BEHAVIORISM OR MENTALISM?
THE CASE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESS
IN MODERN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

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Abstract

There are two majorities of thought in the process of language learning and acquisition. They are behaviorist and mentalist theory. The behaviorist theory is based on psychological aspects of learners in their habit formation while the mentalist's come with the new approach called Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that used in the process of learning. In Modern Islamic Boarding School the term of language environment is used as the process of foreign language learning in which students communicate one another by using the foreign languages, but they are also forced to learn their structures and systems in the classes. The researcher used ethnography and narrative study to gain the data, he observed the phenomenon directly to the one most prominent Modern Islamic Boarding School located in East Java and interviewed with the responsible teacher for language development, in conclusion, both theories are used by Modern Islamic Boarding School in the process of language learning.

Keywords: acquisition, environment, foreign languages, LAD, language learning

Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are genuine of an education system in Indonesia, the learning model in there rooted from long-standing as introduced by Hindu and then continued as an Islamic tradition. In colonial's era, pesantren only teach about Islamic thought and Arabic language as their moderator to achieve and study Quranic verses. As the global period comes, the need for knowledge to know about other languages is improved. In 1926, the new model of pesantren was established, with the additional term 'modern,' it changed the whole perspective about 'traditional model of teaching.' In his curriculum, Modern Islamic Boarding School added English, German, and Dutch language, as the most basic needs for building the next generation. (Nurdianto, 2018).

Now on, almost every Modern Islamic Boarding School have included both Arabic and English language in their curriculum, besides Indonesian and

local languages, both as the medium of instruction in teaching/learning and daily communication. The obligation to use these foreign languages is intendedto improve students' knowledge in Islamic studies, and at the same time, expand their language repertoire (Bin Tahir: 2017).

The unique old-fashioned model of language learning and teaching is interested to be discussed, both paradigm behaviorism and mentalism are applied, the behaviorist method of language acquisition is playing an important role to build students courage of speaking in target language by focusing on drilling method, while the mentalist/cognitivist method is used in the teaching of grammar. In this paper, the writer would like to share how these two methods are combined and integrated to fulfill each other weaknesses and by adding some linguist views to cultivate both ways.

Behaviorism Theory of Language Acquisition

According to VanPatten & Benatti (2015), the environment is the most crucial factor in learning, and it consists of developing responses to environmental stimuli. If these responses receive positive reinforcement, they will repeat. If the reactions receive punishment (in the case of language learning, error correction), they will abandon. According to this theory, SLA occurs similarly. To learn any second language (L2), one must imitate correct models repeatedly. Learning requires repeated engagement in the target behavior, in this case, the production of the L2. Active participation by the learner is considered a crucial element of the learning process.

The same procedure is classical and added by Feedback System using reinforcement and punishment or Operant conditioning behavior. Behaviorists contended that mental processes were not involved in this process; itwas purely a result of the association of events, a response to environmental stimuli and subsequent reinforcement or punishment. In effect, these are both responses to the answer. Support encourages the continuation of the response behavior whereas penalty discourages continuation of the reaction**.**

Based on the Pavlov's experiment with the dog, stimulus and responses(S&R) and classical conditioning created 1-2-3 condition which means (1) a repeated stimulus (2) specific response (3) a new behavior. The theories and then established that there is a significant role for frequency. Each time a response is made to the stimulus, it strengthens the association between them, repeated exposure, therefore, is an essential factor in developing new behaviors.

In the second language context, learners were to be trained to repress first language habits and acquire good second language habits. The correct response modifies learners' behavior over time. The pedagogical and practical implications of behaviorism resulted in the Audio-lingual method (ALM). The ALM was an approach to language teaching based on mechanical and pattern language practice called 'drills' (e.g., repetition and substitution/transformation drills). Second language learners had to repeat, manipulate, or transform a particular form or structure to complete the method. (VanPatten & Benati 2010).

