Language and Language Learning and Teaching
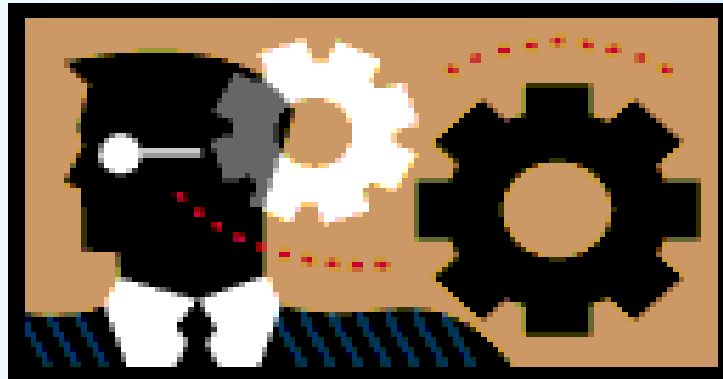
What is language?

Your view(s) of language determines your way of teaching.

What is your view of language?

For me language is...

- a system of signs.
- a set of rules and principles.
- a system of conventional spoken or written symbols.
- a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements.

- a matrix for the expression of thoughts.
- a social medium of expression.
- an instrument of social interaction.
- a weapon of empowerment and a tool against oppression.
- a psychological tool used to solve problems.

What are the common views on language?

What are the common views on language learning?

Language is a system of structures

Language is a linguistic system made up of various subsystems:

the system of sounds

The system of language

the system of grammar

the system of words
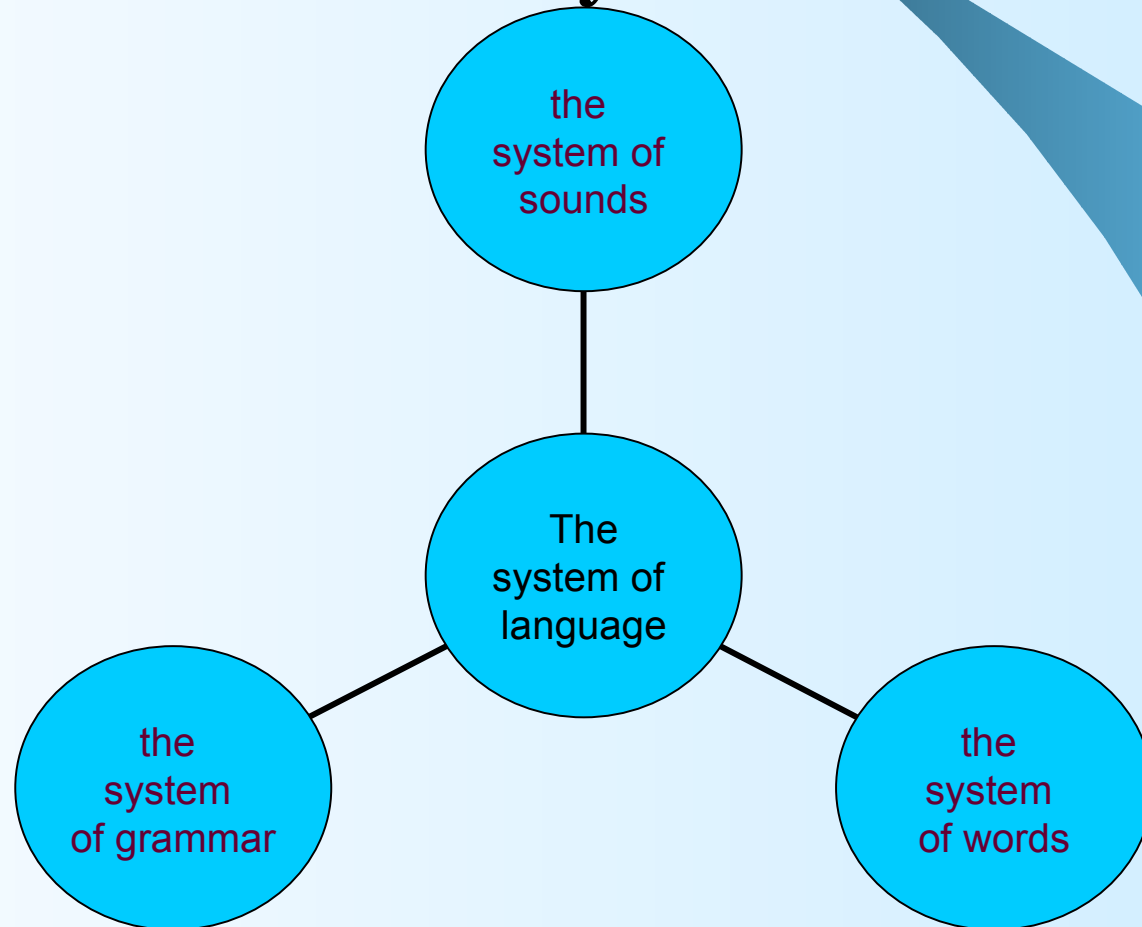
- Learning a language is to learn its...
- vocabulary and structural rules.
- Syntactic system (phrases & sentences)
- Morphological/Lexical system (morphemes & words)
- Phonological system (Phonemes)

