

The Theoretician and the Practitioner Represent a Language Community or its Knowledge of the Language

Ahmed Ali Abdel Sater

At the New Valley Faculty Of Education,
Assiut University, Egypt

[Tel:0020882354089](tel:0020882354089) E-mail: abuwagdy_2005@yahoo.com

Safe El-Nasr Saleh Zanquor

At the New Valley Faculty Of Education,
Assiut University, Egypt

Tel:00201220598376 E-mail: dr_safe42@yahoo.com

Abstract

There is no doubt that practice has determined theory, but theory has typically taken over the leading role and at times has been disconnected from practice. In this respect education and linguistics reflect the priorities of society.

The results of this paper's data show a strongly prevailing difference in the responses of our informants towards the eight items of the suggested questionnaire. Hence, this difference supports the fact that the theoretician and the practitioner can claim to represent a language community or its knowledge of the language.

Keywords: The theoretician , the practitioner, integrated teamwork.

Objective of this Paper:

The objective of this paper is to clarify that there is a close relationship between theory and practice in the Language Community or its Knowledge of the Language.

1. Introduction

At the beginning, the researcher will clarify the meaning of theory and practice, "A theory is an idea and hypothesis which explains some things. Practice is an exercise and application of any task or theory or in other words translation of an idea into action, On the lighter side: Theory is where you know everything but nothing works. Practice is where everything works but nobody knows why" .(Maiwandwall, 2011).

The serious problems of connecting theory with practice in applied linguistics and language teaching are surveyed in view of the symptomatic disconnections of theory from practice in theoretical linguistics. The relationship between theory and practice can form a difficult problem in almost all fields of human activity. In most fields, human practices were well constructed long before theories started to be produced and have also played an important role in the history of communities.

"Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Writing is designed to foster reflection on how theory impacts practice, enabling prospective teachers to develop their own comprehensive and coherent conception of what writing is or should be and to consider how people learn to write" (Clark 2002) .

2.The Relationship Between Theory and Practice

The researcher expects that practice would play an effective role also in determining what kinds of theories should be produced. In fact, theory has typically overcome the basic role and at times has been isolated from practice altogether. This strategy allows a community or its institutions, especially education, to maintain an official theory of humanity, equality, and efficiency.

"We examine three related ways in which the gap between theory and practice has been framed. One approach views it as a knowledge transfer problem, a second argues that theory and practice represent distinct kinds of knowledge, and a third incorporates a strategy of arbitrage leading to the view that the gap is a knowledge production problem". (Andrew H Van De Ven, Paul E Johnson 2006).

It is evident that "the relationship between theory and practice also seems difficult within linguistics, a branch of humanities science. In real life, we see a rich mosaic of practices relating to language, ranging from the general operations of language learning and ordinary conversation over to highly specialized strategies of communication such as translating poetry" (Beaugrande, R. de. 1997).

This similarity suggests a principle which, according to Widdowson H.G. has hardly been raised in the central work on applied linguistics: how far a theory is applicable to practice is a good measure of how far the theory is valid as a theory (Widdowson H.G. 1990).

In this connection, we can start by differentiating between the two main ways of going about constructing theories of language.

"Fieldwork linguist is the backbone of an empirically-based science of linguistics. Firsthand information on barely known minority languages is essential for our understanding of human languages, their structural properties and their genetic relationships. 'Immersion' fieldwork as major 'must' is contrasted to 'interview' fieldwork as a less desirable option. We aim at an open-ended documentation of each language, intended for various audiences, being both accessible and user-friendly. This introductory essay introduces a number of issues concerning linguistic fieldwork, discussed in some detail by the contributors to this issue, each a highly experienced fieldworker and a recognized authority in their fields. This is what makes the issue special" (Alexandra, 2007).

On the contrary, homework linguists 'work' at 'home' or in the office with data that may have come from different sources, such as samples from language textbooks, and finally to data invented by the linguist during the homework process itself. (Beaugrande, R. de. 1997).

3. Review of Related Literature

3.1 Harste, J.C., Leland, C., Schmidt, K., Vasquez, V., & Ociepka (2004):

This article describes a study that examined the role that theory and practice play in the preparation of new teachers. It presents multilayered observational, anecdotal, and performance data relating to a group of undergraduate "interns" in an elementary teacher education program in an urban location in the United States. These data lend support to the hypothesis that a new teacher's understanding of the relationship between theory and practice influences the way she positions herself as a professional, the stance she takes in developing curriculum, and whether she comes to see herself as a change agent who can make a difference in the lives of children. Observational data obtained for four interns during their student teaching experience and two years later when they were teaching on their own are

presented. The authors conclude that education is theory all the way down, and that teacher educators have a particular obligation to address theoretical issues in their work with future teachers.