"Learning itself is a cumulative process, the more knowledge and skillsan individual acquires, the more likely it becomes that his experiences and activities will shape his learning. An adult rarely, if ever, learns anything entirely new; however unfamiliar the task that confronts him, the information and habits that have built up in the past will be his point of departure. Thus the transfer of training from old to new situations is part and parcel of most, if not all, learning. In this sense, the study of transfer is coextensive with the investigation of learning". (Postman, 1971).

Behaviorism banished both cognition and motivation. Even though cognitive psychology has eventually come to occupy an essential place within the field of psychology, it, too, had no role for effect and motivation, at least initially. The implication is that researchers trained in the tradition of cognitive psychology would not have tended to look for a significant role for motivation in the field of SLA, learning involves the establishment of a habit utilizing which this stimulus-response sets become associated (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Based on those thoughts, we may say that behaviorist theory of language learning is focused on the drill with an army method, encouraging the learners to transform their idea into the target language, using reinforcement and punishment as the feedback systems, and banishing the cognition and motivation.

Mentalism Theory of Language Learning

In 1974 Dulay and Burt did morpheme order studies as critics and contrastive analysis to the behaviorist. They found that there are innate mechanisms that cause the learners to formulate certain types of hypotheses about the process of language acquisition. The process happens gradually in the form of rules reconstruction for speech which the learners heard and experienced (Dulay & Burt, 1974). They concluded that there is a place in our brain that centralize the mental process of language learning input.

It changed the term of nurture (how the environment affects the language) into nature (how the input of learning in human's brain took place). Mentalist(or some others called as cognitivist) believed that there is some device named Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that is placed in the human brain to process the language and is only created for human beings. The function of this LAD is to trigger the input and then transform it into cognitive activity. The learners will formally study the grammar rules; they will not be able to draw on that knowledge in spontaneous communication because it has not been acquired (Ellis, 2000; VanPatten & Williams, 2015).

In addition Krashen (1981) even explained more about the humanbrain's activity and then approached with the five theory of second language acquisition; (1) Acquisition, which is learning distinction; (2) Natural order hypothesis, which is grammar or structure; (3) Monitor hypothesis which is avoiding the generalization; (4) Input hypothesis (how the input affects the output); and (5) Affective factor hypothesis which included the motivation, attitude, and aptitude of learners in the target language.

The Foreign Language Learning in Islamic Modern Boarding School

The most usable model of language learning in Islamic Modern Boarding Schools is the direct learning strategy with the teacher-centered approach. It is even more strengthened by the "army method" learning model which emphasizes high discipline and teacher high authority as well as the stressing on the teacher instructions. This learning model follows behavioristic patterns that emphasize customization in language skills and combined with army method patterns that treat students with rewards and punishments. Even the motivating power of language learning process is available at the boarding house, and then the environment of using target language is created to supportthe students in learning both languages, Arabic and English (Risdianto, 2016).

Since the effective way to learn others languages is by practicing it in continue, to acquire the target language, the students have to apply the target words in their daily communication, and it has to be used in a correct way (Damanhuri, Mujahidin, Hafidhuddin, 2013). The language environment creation will motivate the students to improve and develop their capability in the target language. (Fatah, 2011).

There are several programs to support and facilitate the students in developing and improving the target language intensively such as language wall magazine, language bulletin, Arabic or English newspapers, books, courses, and language laboratory. The application of weekly language change, vocabulary drilling every morning, situated conversation on every Sunday and Friday morning, announcement using the target language, public speaking contest, and even the language court/judgment are also the examples of how the target languages are used. (Damanhuri, Mujahidin, Hafidhuddin: 2013).

Method

The researcher used ethnography as the method of collecting the data which consists of an observation and an interview. The observation was conducted in one of the prominent Modern Islamic Boarding School located in East Java and the findings were clarified through an interview. First, he observed the situation and condition of foreign language learning inside and outside the classroom, and then conducted the interview with one of the responsible teacherin Language Advisory Council (LAC) to clarify. The observation and interview was done in three days from October 2th – 5th, 2018 to generate the data. When the researcher conducted the observation he was accompanied by some students from Central Language Improvement (CLI) to make sure all the activities were well observed.

