Chapter II

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Teaching / Learning
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TEACHING / LEARNING

INTRODUCTION

Every aspect of language is extremely complex, but the fact is that children before the age of five learn most of the intricate system. Before they can add 2+2, children are conjoining sentences, asking questions, selecting appropriate pronouns, negating sentences, and are using the syntactic, phonological, morphological and semantic rules of grammar. Certainly, it is clear that the child is equipped from birth with the neural prerequisites for language and language use.

Various theories have been proposed to explain how children manage to acquire the adult language. There are those who think that children merely imitate what they hear. Imitation is involved to some extent, but the sentences produced by children show that children are not imitating adult speech. Bloom et al., (1974)

Another theory of language acquisition suggests that children learn to produce correct sentences because they are positively reinforced when they say something right and negatively reinforced when they say something wrong, Skinner (1954). This view assumes that children are being constantly corrected. This view does not tell us how children construct the correct rules.

The “reinforcement” theory fails along with the “imitation” theory. Neither of these views accounts for the fact that children are constructing their own rules.

Children seem to be equipped with special abilities at such a young age to form complex rules, to construct the grammars of spoken language. Children seem to learn language the way they learn to walk.

Those who have attempted to learn a second language in high school or college know that the process is rather different from learning first, native language. They may be extremely fluent in their native language but may never learn to understand or speak another language.
Young children before the age of puberty, who are exposed to more than one language, seem to acquire all the languages equally well. There are many bilingual and multilingual speakers who have acquired their languages early in life. Sometimes one language is the first learnt, but if the child is exposed to additional languages at an early age he or she will learn those languages. There appears to be a ‘critical age’ for languages acquisition. Research shows that though the nervous system is generally symmetrical – what exists on the left exists on the right and vice versa, the two sides of the brain form an exception. As a child develops, the two sides of the brain become specialized for different functions lateralization(one-sidedness) takes place. The lateralization of the brain appears to be connected with the language – learning abilities of children. It may be that this “critical age” for first language acquisition coincides with the period when lateralization is taking place and ends when it is complete. This was the hypothesis put forth by Lenneberg (1967) but he placed the end at puberty, which appeared to be a crucial limit for ease of acquisition. Krashen (1973) however, has shown that lateralization may be complete by the age of five. Perhaps, this is why the child has already acquired so much of the grammar at that age.

This lateralization and language learning may go hand in hand, but the relationship between the two is not clearly understood.

FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

First language acquisition occurs when the learner – usually a child – has been without a language so far and now acquires one. It is intimately bound up with the child’s cognitive and social development. Language enables the child to express feelings, ideas, and wishes in a socially accepted manner.

Evidence suggests that each newborn baby is capable of acquiring any human language. The innate structure of language is common to all language, and these constitute what Chomsky calls, “Universal Grammar”. First language acquisition is in some sense the simultaneous development of the faculty of language as well as of the structure of a particular language, and it is apparently a natural and automatic product of the process of socialization with adult human beings. Children learn to talk by being immersed in a language rich environment and without formal instruction.
SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Second Language is a Language acquired by a person in addition to his mother tongue.

The spontaneous learning and guided learning are the two types of second language learning. In spontaneous language acquisition, the learner has access to the target language in the course of everyday communication with the environment, the sounds of the language are embedded in a relevant situational context and the learner’s task is to extract from this material the rules for the use of the language. In guided learning, such material is supplied in digested form. There are exercises, dictation, essays, pattern drills etc.

THEORY OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION DEVELOPED BY KRASHEN

Krashen’s five basic hypotheses are:

1. The acquisition – learning hypothesis

   According to Krashen, there are two ways for adult second language learners to approach second language: they may ‘acquire’ it or they may ‘learn’ it. Essentially, he says we acquire as we engage in meaningful interaction in the second language, in much the same way the children pick up their first language- with no attention to form. We learn, on the other hand, via a conscious process of study and attention to form, and error correction, most typically in formal language classrooms.

   For Krashen, acquisition is by far the more important process. He asserts that it is only acquired language which is readily available for natural, fluent communication. Further, he asserts that learning cannot turn into acquisition, citing as evidence for this that many speakers are quite competent without ever having learned rules, while other speakers may ‘know’ rules but continue to break them when they are focusing their attention on meaningful interaction, rather than on the application of grammatical rules for accurate performance.