Structural view

Language is a linguistic system as well as a means for doing things

Learners learn a language in order to do things with it (use it)

Learners learn a language through using it

Instruction focused on the functions and notions of language

Functional view

Language is a communicative tool to maintain social relations.

Language is the reflection of cultures

Learners need to know the rules of a language and where, when and how it is appropriate to use them.

Instruction on cultures and focus on appropriateness of speech

Two things are needed for communication:

➢ Rules of language form (grammar & vocabulary)

➢ Rules of language use in a context

Is it <u>appropriate</u> to use this language item in this context?

Interactional view

Views	Language	Language learning
Structural	Language is a linguistic system made up of structural rules and vocabulary.	to learn these structural items. . * vocabulary and grammar (sentence patterns)
Functional	Language is a linguistic system as well as a means for doing things (to be used in real life).	to know how to combine the grammatical rules and the vocabulary to express notions that perform the functions. •communicative categories •communicative ability (to be able to communicate)
Interactional	Language is a communicative tool to maintain social relations.	not only to know the grammar and vocabulary of the language, but also to know the rules for using them in a whole range of communicative contexts. •to communicate appropriately (communicative strategies, cultural awareness, etc.)

What are the common views on language learning?

Process-oriented theories are concerned with how the mind processes new information, such as habit formation, induction, making inference, hypothesis testing and generalization.

Condition-oriented theories

emphasize the nature of the human and physical context in which language learning takes place, such as the number of students, what kind of input learners receive, and the learning atmosphere.

Behaviorism	Pavlov Skinner	Imitation & repetition (S-R-R)	External factors

- Representatives: Pavlov, Skinner.
- Behaviorist view of language and learning.
- All complex forms of behaviors can be learned by Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement.
- Language is a form of behavior.
- Language can be learned as animals are trained to respond to stimuli (by mechanical drills such as imitation & repetition).
- Influence (Audio-Lingual Method).
- 'Listen and repeat' drilling activities are the most important classroom activities.
- Mistakes are immediately corrected and correct utterances are immediately praised.

Ivan Pavlov: S-R (1849-1936)
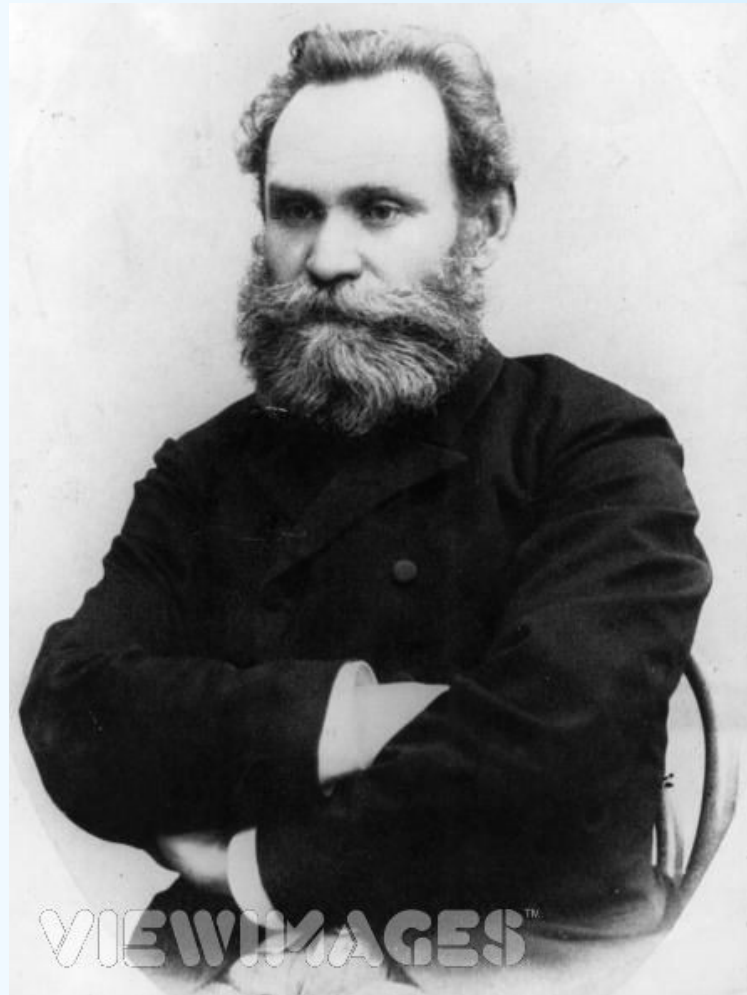
Before conditioning
FOOD **SALIVATION**
(UCS) **(UCR)**