Findings and Discussion

Vocabulary Drills

In teaching the new vocabulary, the students are guided by the direct method, which is drilling. The vocabulary drill begins after reading of Holy Quran(around 5.00-5.30 am). One of the dormitory managers (11th-grade students) is standing in front of their members and giving them three new vocabularies

each day. In this process, the students are not allowed to take a note or write the vocabularies before the instruction. They are ordered to repeat them based on the model given, the manager then asked the students one by one to try putting them in the three simple sentences. If there are any ununderstood words, the managers are not allowed to transfer it into 'Bahasa' they have to make another meaning by showing the teaching aids (pictures, real stuff, and even explanation).

"This method of teaching is meant to make sure the students are pronouncing the exact words, while in the English language sometimes the students are asked to spell the given vocabularies. The students are only allowed to take notes and write the vocabularies after those three are already given, and then they have to put the words each in three simple sentences, it is purposed to keep the students' focus on the pronunciation. There is no translation in this method of teaching, for the students to avoid the use of the conversion instead of the target language. If the students are still hard to understand the meaning, they may look for the answer in the dictionary." (Nurcahyo, 2018).

In the classroom, the students are given similar material, but it is advanced and given intensively by their homeroom teachers. The way in its teaching is also identical for the students in the first year. For the students in their second-forth year, the learning of language in the classroom is developed. The materials are added by reading activities (stories, dialogues, narrative, procedure, etc.).

According to Saz, Lin, and Eskenazi (2014), in the term of contextual meaning, the dictionary definition and examples of sentence in which word could be used are considered to be the most effective tools for teaching new words without translating it directly, it can assimilate the concept of the original word without any reliance on their L1. It also implies that such techniques can lead to the improvement of L2 fluency and accuracy. The activities are also similar with the Ellis suggestion in Turnbull (2000) that learners who are used to hearing their teachers use of L1 tend to ignore the use of Target Language (TL) and therefore do not give full benefit from valuable TL input.

"Thus when the students are allowed to consult the resources, there has been no controlled measure of how much they use them. Furthermore, while teachers can measure the accuracy of their students' task, they can't precisely how much time it takes for each one to respond to a given question." (Saz, Lin, & Eskezani, 2014, pg. 2).

The foreign language learning begins soon after the new students are accepted and enter the first semester. The new students are allowed to use their previous language to bridge their language learning for about three months, and after that, they are prohibited to use it while the old students are not permitted in the day they enter the school environment.

"This policy are meant to accustom the students with their new environment, in the first three months they are allowed to communicate with 'Bahasa', and they will receive an intensive training to get used with the bilingual environment (Arabic or English) while the use of local language (Javanese, Sundanese, etc.) are prohibited." (Nurcahyo, 2018).

The brief explanation about language policy for the new students is similar with the concepts of using L1 in L2 learning mentioned before. The students there can only use their L1 (Bahasa) to bridge their understanding of vocabularies and afterward they have to go with bilinguals system, so they can exactly remember their language learning in short-term memory to get used into their new environment.

Environment Building

They vary widely based on the learning environment. In the dining room, the students are taught some vocabulary and gave the examples in a multi- language simple sentence. It implements the repetition learning method so that what is conveyed by the teacher can be memorized and transferred to the long term memory of the students. In the dorms, the students are taught about basic grammar to create simple sentences. Whereas in the sports field, the teachers applied the communicative approach in multi- language learning in which the students are grouped in pairs to make dialogue and small conversation using the target language. In the previous explanation, language learning in Islamic Modern Boarding School happens in behavioristic ways. The creation of language habit forms and then become the language environment where the students can practice their ability of foreign language in daily communication. There is no exception either the new students or old students to communicate their thought in a formal language (Arabic and English). The weekly language changes are applied twice in a month, two weeks for Arabic and two weeks for English.

"The environment here is created to encourage the students in delivering their thoughts in both formal languages. Arabic and English are changed in two weeks, so they have to accustom their input of learning based on the language that used in that week. They are prohibited to translate their thought into 'Bahasa,' and if they trespass the rule such us speaking in Bahasa, they will be punished either directly or in the nightly judgment." (Nurcahyo, 2018).

