunciate it, then develop it and finally present a synthesis of it. For Ausubel, the teacher is the fundamental figure of the learning process since he/she is a mediator. He identifies some personal aspects that influence the learning process such as motivation, intelligence and personality.

The teaching of foreign languages was also influenced by this theory, therefore, cognitivism appeared as an underlying theory for the methods used in the teaching of foreign languages that appeared during the 60's such as the Cognitive Code, Silent Way, Community Language Learning. These methods show the use of cognitive psychology theories in the learning process of languages. The techniques used in these methods focus on meaningful learning and also in the contextualization of the foreign language aspects.

Nevertheless, teachers and psychologists thought cognitivism was not a complete theory since it did not take into consideration the human being as a whole. The theories developed until the 60's focused on the behavior of a person or on the cognitive aspect but in an isolated way. Psychologists and educators needed a theory that integrated the learning process with the human being as a whole. Therefore, a new theory emerged: Humanism.

HUMANISM IN EDUCATION

The humanistic theory can be applied in education, not only to the contents of classes but also to the abilities and capacities to be developed in class. It can also be applied to the general structure of the school or university where the educational process takes place.

In relation to the contents, with the humanistic approach it is important that the students identify themselves with the topics they will study. The topics should be directly related to what they experience in life. Then, topics that relate to sexuality, drug abuse, aggression, tolerance and violence can be included as topics for class to be developed with a group of adolescent students.

Referring to the skills to be developed in the classes with a humanistic approach, it is possible to find the development of self identity, power, and communication. All of these aspects are worked on in conjunction with the development of practical experiences in the work with the body and the feelings of the students. Acting skills are very important here. It

is from these skills that Role Play appears as a technique for the teaching and learning process of languages. Group work is also important to put an end to shyness of students and rush them to integrate and communicate in the language classroom.

Concerning the structure of the location, humanism works based on what the student chooses for him/herself. If the students are allowed to choose, they will feel fine in the environment they have chosen. Another important point in relation to the environment for classes is that humanism rejects any kind of grading. The teacher is a facilitator and not an authoritative or provider figure (Andrade, 2001).

A better way of cataloging education under the point of view of humanism is considering the aspects that should be taken into account for achieving a humanistic development during class time. Rogers (1980) presents the following aspects:

- Control and selection: It is suggested to students that they should take more control and selection on the path their education should follow as time passes. These control and selection processes should be focused on the objectives and daily activities of students.
- Feelings of preoccupation: As long as education becomes more humanistic, the curriculum tends to focus on the needs and interests that the student feels.
- The person as total being: It is necessary to pay close attention to feelings, selection, communication, and acting. Students should be asked about their dreams, thoughts and actions. Guided fantasy can be used to illuminate physical activity or drama to illustrate history or geography.
- Self-evaluation: Students are encouraged to figure out the progress they make in the learning process. They, occasionally, can choose taking exams or asking for feedback from others or collecting data about themselves.

- Teacher as facilitator: The teacher or advisor tends to be more a guide than a reviewer. He/she should be more understanding than judging, more genuine than an actor.

The teaching of languages was also influenced by the humanistic theory of psychology. In the teaching and learning processes, this theory is known as the “centered person approach”, in other words, an approach that has the person as the center. The main author here is Carl Rogers. This approach expresses that the way in which one addresses people is the determinant factor in their growth and development. The person that treats others in the proper way makes them able to solve their problems by themselves.

For this approach to be developed, it is necessary to take into account 3 qualities:

1. Empathy: This quality refers to the capacity to enter the world of the person who is called the client so that this person identifies with the other and feels accepted and understood.
2. Genuineness: The person should be genuine. The person should express what he/she is and not something else. A person that has developed completely can be genuine.
3. Warmth: The person should feel that he/she is accepted in a very human way, so the person does not have any thing to fear. That person should feel free to act and express in that specific atmosphere (Rogers, C. 1969).

Apart from the three qualities expressed above, Rogers worked with the “Encounter” group. In this group, people sit in a circle and interact orally. In this group there is a leader that is the person who facilitates the activities to be developed during the session and encourages the participants to act with him/her. Rogers used this approach as a base to develop work with groups of students and also groups that are related

cross-culturally to increase international relations. These are the aspects in which a methodology for teaching English as a second language is based: Community language learning.

