

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN INDIAN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Language is the vehicle for inter and intra communication. It is a tool to communicate across geographical boundaries. It would be the key that opens windows to the world, unlocks doors to opportunities, and expands our minds to new ideas. According to Albert C. Baugh & Thomas Cable (2002:10) a language communicates one's thoughts, feelings to others, the tool with which they conduct their business, or the government of millions of people, the vehicle by which has been transmitted the science, the philosophy, the poetry of the culture is surely worthy of study. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1989:699) defines language is a system of sounds, words, patterns, etc. used by humans to communicate thoughts and feelings. Robert Lado (1971:12) says that language is intimately tied to man's feeling and activity. It is bound up with nationality, religion, and the feelings of oneself. It is used to work, worship, and play by everyone, whether he is a beggar or banker, savage or civilized. According to Albert C. Baugh & Thomas Cable (2002: 4) a language may be important as a lingua-franca in a country or region whose diverse populations would be unable to communicate otherwise all these definitions depict various aspects and purposes of language. However, language can be designated differently based on its function, nature, quality, etc.

Key Words: acquisition, children, English, first language, second language, learning

FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Language acquisition is the process whereby children acquire their first languages. All humans (without exceptional physical or mental disabilities) have an innate capability to acquire language. Children may acquire one or more first languages. For example, children who grow up in an environment in which only English is spoken and heard will acquire only English as their first language. However, children who grow up in an environment in which both Telugu and English are spoken and heard equally will acquire both Telugu and English as their first languages. Acquisition occurs passively and unconsciously through implicit learning. In other words, children do not need explicit instruction to learn their first languages but rather seem to just "pick up" language in the same way they learn to roll over, crawl, and walk. Language acquisition in children just seems to happen.

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Language learning, in contrast to language acquisition, is the process whereby humans past the critical period learn second languages. All humans have the ability to learn additional languages although, just as with other areas of study like math or science, some people are better at learning second languages than others. Older children and adults may learn one or more second languages. For example, a woman who acquired Marathi as a child and learned English as an adult would have one first language (Marathi) and one second language (English).

TYPES OF LANGUAGES

According to Paliwal (1998:3) there are seven types of languages as follows that are designated based on their nature, the ways in which they are learnt in Indian context.

1. First Language (L1) - Mother tongue
2. Second Language (L2) - English (in India)
3. Third Language (L3) - Hindi (in India but not the case in Tamilnadu)
4. Foreign Language (FL) - French, German, Chinese, etc.
5. Dead Language (DL) - Sanskrit
6. Classical language (CL) - Tamil, Latin etc.
7. Modern Language (ML) - English

Among the above all, the first and second languages are mainly employed for day to day communication, while others are used for certain specific purposes.

FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

For first language, a child acquires the mother tongue naturally, gradually, automatically and unknowingly but he does not learn it. There is no formal teaching for acquiring the first language. On the other hand, second language is

learnt, not acquired. It is a widely accepted fact that the first language is acquired whereas the second language is learned by the learners. There is an important distinction made by linguists between language acquisition and language learning. Children acquire language through a subconscious process during which they are unaware of grammatical rules. This is similar to the way they acquire their first language. In second language learning, students have conscious knowledge of the new language and can talk about that knowledge. A student who has memorized the rules of the language may be able to succeed on a standardized test of English language but may not be able to speak or write correctly. Krashen (1982) has described five basic differences between the first language acquisition and second language learning.

Differences between the first language acquisition and second language Learning:

Sl. No.	First Language (L1) Acquisition	Second Language (L2) Learning
1	Subconscious process	Purely conscious process
2	Informal activity	Formal activity
3	Uses grammatical 'feel'	Uses grammatical rules
4	Depends on attitude	Depends on aptitude
5	Stable order of acquisition	Simple to complex order of learning