BELL **NO RESPONSE**

During conditioning
BELL + **SALIVATION**
FOOD
(UCS) **(UCR)**

After conditioning
BELL **SALIVATION**
(CS) **(CR)**

B. F. Skinner: S-R-R
(1904 - 1990)

(a) **Skinner box**

Speaker

Signal lights

Lever

To food dispenser

Food pellet

Electric grid

To shock generator
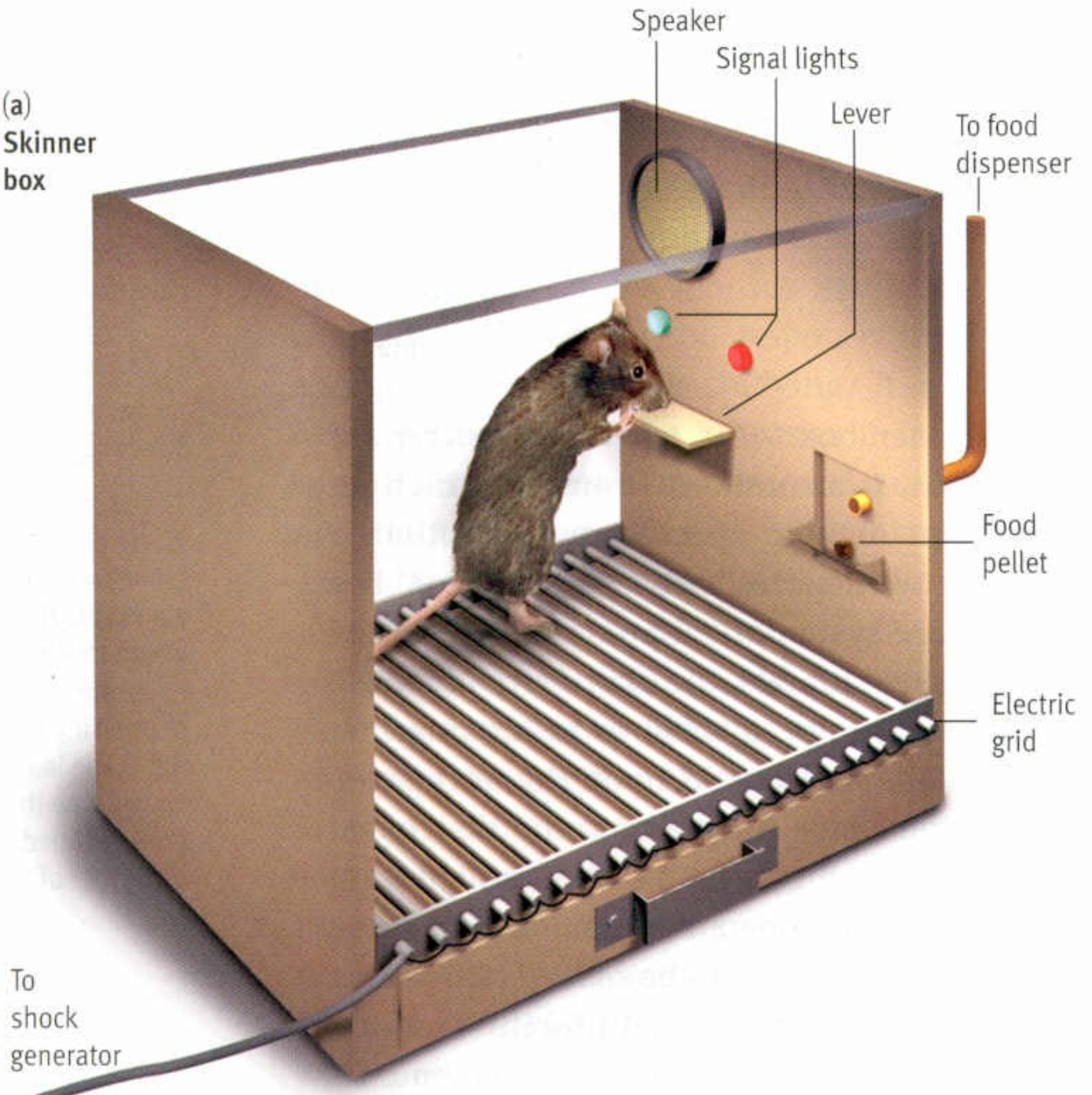
Cognitivism	Chomsky	Thinking (creativity)	Internal factors