2. The monitor hypothesis

   Krashen argues that the acquired system to initiate the speaker's utterance is responsible for fluency and intuitive judgements about correctness. The learned system,
polishing what the acquired system has produced. Moreover, Krashen has specified three conditions necessary for monitor use: sufficient time, focus on form, and knowing the rules. Thus, writing is more conducive to monitor use than is speaking, where the focus is on content and not on form. He maintains that knowing the rules only helps the speaker polish what he has acquired via real communication, and that the focus on language teaching should therefore be communication and not rule-learning.

3. The natural order hypothesis

This hypothesis states that we acquire the rules of a language in a predictable sequence – some rules are acquired early while others are acquired late. Krashen asserts that the natural order is independent of the order in which rules have been taught. Most of the evidence of this hypothesis comes from the morpheme studies, in which children’s speech has been examined for accuracy of certain grammatical morphemes.

4. The input hypothesis

Krashen asserts that we acquire language in only one way – by receiving comprehensible input, that is, by understanding messages. If the input contains forms and structures just beyond the learner’s current level of competence in the language, then both comprehension and acquisition will not occur.

5. The affective filter hypothesis

The ‘affective filter’ is an imaginary barrier which prevents learners from using input which is available in the environment. ‘Affect’ refers to such things as motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states. A learner who is tense, angry, anxious, or bored will screen out input, making it unavailable for acquisition. Thus, depending on the learner’s state of mind or disposition, the filter limits what is attended to and what is acquired. The filter will be ‘up’ or operating when the learner is stressed, self-conscious, or unmotivated. It will be ‘down’ when the learner is relaxed and motivated.

MOTIVATION IN L2 LEARNING

Some L2 (second language) learners do better than others because they are better motivated. Motivation is the interest that something generates in the students. A particular exercise, a particular topic, a particular song, may make the students appear involved in the class.
Two types of favorable motivation have been talked about, Integrative and Instrumental motivation by Lambert (1972) and Gardner (1985).

The integrative motivation reflects whether the student identifies with the target culture and people. The more that a student admires the target culture, reads its literature, visits it on holiday, looks for opportunities to practise the language, the more successful the student will be in the L₂ classroom. Instrumental motivation means learning the language for an ulterior motive to pass an examination, to get a certain kind of job.

Students will find it difficult to learn a second language in the classroom if they have neither instrumental nor integrative motivation.

Motivation also goes in both directions. High motivation is one factor that causes successful learning. Successful learning however may cause high motivation. The process of creating successful learning, which can spur high motivation, is under the teacher’s control. The choice of teaching materials and the information content of the lesson should correspond to the motivation of the students.

APTITUDE IN L₂ LEARNING

Some people have a knack for learning second language. They have more aptitude for learning second language than others.

Aptitude is important for formal situations such as classrooms, and attitude is important for informal real world situations. The four main factors that predict a student’s success in the classroom aptitude test are the phonemic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning ability and rote learning ability.

Peter Skehan (1986) looked at soldiers learning foreign languages and found three groups of successful learners.

1. Memory-based learners (these rely on their memory rather than grammatical sensitivity.)
2. Analytical learners (these rely on grammatical sensitivity rather than memory)
3. Even learners (these rely on both grammatical sensitivity and memory)
So there seemed to be two sides of aptitude: a memory-based side and a language-based side. Lack of memory capability in older students can be compensated for by greater grammatical sensitivity. Lack of grammatical sensitivity in younger students can be compensated for by better memory. Students do well if they have both attributes but they also do well if they have either of them.

**EFFECT OF AGE ON L2 LEARNING**

Research shows that age is a positive advantage on L2 learning. Usually children are thought to be better at pronunciation in particular. The claim is that an authentic accent cannot be acquired if the second language is learnt after a particular age.

In the first six years of school, the child develops cognitive and communicative skills, that by age twelve, almost equal those of the adult. Cognitive skills change markedly during the first six years of school. The brain is nearly adult in size by age eight, but development is not complete. Intra cerebral association tracts must be better developed before the brain becomes mature.

In addition, the child’s selective attention, both visual and auditory, improves, and she is able to filter out unnecessary information more effectively. Increase of memory enables her to process and organize the information for more efficient problem solving.

During the early school age years, the child refines the conversational skills needed to be a truly effective communicator. She learns to introduce new topics, and once begun, to continue and to end conversation. By age of six, the child acquires most English speech sounds. By age of eight, she also acquires consonant clusters. In addition, the child’s vocabulary continues to grow. The first grader has an expressive vocabulary of approximately 2,600 words but may understand as many as 20,000 to 24,000 English words. Aided by school, this receptive vocabulary expands to approximately 50,000 words by sixth grade and 80,000 words by high school (Palmermo & Molfese, 1972). Multiple word meanings are also acquired. Dunn (1959) reports that the child learns verbs that describe a simple action first, then verbs for complex actions or very specific situations.