Turnbull (2000) thought that using the target language will give benefit full of the students. Although they are not a native speaker, and the use of TL is sometimes resistant, but it is necessary to do.

"I was comfortable speaking the TL to my students as much as possible, even though I am a non-native speaker of French. Although my students may have been resistant to my use of the TL at first, they quickly adjusted and often

thanked me at the end of a school year for teaching them in French. They said to me that they learned so much because I spoke French to them most of the time, whether we were analyzing a grammar point, debating a controversial topic, or talking about social activities outside of class; they said that they could never 'tune out' or ignore what I was saying to them" (Turnbull, 2000, pg. 533).

Mr. Nurcahyo also added some essential points of these activities, that the students would have 'paired-conversation' twice in a week (usually on Sunday morning and Friday morning). They will practice their capability in using the target language and controlled by the teachers and managers.

"The teachers and managers will take around the crowd where the students are already paired and then control their use of language. If the students make some mistakes, the manager will give them the direct feedback and order them to take note so that they will remember the feedback and hopefully they don't make the same mistake again." (Nurcahyo, 2018).

The teachers mixed some approaches such as structured immersion, pullout, transition, and even submersion in which the students are placed in classrooms where all the instruction, classroom routines, and peer interactions occur only in the target language. The teachers felt positive of using combination approaches in teaching multiple languages. Also, Mr. Eko Nurcahyo mentioned others secondary activities to develop students' bravery of speaking the foreign languages. The events are: Arabic and English Public Speaking which held twice in a week on Thursday noon and night and on Sunday night, Arabic and English discussion forum which specialized for the final grade students, Nightly judgement which held every night after Maghrib prayer, and Dictionary examination which stayed in the end of semester as language test.

The Teaching of Explicit Grammar

According to Mr. Nurcahyo in his interview, the grammar is taught explicitly. The study of Arabic grammar is begun in the second year until the sixth year of the study, while the English grammar is explained in the third year until the sixth year of the study. The differencing phase of grammar study for Arabic and English is because almost the 75% of subjects that taught are delivered in Arabic, while English only take in 5%-10% from all the lessons, andthe rest 15% are shown in Bahasa (Math, Biology, History, Physic, Chemistry, etc.).

"The grammar learning here begins from the sentences, the students are given the sentences, with the help from their vocabularies capacity, to be analyzed, and then find the rules from the sentences. So sometimes when we assess the students, they are likely to remember the sentence, but they forget

the rules or formula. This kind of teaching is used for Arabic and English grammar." (Nurcahyo, 2018).

According to Steiglitz (1955), grammar teaching is based on the systematical and relevant materials given to the students in the range of oral expression (sentences). The grammatical items are kept as small as possible, and they will receive individual attention and then introduced to the students when the requirements are met, and the drills have been assimilated. The grammar will not contain any new vocabularies, so their explanation is not impaired. In this way, the sentence is gradually developed and the principle of 'single emphasis' is applied in full. The sentence structure grows together with the given vocabularies; the tasks are blended to serve over-all-objective to increase the ability to use the target language accurately.

Conclusion

Based on the explanations, examples, and thoughts from the interview and theories we may conclude that the foreign language learning and teaching in Islamic Modern Boarding school are mostly based on these three main activities (1) Vocabulary Drills, (2) Environment Building, and (3) The Teaching of Explicit Grammar. Vocabulary drills and Environment building belong to behaviorist theory, and the explicit grammar belongs to mentalist theory. There are many secondary activities there to develop students' courage to speak such as Public Speaking (held twice in a week), Discussion (held for the final grade students), and daily judgment. Both theories are running in balance along with students' activities inside and outside the classroom. It is just like what Krashen (1981) has said that the solution to language teaching problem lies not in the expensive equipment, unusual methods, good linguistic analyses, or well-established laboratories, but in full using of what we already have, language, the speakers have to use it for real communication.

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