- **Representative: Chomsky**
- **Cognitive view of language and learning**
- **Influence: Natural Approach**
- **If all language is learned by imitation and repetition, how can a child produce a sentence that has never been said by others before?**
- *"Olha o desenho que eu fazi";*
- *"Vamos lá no pintinheiro?"*
- *"Eu não sabo não.*
- **Language is not a form of behaviour. It is an intricate (complicated) rule-based system. (Language is rule-governed)**

Cognitivism			

•Children must have an inborn faculty for language acquisition.

•Language Acquisition Device (LAD).

•There are a finite number of grammatical rules in the system and with knowledge of these rules an infinite number of sentences can be produced. (Language is generative)

• Influence of cognitive theory

•Learners should be allowed to create their own sentences based on their understanding of certain rules (creativity).

Input
(Language Data)

Language
Acquisition
Device (LAD)

Output
(Language Produced
by the Learner)
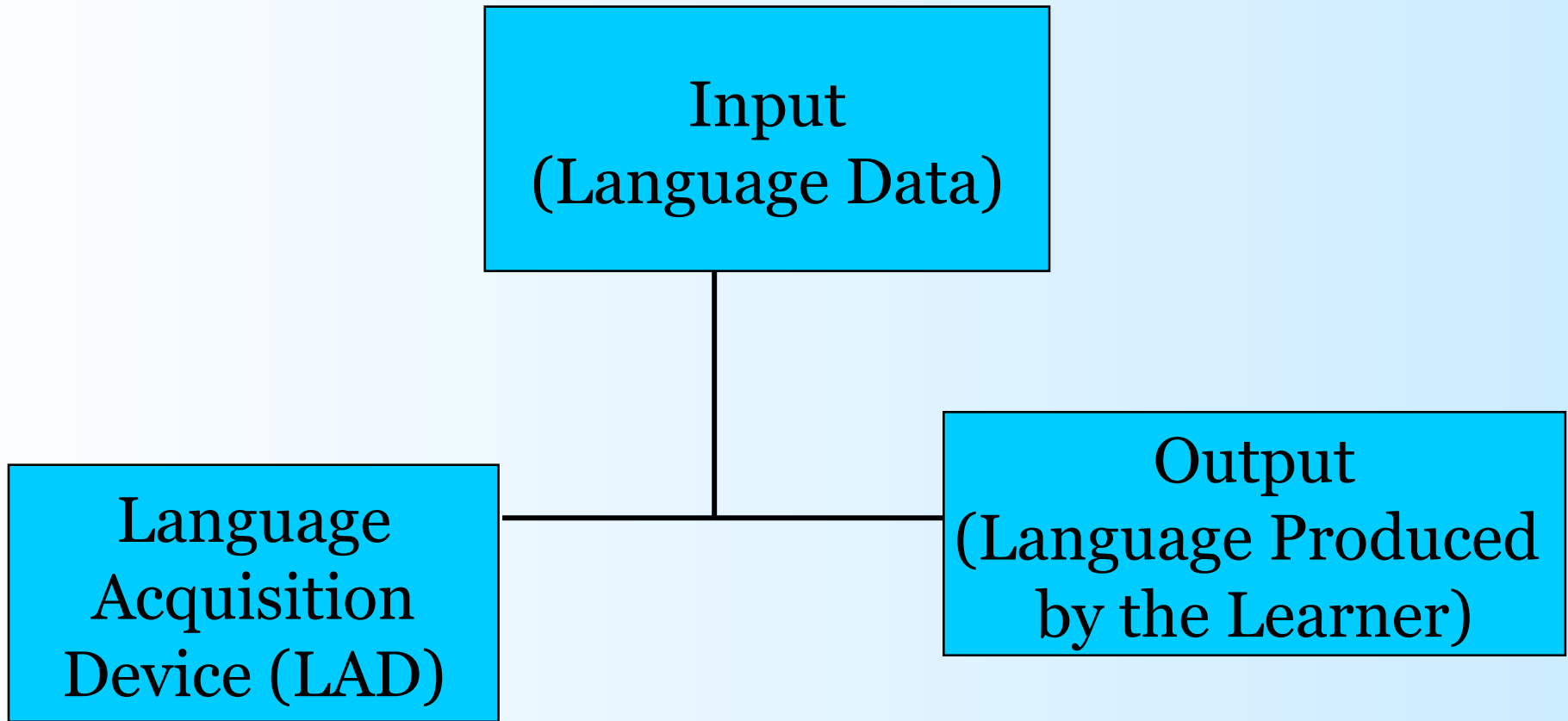
Noam Chomsky (1928--)