THE STUDY

This study was developed with 15 retired professors from the Linguistics and Languages Department at the University of Nariño who worked in the Department from 1996 to 1998. 150 alumni from the same Department also participated in this study. The aim of the study was to identify to what extent professors were conscious of the methods being applied at the time in the teaching and learning processes of English as a Foreign Language. In the same way, the study aimed at discovering if these professors were able to identify the underlying learning theories on which language teaching methods were based.

Taking into account the importance of the application of methods in the teaching of English and the underlying theories, a survey was applied to a group of twenty professors from the University of Nariño who worked in the Linguistics and Languages Department to know to what extent they were conscious of the method they were applying during the 1966's up to the 1998's. The results obtained from the study are as follows.

A lack of knowledge of the theoretical basis for the methodological application for the teaching of English in the Department of Linguistics and Languages at the University of Nariño was observed during the interviews. There was a group of professors that identified the methods used for the teaching of English in the sense of naming them, nevertheless, when they were asked to describe the methods it was possible to observe that there was confusion; first of all in the identification of the underlying theories and secondly the identification of the techniques that can be identified as components of the method. The professors managed to name a limited number of techniques and postulates of the teaching methods that

have been applied in the Linguistics and Languages Department. When this phenomenon was identified from the interviews, it was possible to identify not only the confusion some teachers from the époque comprised from 1966 to 1998 had in the application of the methods but also the identification of an intuitive method to obtain optimal learning results. It was interesting noting that some teachers did not even know the method nor the underlying learning theories. They said they used their own way of teaching for students to learn English.

Apart from this small group of teachers who claimed not to know about methods or theories, there was a big group of teachers who clearly identified behaviorism as a learning theory that influenced some of the learning methods that were applied during the time of the study (1966-1998). There were three more teachers who identified cognitivism as a fundamental part in the teaching and learning process of English as a foreign language. Some other teachers also identified humanism as an underlying learning theory from psychology that had an influence in the teaching of English in the Linguistics and Languages Department at the University of Nariño.

The professors that identified behaviorism as a learning theory also validated it because they experienced learning through this theory when they were students. They also argued in favor of it since they had applied the theory and it gave them good results when they taught students by means of memorization and repetition. As it was stated above, behaviorism proposes a separation between the study of conscience and the mental processes since they are not observable. Behaviorism prefers a focus of attention that can be observed in students such as behavior. It is totally observable; therefore, it becomes the object for study in the psychology of learning. Maybe, it is due to the fact that behaviorism emphasizes the study of learning processes that it became a very important theory for language learning and therefore, it was also the cause for the application of this theory in the Modern Language Department at the University of Nariño during the 1960's and extended to the 90's. It is also important to

mention that the traditional methodologies in the teaching of English are based on this theory and the teaching techniques direct the attention of the teacher to the development of language behavior that are very observable such as repetition for the evaluation of language learning.

This application of behaviorism to the language teaching and learning processes was at the time it appeared a very plausible alternative for teaching but later it was reviewed due to the consequences it brought for the teachers and students. For behaviorists, language is a set of habits, in the same way and taking into account psychology theories, linguists should explain it in a mechanical way; as a behavior manifestation or habit formation in human beings. For linguists from the years 1930 to 1950, the objective of Linguistics consisted of the classification of the language components in the same way as a scientist could do when developing taxonomic classification of plants. Linguists aimed at achieving the exactness of natural sciences when classification processes were thought of. Hocket (1942) explained this precision when he referred to linguistics as a classificatory science. The behaviorist linguists became a part of the group of the people who were interested in measuring and quantifying language production. These linguists started the descriptive tradition in the study of languages and all of the aspects that determined languages. Experimentation is adapted as a method that allows us to observe that the environment is the factor that controls the behavior of human beings.