In part, the school-age child’s vocabulary growth reflects the systematic development of word formation rules. The sentence structure of the school-age child becomes more elaborate as the child matures.
Finally, the school-age child learns to understand and use figurative language. Figurative language consists of idioms, metaphors, similes and proverbs that represent abstract concepts not always stated in a literal interpretation. General usage of figurative language does not begin until the child attends school.

In conclusion, by age twelve, the child has many of the cognitive and linguistic skills of an adult. The rate of development in these areas decreases as the child prepares for the physical changes that will accompany adolescence.

PROBLEMS OF PRONUNCIATION IN L₂

Problems of pronunciation often arise owing either to factors that are external to the nature of the language being learnt, or to those that are inherent in the language itself, or to both.

One of the external factors owing to which problems may arise is the tendency, as learners, to map the sound system of our mother tongue on to that of second language, irrespective of the differences in the two systems. As a result of this mapping, we fail to perceive these differences. Either we replace unfamiliar sounds with those in our mother tongue that appear to be closest to them, or we are unable to produce some of the sounds or sound combinations altogether.

Another external factor that is responsible for the continuance of the problems of pronunciation of English over the years, is the almost total neglect of the speaking and listening skills. In fact, English language teaching in India has, for a long time, focused on the reading and writing skills to the exclusion of the oral and aural skills. And even though recent theories of second language learning and teaching have emphasized the importance of the listening and speaking skills, they continue to be neglected in India.

Frequent changes in the level at which English should be introduced, and the skills that are to be focused on, are responsible for the rather hastily prepared syllabii and textbooks from time to time. This problem is further compounded by the casual attitude of educators themselves towards pronunciation teaching and learning.

Several arguments are put forth in favor of the exclusion of pronunciation teaching as a language teaching component, the chief among them being that any Indian pronunciation is good enough for effective communication.
To add to this, the virtual absence of prolonged contact with native speakers of English and therefore, little or no exposure to it as spoken by them, has ruled out the possibility of Indians learning pronunciation with the help of a direct (i.e., native) source of reference.

**LANGUAGE IMMERSION IN L₂ LEARNING**

Research suggests that one of the best ways of learning a second language is not to take occasional lessons, private instructions, expensive audio or videotape courses, or concentrated study, but to become immersed in the language. In essence, language immersion involves entering an environment in which only the language that is to be learnt is spoken. There is ample evidence to suggest that if this occurs early enough (soon after the first language is firmly established), children can painlessly learn a second language and, perhaps, even a third and a fourth. Jean Piaget (1980) was a Swiss psychologist who developed a new theory of learning or cognitive development. He described learning as the modification of students’ cognitive structures as they interact with and adapt to their environment. This definition of learning requires a reexamination of the teacher’s roles. Instead of dispensing knowledge, teachers engage students with experiences and environments that require them to modify their cognitive structures and construct their own knowledge. Young children learn to talk by being immersed in a language-rich environment and without formal instruction.

L₂ teachers must simulate the linguistic environment by making their classroom look and feel English, through displays, posters and resources such as magazines and books. It is made certain that the learners are immersed in the sounds of the language without always knowing exactly how it is affecting them. The teacher must use a whole variety of strategies to communicate signs, drawings, as well as linguistic devices such as repetitions, paraphrase or selective use of cognates.

Much L₂ learning is re-naming already known concepts. The excitement (motivation) of discovering a new concept is missing – the learner already knows the concept exists. The excitement of learning a new name for it is less compelling (Hawkins 1981).

No matter how rich the linguistic environment can be, it would be unrealistic for the language teacher to sit back and wait until the pupils ‘feel the need’ to begin to express themselves. Nonetheless, the variety and the richness of the language that the pupils are being exposed to, can, with careful guidance from the teacher, encourage the pupils to start using language for their own purposes.

Research leaves little doubt that immersion programmes are extremely effective in teaching a second language (Genesee, 1985) Participants quickly reach high levels of proficiency in understanding and speaking the second language, as well as in reading and
Although the majority do not reach as high a level of proficiency as native speakers. In addition, perhaps only a small number will ever become what Diaz (1983) calls balanced bilinguals (individuals who are equally proficient in both languages).

LISTENING AND L2 LEARNING

Listening has been taken as a process of decoding speech, working out the message from the sentence you hear. L2 learners cannot learn a language if they never hear it; the sounds, the words, the structures have to come from some where.