Constructivism	Piaget Dewey Bruner	Personal construction	Interaction

- **Representatives: Piaget, Bruner, Dewey.**
- **Constructivist view of language and learning**
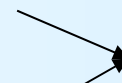
Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980)

Piaget's views and influence

- **Learning is a personal construction of knowledge to be learned based on the learner's previous experience.**

Learner's experience

Knowledge to be learned

Learner's personal construction

Receiving information	→	Processing information	→	Constructing new meanings

Input (listening, reading)

Decoding

Relating what learners already know with the received information

(Listening/reading)

comprehension

output

John Dewey (1859-1952)
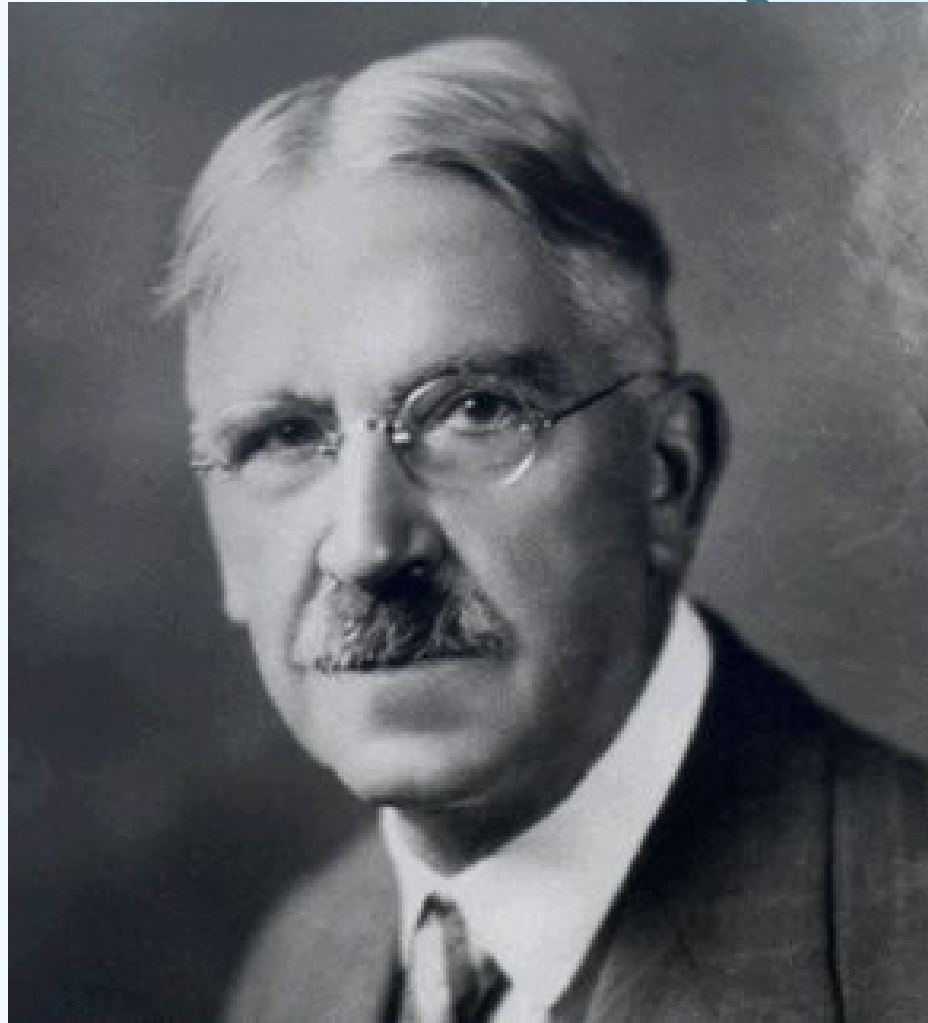
Dewey's views and influence