ENGLISH IN THE GLOBAL ARENA

English is the major language used for international communication. As mother tongue it is spoken in England, America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand the Caribbean Islands, South Africa and in some pockets of Rhodesia, Kenya, and India. As a foreign language it is used in many countries such as Japan, Germany, Russia, France etc. As a second language, it is used in India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Burma, Thailand and South Korea. English thus can be rightly called the Global Lingua - Franca or language of wider communication. There are three important factors contribute to get the permanent place of global arena such as its usage in science, technology and commerce, the ability to incorporate vocabularies from other languages and acceptability of various English dialects. According to Dash (2004:7-8) English is described as a pipe-line for the stream of knowledge in all branches of learning. English is the language of widest international currency and a treasure house of worldwide learning and research in literature, life, art, science and technology. According to Albert C. Baugh & Thomas Cable (2002:8) now more scientific research is properly published in English than in any other language, and the preeminence of English in commercial use is undoubted. There are large number of speakers and learners and infinite number of translations available in English in the world. According to British Council English has official or special status in at least seventy-five countries with a total population of over two billion. English is spoken as a native language by around 375 million and a second language by around 375 million speakers in the world. Speakers of English as a second language will soon outnumber those who speak it as a first language. Around 750 million people are believed to speak English as a foreign language. One out of four of the world's population speaks English to some level of competence. It is the language of international scientific thinking, trade and commerce, journalism, diplomacy, education and politics.

ENGLISH IN INDIA

India is one among the countries which have different languages, cultures and customs. Even though it is bifurcated into different states based on linguistic area, within a single state, people speaking different languages live together. English is an official and also important language in India. It is a language which is widely spoken after Hindi. Dash (2004:2) says that English is the greatest unifying link between the Hindi speaking and the non-Hindi speaking people of India. Most Indians thought that English is a prestigious language by using it one can acquire better education, better culture and higher intellect. Obviously, Indians are mixing English language when they are conversing in their respective mother tongues. English also functions as the effective communicator among Indians who speak different languages. It penetrates legal, financial, education, business in India. As far as India is concerned, English is the medium of instruction in Indian higher education. Indians and Indian Media are using unique vocabularies and expressions which have been derived from most of the Indian languages. India has large number of English speakers than any other countries as a second language. English is an essential language, because knowledge of English is required in many fields, professions, and occupations. Education ministries throughout the world mandate the teaching of English at least at a basic level.

ENGLISH IN EDUCATION

English language embellishes in many a domain of our everyday life. The field of education is one such domain which badly warrants the use of English language. The phenomenon of globalization intensifies the use of English in educational domain although a lot of positive arguments favoring the use of vernacular language in education. So, the use of English in education is getting increased day after day so, every student ought to learn English willingly or unwillingly. Otherwise they will miss the bus in furthering their education. Among the various areas of education, the Engineering education is a vital area which badly invites the use of English.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDIA

English language has been playing a significant role in Indian education and it has been embellishing the Indian classrooms from Pre K.G to Ph.D. The liberalization of the Indian economy has brought a new impetus for the teaching/learning of English language in India. In those days students who had specialized in English joined either in teaching or in civil services, but in current age a whole new spectrum of job opportunities has been opened up to those who possess good communication skill in English. The last few decades witnessed the proliferation of call centers, medical transcription centers, and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) which thrive solely on the communication skill of the personnel who serve there. Similarly, there are multinational companies which require live wire candidates with effective communication skill in English. Another important thing is that those who are desirous of immigration need professional help for clearing English tests like TOEFL, TESOL, and IELTS etc.

The competence in English, therefore, is a prerequisite for every individual who aspires for modern profession in the contemporary society.

OBJECTIVES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING**Students should be able to:**

1. Develop their intellectual, personal and professional abilities.
2. Acquire basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in order to communicate with speakers of English language.
3. Acquire the linguistic competence necessarily required in various life situations.
4. Acquire the linguistic competence required in different professions.
5. Develop their awareness of the importance of English as a means of international communication.
6. Develop positive attitudes towards learning English.
7. Develop the linguistic competence that enables them to be aware of the cultural, economical and social issues of their society in order to contribute in giving solution.
8. Develop the linguistic competence that enables them, in the future, to present the culture and civilization of their nation.
9. Benefit from English-speaking nations, in order to enhance the concepts of international cooperation that develop understanding and respect of cultural differences among nations.
10. Acquire the linguistic bases that enable them to participate in transferring the scientific and technological advances of other nations to their nation.