During the early 1980, there was much talk of listening – based methods Postovsky (1974) had described how students who were taught Russian by methods that emphasize listening were better than student taught in a conventional way.

According to Gary and Gary, (1981a, 1981b) the benefits of concentrating on listening are that students do not feel so embarrassed if they do not have to speak, the memory load is less if they listen without speaking, classroom equipment such as tape – recorders can be used more effectively for listening. Krashen (1983) brings these listening – based methods together through the notion of comprehensible input. He claims that acquisition can take place only when people understand messages in the target language. Listening is motivated by the need to get messages out of what is heard.

Another approach to listening pioneered by Mary Underwood in the 1970’s relies on authentic tapes of people talking. After some introductory focusing activities, students were played the tape and then did follow-on comprehension activities.

Thus listening cannot be trained directly and the best that teacher can do is devise amusing activities during which the natural listening processes can be automatically activated.

THE AUDIO LINGUAL STYLE

Its emphasis is on teaching the spoken language through dialogues and drills. Language is not only divided into the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, but these have to be taught in that order, spoken language always preceding written language. Anything the student learn must be heard before been seen.
All pronunciation teaching must use audio-lingual techniques. Repeating sentences and hearing recordings of your repetition, doing drills and hearing the right answer after your attempt, can be done on a tape-recorder.

Language is a set of habits just like driving a car. Each habit is learnt by doing it time and again. The dialogues concentrate on unconscious ‘structures’ rather than the conscious ‘rules’ of the academic style. Instead of understanding every word or structure, students learn text more or less by heart. Learning sentences means learning structure and vocabulary, which amounts to learning the language.

The goal of the audio lingual style is to get the students to ‘behave’ in common L₂ situations, such as the station or the supermarket. It is concerned with the real life activities the students are going to face. It is practical and communication-oriented.

Most language programmes neglect listening comprehension. Texts, guides, and course of study frequently contain tests for evaluating progress in listening comprehension, but rarely do they contain specific learning materials designed for the systematic development of this skill.

The present trend in learning instruction is centered on memorized dialogues and pattern drills. Within the dialogue-pattern drill approach, the teacher can take the following steps to emphasize listening comprehension.

1. Present the dialogue as a story in the foreign language, using simple language. Explain the meaning of some of the new words and expressions that will appear in the dialogue through gestures, visual aids, use of synonyms, paraphrasing, etc., The idea, is not to teach the exact meaning of every new linguistic element in the dialogue, but rather to convey the general idea of the content in story form.

2. Present the dialogue verbatim, acting out the various roles. Time spent in paraphrasing and acting out meanings is not wasted as far as listening comprehension is concerned as long as the student is hearing authentic language.

3. Go through the dialogue again, without stopping, to give students a feel as to how the entire conversation sounds, at a normal rate of speed.
4. Have a programmed true-false activity based on the dialogue in order to ensure comprehension.

5. Repeat the entire dialogue again at normal rate of speed without interruption.

6. Have a role-playing activity. Assign roles from the dialogue to individual student or rows of students. Phrase questions which students will make “yes” or “no” or short responses, according to their assigned roles.

7. Have students hear the entire dialogue again, with their eyes closed, without interruption, but this time at slightly faster than normal rate of speed.

8. Give a listening comprehension test.

9. At this point, periodically, recombination listening comprehension practice can be given, using dialogues from other courses of study.

All these suggestions are aimed at having students spend more of their time listening to natural speech and for the systematic development of listening comprehension, not only as a foundation for speaking but also as a skill.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LISTENING SKILLS USED IN THE AUDIO PACKAGE

For the purpose of audio assisted teaching of listening skills, the researcher divided listening skills into seven basic categories. They are as given below:-

1. Discriminative listening skill
2. Aesthetic listening skill
3. Efferent listening skill
4. Critical listening skill
5. Therapeutic listening skill
6. Social listening skill
7. Descriptive listening skill

1. Discriminative Listening Skill

To hear and discriminate between the various sounds for effective pronunciation. This skill consists of different vowel sounds, consonant sounds and diphthongs played
through audiotape to help learners differentiate various sounds. Word stress - When a word has two or more syllables, one syllable is stressed, which means it is spoken louder and longer. The unstressed syllables are spoken more softly and more quickly. When students hear a good model, most of them will be able to use the correct word stress after they have heard a new word several times and repeated it. Correct word stress is important, because incorrect word stress can be a major cause of misunderstandings. The stress for individual word is best learnt when students first learn the word.