- **Learning by doing**

- **Teaching should be built on learners' experience and engage learners in learning activities.**

Dewey's views and influence

- **Learning by doing**

- **Teachers need to design environments and interact with learners.**

Social-constructivism	Vygotsky	ZPD & scaffolds	Interaction
• **Representative: Vygotsky** • **Social-constructivist view of language and learning** • **Social-constructivist views of language and language learning**			

Lev Vygosky
(1896-1934)

Social-constructivist views of language and language learning

- **Interaction and engagement with the target language in a social context is important.**

- **ZPD—Zone of Proximal Development**

Zone of Proximal Development & scaffolding
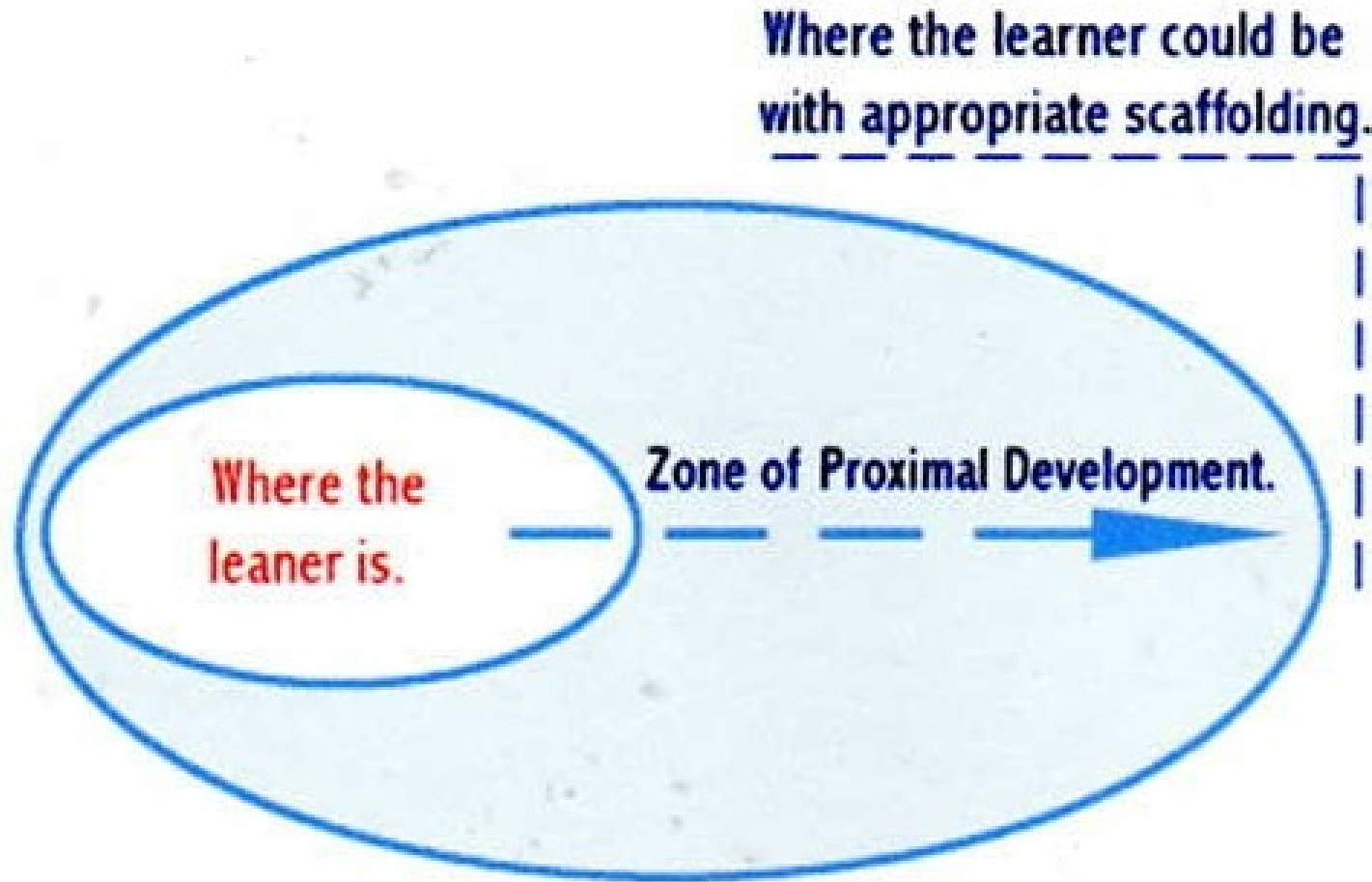
Social-constructivist views of language and language learning