3.2 Bongarets

This paper reports on two studies that addressed the issue of ultimate attainment by late second language learners. The aim of the studies, which included a carefully screened group of highly successful Dutch learners of English in their designs, was to determine whether or not late second language learners who had achieved a native like performance in the pronunciation of a second language could be identified. Speech samples provided by two groups of learners, one of which consisted of highly successful learners only, and a native speaker control group were rated for accent by native speakers of English. The ratings obtained by some learners were within the range of the ratings assigned to the native speaker controls. Such results suggest that it is not impossible to achieve an authentic, native like pronunciation of a second language after a specified biological period of time. Examination of the learning histories of the highly successful learners lead the authors to argue that certain learner characteristics and learning contexts may work together to override the disadvantages of a late start.

3.3 Ioup

This study concerns the ability of adults to achieve native like competence in second language when the acquisition context lacks formal instruction and, therefore, more closely resembles the environment for first language acquisition. The study presents the results of extensive testing of an adult who has apparently acquired native proficiency in Egyptian Arabic (EA) in an untutored setting. The goal is to determine to what extent her linguistic competence matches that of native speakers. Measures employed to assess her level of achievement are a speech production task, a grammatically judgment task, a translation task, an anaphoric interpretation task, and an accent recognition task. Results are compared to those of native speakers as well as to those of a proficient learner of EA with extensive formal instruction. The results lead the authors to reexamine the critical period hypothesis while addressing the role of talent in adult language learning. The study concludes with an evaluation of our subject's language learning history to discover what factors differentiate her from less successful naturalistic adult acquirers.

3.4 Munro

Untrained native English listeners assigned foreign accent scores to sentence and narrative utterances that had been rendered unintelligible through low-pass filtering. Utterances produced by native English talkers were assigned consistently higher ratings than those produced by Mandarin-speaking learners of English, even when the listeners were unfamiliar with the content. Because these filtered speech stimuli contained very little of what could be considered segmental information, the results suggest that untrained listeners can identify foreign-accented speech on the basis of no segmental information alone, whether they are presented with material of known or of unknown content. Acoustical analyses of the stimuli suggested that differences in speaking rates, intonation patterns, and timing may have played a role in the listeners' assessments, although the cues to foreign-accentedness may have varied from talker to talker and from utterance from utterance. Surprisingly, no relationship was observed between the ratings of the filtered and unfiltered versions of the nonnative stimuli.

3.5 Slavoff

The present study evaluates the role of age on the rate of acquiring English as a second language in an immersion setting. Subjects were children with native languages typologically very different from English. The children arrived in the US between the ages of 7 and 12 years and were tested on their knowledge of English grammatical morphology and syntax at different lengths of stay in the US, ranging from 6 months to 3 years. Subjects' performance was predicted by the length of their stay in the US and by gender, with females outperforming males. Age of arrival played no role in predicting subjects' rate of acquisition. Performance was very similar between two age groups examined (7-9- and 10-12-year-old arrivals) throughout the 3 years measured. The present results suggest that, on certain aspects of grammar, different-aged children acquire a second language during the first 3 years of acquisition at similar rates when their native language is very different in typology from the target language.

3.6 Discussion

From the previous studies, it is evident that there is a close relationship between theory and practice in the Language Community or its Knowledge of the Language. By reviewing the above studies, the researcher can deduce the following:

- Both of theory and practice play an integrated role in the central work on applied linguistics.
- The role of the theoretician and the practitioner would be explicitly accounted for within the theories, stipulating under what conditions a theory or practice is related to a given language or to language as general conception, and how the theoretician and the practitioner can claim to represent a language community or its knowledge of the language. (Beaugrande, R. de. 1997).

4. Fieldwork Linguistics and Language Learning

Anyone who studies this research, it comes to his mind an important question, it is : what is the difference between fieldwork linguistics and language learning?

The case of the fieldworker linguist differs from that of the language learner in the following points:

- (1) The fieldworker tries to learn from the society's language from multiple viewpoints. On the contrary, many of the language learners have one source, i.e. their tutors..
- (2) "Fieldworkers are asked to gather their own systematic data corpus, but language learners are given textbooks compiled by other people may be in some ways non-specialist persons" (Beaugrande, R. de. 1997).
- (3) The fieldworker is a well educated scholar who has the ability to commit to the task as compared to those language learners who are children and teenagers.

These three points assure the success of the fieldworker as an ideal language learner, but the expectation of failure causes apprehensions and painful worry for ordinary classroom learners.

Consequently, there is no doubt that a practice-driven theory needs to explain how cultural communications happen and how they might be guided to meet the specific needs of second language learning.

In this sphere, we can deduce that a practice-driven theory also needs to explain how both the training of teachers and the role of learners in conventional classrooms might effectively compensate the lack of opportunity for cultural immersion.

5. To What Extent can the Application of Homework Linguistics be expected?

Chomsky's followers believe to have achieved this high-minded goal. Newmeyer's (1980: 249) *Linguistic Theory in America* presented Chomsky's as 'the world's principal linguistic theory', for which 'no viable alternative exists'; 'the vast majority' of 'linguists' 'who take theory seriously acknowledge their adoption of Chomsky's view of language'.