Memoristic learning permits the student to work and keep in memory any datum that internalizes by heart. One example of this kind of learning is represented by the retention of phone numbers, addresses and names, among others. This is the learning process that is widely applied in English as a foreign language, at least, in the early levels of instruction. It is at this level that teachers observe the need for students to memorize vocabulary, expressions and formulaic speech or fixed communication patterns for specific communicative situations. Through the 70's and 80's the Modern Language Department should have already been applying cognitivism in

language teaching, nevertheless, professors argued they were still using memoristic leaning techniques not as a reaction against cognitivism but just as an intuitive process or because of some influence from the previous approach which was behaviorism.

From the professors who undertook the interview, just two of them talked about cognitivism as a language learning theory. These professors were able to locate the different methods that are based on the cognitivist theory of learning such as the Communicative Approach and the Natural Approach. These professors argued about the importance of the memorization process in the sense in which cognitivism presents it since cognitivism does not simply consider memorization as a mere repetitive stage but is complemented with a second stage in the learning process that is when memorization becomes meaningful. According to Ausubel, this stage takes place when the new knowledge is intentionally associated with the concepts and propositions in the cognitive structure of the person. For learning to take place, it is necessary to establish the relation between the new and the old knowledge, otherwise, learning would not take place. The group of professors who were interviewed and who identified cognitivism in language teaching also identified this characteristic of cognitivism. They considered the relation cognitivism established between old and new knowledge was what facilitated language learning. The association and relation of knowledge make it possible to obtain new knowledge. In languages, this relation is known as background knowledge and has mainly been applied in the reading comprehension process. It was in reading comprehension techniques that professors identified cognitivism as a very important theory in language learning.

According to the interviews developed, at the Modern Language Department, the Communicative Approach started being used at the end of the 80's and during the 90's. It was with the application of this method that cognitivism started being applied in the Languages Department. In this learning approach, it is the student who uses meaningful language in real communicative

situations. From the alumni who participated in the study, there was one who argued that the learning process of English was meaningful and communicative in the foreign language once the Department had some professors who traveled to complete graduate studies in the United States and came back to the Department for teaching. These professors not only had fluency in their use of English but also knew about the culture of the foreign language and the methods of English teaching. These professors applied the methods with the characteristics described in methodology books and when needed they adapted them to the needs of the students in the context of the Modern Language Department at the University of Nariño. This adaptation process provided students with materials that made a meaningful learning of the foreign language possible.

Although the information from students tends more to deny the application of the communicative approach in the 70's and 80's, there are some students who confirm the use of this method at that time. When talking to the professors, some of them admitted not applying the cognitive theory of learning since it was unknown to them but it is possible to argue that if they applied the communicative method, they should have been applying the cognitive theory behind the method. It is also worth noting that the cultural aspects of the language have been worked on with a great emphasis starting on the 80's as part of the English class and also in a specific subject matter that deals with the teaching of cultural aspects from life in the United States and life in England. This cultural teaching did not change the view of English teaching nor the objectives of that teaching. The emphasis in English classes was mainly on the structure of the language and the expansion of lexical items in English.

In relation to humanism, professors and students denied the use of this theory of learning in English classes as such. Since during the period of the study (1966-1998) methods that had a humanistic basis were not used, professors and students consider humanism was not taken into consideration in English classes. Two of the professors who participated in the interviews

claimed to know humanism and described it perfectly well. They considered that methods such as *suggestopedia* were planned for use in second language contexts; nevertheless, it does not mean they did not use humanism in their classes. They said they used humanism since in their teaching situations they considered the affective aspect of the students in all of their classes and in all of the epochs in which they worked as English teachers.

From the study developed, it is possible to say that although teachers applied some methods for teaching English, they were not aware of the psychological theories underlying those methods. In fact, teachers applied traditional methods which were based on the teaching of the structure of the language and made students memorize language creating habits of language as it was established in behaviorism. Later on, they applied more modern methods that implied the teaching of the foreign language in more meaningful ways. Some teachers kept the all traditions and applied techniques from behaviorism to more modern methods that demanded the use of cognitive activities. Some other teachers, in fact, applied cognitivism as they were prone to providing students with meaningful ways of acquiring the foreign language in a foreign context of language learning.

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