- **Scaffolding**—learning is best achieved through the dynamic interaction between:
  - the teacher and the learner (question & explanation)
  - the learners themselves.

Your view of language determines your **way of teaching.**

Your view of language learning determines your **way of teaching.**

Your view of language and language learning determines your **teaching methods.**

Your teaching method is a **major factor** to determine whether you'll succeed or not in a given context.

What method do you use in teaching a foreign language?

Why is the study of language teaching methods important?

- The study of **approaches** and **methods** provides teachers with a view of how the field of language teaching has evolved.

- They can be studied not as prescriptions for how to teach but as a source of well-used practices, which teachers can adapt or implement on their own needs.

- Experience in using different teaching approaches and methods can provide teachers with basic teaching skills that they can later add to or supplement as they develop teaching experience.

- When teachers are exposed to methods and asked to reflect on their **principles** and actively engage with their **techniques**, they can become clearer about why they do what they do. They become **aware** of their own fundamental assumptions, values and beliefs.

- By becoming **clearer** on where they stand, teachers can choose to teach **differently** from the way they were taught. They are able to see why they are attracted to certain methods and repelled by others.
- A knowledge of methods offers teachers **alternatives** to what they currently think and do. With a knowledge of various methods, they are able to make choices that are **informed**, not conditioned or imposed by authorities.

- It is part of the knowledge base of teaching. With it teachers join a community of practice.

- A knowledge of methods helps **expand** a teacher's repertoire of techniques which, presumably, helps them deal more effectively with the unique qualities and particular characteristics of their students.

- They can help teachers inquire into, and perhaps transform, their understanding of the teaching/learning process.

Approach, *method* and *technique* (Anthony, 1963).

Approach	Method	Technique
* A set of assumptions or beliefs about language teaching/learning. * Theories about language. * It is axiomatic and describes the nature of the subject matter. * An approach can give rise to different methods.	* A practical application of an approach. * An overall plan, level at which theory is put into practice including or not an orderly presentation of language material. * While the approach is axiomatic, the method is procedural.	* It refers to the practical implementation of activities within a method. * A specific task or activity that actually takes place in a classroom, i. e., a strategy, procedure.

- Different theories about the nature of language and how languages are learned (the approach) imply different ways of teaching language (the method) and different methods make use of different kinds of classroom activities (the techniques)

Approach, Design and Procedure

(Richards; Rodgers, 1986)

METHOD		
Approach	**Design**	**Procedure**
* refers to the beliefs and theories about language, language learning and teaching that underlie a method	* level in which objectives, syllabus, and content are determined, and in which objectives, the roles of teachers, learners and instructional materials are specified	* concerns the techniques and practices employed in the classroom as consequences of particular approaches and designs.

The Audio-lingual method

- **Approach**

- **Theory of language**

- The Structural view of language is the view behind the Audio-lingual method. Particular emphasis was laid on mastering the building blocks of language and learning the rules for combining them.