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING PROGRAMS

Although second language learners cannot acquire languages through language learning programs, such learners can learn second languages through such programs. For example, the 'Learn English Now!' program available through Transparent Language promises not only to teach vocabulary and pronunciation through simulated English language conversations but also to reference English grammar. The everywhere English Audio Course similarly provides explicit English language instruction including grammar and vocabulary lessons. Language learning programs are legitimate means for learning second languages so long as the language instruction is explicit especially in the area of grammar education.

METHODS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN INDIAN SCHOOLS

1. The government should often conduct in-service training to train the teachers to use English language in classrooms. They should try to bring reforms in the pattern of examination. Separate marks should also be allotted to test the spoken language of the students.
2. An attempt should also be made to give rewards to the rural students for those who performed well in English examination.
3. Government should facilitate all schools with language laboratory. The Government may encourage the management to develop the aural and oral skills of the students.
4. The educational officers should arrange guidance and orientation programmes in English. They may encourage the management of the schools to conduct reading test in English. Often they have to supervise the way of providing English education in schools. By the way of supervision, they can give suggestions for improvement in the curriculum. They have to motivate the teachers to imbibe the culture of referring dictionary among the students.
5. Management should often insist the teachers to assess the development of students' proficiency in English.
6. The information on students' development in English should be communicated to parents at regular intervals. They may arrange special coaching classes for slow learners and rural students. They may also encourage the students to read English news during prayer hours.
7. The key role of the management is to insist the English teacher to converse in English with the students even in and outside the school campus. To impart the spoken aspects of the language, they should allot separate period for spoken English. If time permits, they could also extend the duration of the English class.

8. English teachers have to encourage the students to communicate in English. They may impart the spoken aspects of the language once/twice in a week.
9. Teachers should create student-friendly and learner centered environment. They should motivate students for participative learning. They should also strengthen the communication skills of the students by making them to raise their doubts in English.
10. While taking classes, the teacher should pay individual attention. They should stimulate the interest of the pupils to read English newspapers and magazines.
11. Children are more successful when their parents are involved in their education. Parents have to create conducive atmosphere to learn English. Their role is to encourage their children to communicate in English even at home. They should provide English newspapers, journals and magazines to enrich the reading skill of their children. They may also encourage them to listen to English news and to watch English programmes.

BENEFITS OF LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Learning English as a second language could be one of the best decisions that you ever make. Being fluent in English can help you in many ways, whether you are planning to travel, study in an English-speaking country, emigrate, or improve your career prospects. Think about the following:

- a) English is the most popular language on the Internet. In 2016, the world wide web had more than 700 million English-speaking users. Nearly 5.5 billion websites are available in English.
- b) Approximately 75 per cent of the world's scientists and researchers use English as a second language.
- c) Twenty-five percent of the world's population speak English at basic-intermediate level.
- d) You simply can't get into some professions unless you are competent in English. Some of these professions include air traffic controller, the diplomatic sector, and some jobs in the computing or information technology industry.
- e) If you want to live and work in an English-speaking country, immigration authorities will ask that you have a certificate that proves your English language skills.

MIND-SET OF STUDENTS

The mind of the students should always be ready to learn. They should read English newspapers, journals, novels, etc., as per the advice of their parents and teachers. They should also develop their habit of listening to English news and referring dictionary. They should not study English from an exam point of view. If they study English from an exam point of view, they may not be able to write on their own. The conversation with their parents, teachers and peers should always be in English. To learn English, opportunities have to be utilised by them effectively and efficiently.

Conclusion

First language acquisition differs from second language learning in that children acquire first languages innately and passively while adults learn second languages actively through explicit education and instruction. Older children and adults past the critical period can successfully learn second languages through language immersion. However, many language learning programs that promise language acquisition through immersion fail to take into account the differences between first language acquisition and second language learning as well as the necessary linguistic environment for authentic language immersion. Nonetheless, language immersion programs can reinforce the learning that language learners gained through explicit second language education and instruction. The benefits of learning English as a second language in a user-friendly environment are very valuable and will be greatly utilized in future communication experiences, including personal, professional, and educational. Anyone thinking of expanding their language skills should certainly consider using online learning tools to help them succeed. Using such a method is not only interesting and interactive, but it can also be very enjoyable and is perfect for anyone with a busy schedule.

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