Sentence stress – Stressing certain syllables or words in sentence gives a specific meaning to that sentence, so incorrect sentence stress can cause problems in understanding. These exercises show how to use correct word stress to emphasize the meaning of a sentence.

Sounds in connected speech – English has distinctive rhythm with a steady beat, so the time between all stress syllables is approximately the same. To keep this beat regular, the small words and less important words must become weak or unstressed.

Intonation – Intonation is music of a language, meaning how our voice rises and falls at certain point of the sentence. Different English intonation pattern can change the meaning of the sentence. So students need to be aware of the meaning of different patterns and also need to be able to say the different patterns appropriately.

2. Aesthetic Listening Skill

Students listen aesthetically to a speaker or reader when they listen for enjoyment. The term aesthetic listening can be applied to describe the type of listening children do as they listen to storytellers tell stories, poets recite poems, actors perform a play, singers sing songs, or readers read stories aloud.

As students listen to a story read aloud, they predict or guess what will happen next in the story. Students create an image or picture in their minds while listening to a story that has strong visual images, details, or descriptive words. Students make personal connection between the stories they are listening to and experiences in their own life. As they are listening, students become sensitive to the authors choice of language, to the way the sentences are phrased and to the author’s choice of language, to the way the sentences are phrased and to the author’s use of comparison or word play. Students, as
they listen to stories read aloud, apply their knowledge of plot, characters, settings, theme and a point of view in order to anticipate what will happen next and how the problem introduced at the beginning of the story will be resolved at the end.

3. Efferent Listening Skill

Efferent listening is practical listening to understand a message. This type of listening is used to identify the important piece of information and remember them. It is required in many instructional activities particularly in theme cycle.

Students categorize or organize information in groups when the speaker’s message contains many pieces of information, comparisons or contrasts. Students monitor the listening to make sure of their understanding. As they are listening, students sometimes need to ask the speaker questions to clarify information, eliminate confusion, or increase the understanding to structure a message. Five common organization patterns are description, sequence, comparison, cause and effect and problem and solution. Students learn to recognize these patterns and use them to understand and remember a speaker’s message more easily. Active listening helps in note taking. Speakers use both visual and verbal clues to convey their messages and direct their listener’s attention. Once students are aware of these clues, they can increase their understanding of a message.

4. Critical Listening Skill

Students need to develop critical listening skills because they are exposed to many types of persuasions and propaganda. Peer pressure to dress, behave, and talk like their classmates, exerts a strong pull on students. Interpreting books and films requires critical thinking and listening. Social studies and science lessons on topics such as pollution, political candidates and drugs, demand that students listen and think critically. Since television commercials are directed at children, it is essential that they listen critically and learn to judge the advertising claims.

5. Therapeutic Listening Skill

Therapeutic means, “to treat” or in this context, “sympathetic listener”. Life has various situations, some of them needing reassurance, support and sympathy. This is possible with good listening skill. Their ability and interests in listening to such topics is
evaluated. People like to hear and sympathize and offer suggestions. They can link it to
some happening of their own lives. Situations may have more than one remedy. The
listener can ask relevant questions and offer suggestions and know what happened
eventually. Specific situations where such listening skills are useful are, for example, those
relating to theft, loss, deaths, accidents, failure, and illness and so on. When the interest is
created to listen, then the exercise becomes useful in improving their listening skill.

6. Social Listening Skill

Man is a social being; he helps others and gets help in return. For this, he has to
interact with his community, namely in school, post office, banks, shops, hospitals, work
places where he has to socialize and communicate. The preschool child starts to
communicate in simple words and sentence, and this continues throughout his schooling
and, afterwards, as a lifelong process. This has to be learnt early in life, so they would
listen with great interest and hear the appropriate responses. So listening to various
social interactions by audio tapes method gives him the necessary means to reply
correctly in various such situations.

7. Descriptive Listening Skill

This skill is universal in application. A thing, person, place, activity can be
described and listening skills are enhanced by interested listening exercises Working of a
gadget, place of interest, things to do, all interest children when explained and this is
given in exercise form to help enhance this skill.

CONCLUSION

The audio package relevant to the above mentioned skills, assists the teacher of
English (as second language) by providing easily - taught listening skills adaptable to the
classroom environment, with minimal technology inputs.

The Audio Package of listening skills have all the elements necessary to make the
input comprehensible, and thus improve the student’s Attitude, Motivation and
Pronunciation for second language acquisition.

Thus, it is for the teacher to integrate and incorporate such Audio Packages in
encouraging the student’s linguistic knowledge, and previous background knowledge to
further improve his linguistic competency.