- **Theory of learning**
- Behaviorism, including the following principles:
    - language learning is habit-formation
    - mistakes are bad and should be avoided, as they make bad habits
    - language skills are learned more effectively if they are presented orally first, then in written form
    - analogy is a better foundation for language learning than analysis
    - the meanings of words can be learned only in a linguistic and cultural context

- **Design**
- **Objectives**
- Here are some of the objectives of the audio-lingual method:
  - accurate pronunciation and grammar
  - ability to respond quickly and accurately in speech situations
  - knowledge of sufficient vocabulary to use with grammar patterns.
- **The syllabus**
  - Audiolingualism uses a structural syllabus
- **Types of learning techniques and activities**
  - dialogues
  - drills

- **Procedure**
- Here is a typical procedure in an audio-lingual course:
  - Students hear a model dialogue
  - Students repeat each line of the dialogue
  - Certain key words or phrases may be changed in the dialogue
  - Key structures from the dialogue serve as the basis for pattern drills of different kinds.
  - The students practice substitutions in the pattern drills.

Total Physical Response

- **Approach**
- **Theory of language**
- Asher does not directly address his view of language but Richards and Rodgers state that the labeling and ordering of classroom activities seem to be build on the Structural view of language
- **Theory of learning**
- Asher's language learning theories seem similar to those of other behavioral psychologists. There are some principles he elaborates:

- Second language learning is parallel to first language learning and should reflect the same naturalistic processes;

- Listening should develop before speaking;

- Children respond physically to spoken language, and adult learners learn better if they do that too;

- Once listening comprehension has been developed, speech develops naturally and effortlessly out of it;

- Adults should use right-brain motor activities, while the left hemisphere watches and learns;

- Delaying speech reduces stress.

- **Design**
- **Objectives**
- Here are some of the objectives of Total Physical Response
  - Teaching oral proficiency at a beginning level
  - Using comprehension as a means to speaking
  - Using action-based drills in the imperative form

- **The syllabus**
- TPR uses a sentence-based grammatical syllabus.

- **Types of learning techniques and activities**
- Activities where a command is given in the imperative and the students obey the command are the main ones in TPR.

- **Procedure**
- Asher gives step-by step accounts of how to use TPR for English or other languages.

Communicative language teaching

- Communicative language teaching began in Britain in the 1960s as a replacement to the earlier structural approach, called Situational Language Teaching.

- This was partly in response to Chomsky's criticisms of structural theories of language and partly based on the theories of British functional linguistis, such as Firth and Halliday, as well as American sociolinguists, such as Hymes , Gumperz and Labov and the writings of Austin and Searle on speech acts.

- **Approach**
- **Theory of language**
- **The Functional view of language** is the primary one behind the Communicative Approach, as well as the **Interactional View.**
- **Theory of learning**
- Not a great deal has been written about the learning theory behind the communicative approach, but here are some principles that may be inferred:
  - activities that involve real communication promote learning
  - activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning
  - language that is meaningful to the learner promotes learning

- **Design**
- **Objectives**
- Here are some of the objectives of Communicative Language Teaching:
  - students will learn to use languge as a means of expression
  - students will use language as a means of expressing values and judgments
  - students will learn to express the functions that best meet their own communication needs.

- **The syllabus**
- Communicative language teaching often uses a functional-notional syllabus.
- **Types of learning techniques and activities**
- Communicative language teaching uses almost any activity that engages learners in authentic communication.
- Littewood, however has distinguished two major activity types:
  - functional communication activities: ones aimed at developing certain language skills and functions, but which involve communication

– social interaction activities, such as conversation and discussion sessions, dialogues and role plays

- **Procedure**

- It is difficult to summarize the procedure in communicative classes because of the wide variety of activities used.

- References
  - Richards, Jack C. and Theodore S. Rodgers. *Approaches and methods in language teaching: A description and analysis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1986.
  - *www.nse.cn/nse/jp/08110308.ppt*
  - *www.deu.edu.tr/.../Birimler/.../History_of_Language_ Teaching.ppt*
  - *210.46.96.21/jpsystem2/UploadFile/20085192327156 11.ppt*
  - *http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/languagelearning/Ways ToApproachLanguageLearning/contents.htm*