A leading argument in Chomsky's campaign was that fieldwork would never attain 'the deeper and more important notions of linguistic theory', due to its 'limitation-in-principle to classification and organization of data' (Chomsky 1965: 18).

Frankly and without exaggeration, we should not expect that reliable operational criteria for the deeper and more important ideas of linguistic theory will ever be forthcoming because knowledge of the language, like most facts of interest and importance, is neither presented for direct observation nor extractable from data by inductive procedures of any known sort.

The gap between what real native speakers say or what real children learning the language do versus what the theory said or implied about them was continually blurred by rhetorical double-tracking to connect each theoretical construct with a conveniently commonsense misinterpretation.

in this case 'theory of language' rather than 'theory of a particular language' — with a systematic ambiguity to refer both to the child's innate predisposition to learn a language of a certain type and to the linguist's account of this (Chomsky 1965: 25).

Of course, there is no clear notion of how a child could learn a language as a set of formal rules, witness his audaciously evasive 'instantaneous model' wherein 'successful language acquisition

(SLA)' happens in a single 'moment' (Chomsky 65: 36). Otherwise, he would have had to specify how the LAD proceeds by building up rule after rule.

6. The attitude towards the relationship between theory and practice among a group of students in Assiut university, Egypt

In addition to the differences of opinion about the relation between theory and practice, an attempt will be made in this paper to investigate the attitude of a group of undergraduate students in Assiut university, Egypt, towards this relation. A hundred informants of those students (50 males and 50 females) studying at three colleges in Assiut university were selected (colleges of medicine, engineering and education.) all of whom are native speakers of Arabic but due to their educational background all of them have learned English as a foreign language and use it as a medium of instruction in their colleges a mixed methods approach to data collection was employed using a self report questionnaire and key informants interview. the questionnaire includes eight items used earlier by Chomsky 1985 (number 1), Ferguson 1983 (number 2-3) and by Dives 2003(number 4-8). The informants were interviewed individually to answer some questions (appendix1), then were asked to fill in the eight items of the questionnaire by choosing one of the four variables (strongly agree, agree, uncertain, and disagree). (appendix 2).

7. Results and Discussion

The results of our data show a systematic difference in the responses of the one hundred subjects towards almost every item of the suggested questionnaire.

Examining table 1 closely, we see that the informants of our study have chosen the ‘‘strongly agree’’ variable with a percentage 65% in their response to item number 1, while they have chosen the same variable (i.e. strongly agree) with a percentage 60% related to item number 2; 90% related to item number 3 and they have chosen the same variable (i.e. strongly agree) with a percentage 51% related to item number 4.

Also they have chosen the variable (agree) with a percentage 90,85,80 and 70 % for items 5,6,7 and 8.

These results show a strongly prevailing difference in the responses of our informants towards the eight items of the suggested questionnaire. Hence, this difference supports the fact that the theoretician and the practitioner can claim to represent a language community or its knowledge of the language and indeed there is a close relation between theory and practice.

8. Conclusion

At last, we can say that the expectations of application were determined before the theories were constructed, accordingly, the results of this paper's data show that the role of the theoretician and the practitioner would be integrated within the theories, and how the theoretician and the practitioner can claim to represent a language community or its knowledge of the language.

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Appendix One

The Questionnaire

Table(1)

The attitude towards the relation between theory and practice among some students in Assuit university.

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
1-The relation between theory and practice in learning the English language	65%	10%	10%	15%
2-The theoretician and the practitioner represent a language community	60%	20%	10%	10%
3-The fieldwork linguist should be well-educated and well-qualified person	90%	3%	2%	5%
4-The language learners are given books compiled by other people	51%	20%	20%	9%
5-The field worker is doing under the conditions of cultural immersion	90%	2%	3%	5%
6-The learners of foreign languages may have scant contact with the culture	85%	5%	5%	5%
7-"The theory should provide a framework for a permanent interaction among the individuals concerned with teaching and learning of both native and all foreign languages"	80%	5%	5%	10%
8-"It is necessary to share all the learners as a whole in contact"	70%	15%	10%	5%

Appendix Two

The Interview Questions

What is your name?

In which university do you study?

What is your major?

Language Background

What language do you know? How well?

Have you lived abroad? If yes which country?

What is the percentage of your study material given in Arabic vs. English? (%)

How would you compare your speaking/reading/listening and writing abilities in Arabic and English?
(%)

Table (2): Summary of Results

Attitude	Standard Deviation	Mean	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Item
			Number	Number	Number	Number	
			%	%	%	%	
Strongly Agree	0,869	3,45	65	10	10	15	1
Agree	1,090	3,22	60	20	10	10	2
Uncertain	2,040	5,40	90	3	2	5	3
Strongly Agree	0,600	2,90	51	20	20	9	4
Disagree	2,040	5,40	90	2	3	5	5
Disagree	1,090	4,80	85	5	5	5	6
Disagree	1,010	4,00	80	5	5	10	7
Disagree	0,900	3,00	70	15	10	5	8