

Language Acquisition: It's A Good Way to Learn Second Language

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Abstract. Second Language learning is always a challenge, as first language always remains present in absentia. The present paper focuses on language acquisition and tells what are the strength and weaknesses of language acquisition. The paper suggests that we can make strengths of first language acquisition our weapon for learning second language. The paper also tells some of the benefits of second language learning. The writer also suggests some tested and practically experienced exercises in the classroom also.

Keywords: Vocabulary, Acquisition, Pronunciation, Non-native, Grammar.

1. Introduction

Language acquisition is the process in which child acquire their first language. All human beings have an innate tendency and capacity to learn languages. An infant when comes in the age of acquiring or learning a language, he may adopt one or two language. Suppose a child who learns Mother Tongue at the age of 0 to 2 years, but when he comes in contact of the outer world he adopt their language too. For example, MT is a regional language and L₂ is English. When child starts going in plays groups or schools, he took few months only to grasp L₂. This language acquisition remains strong till the age of puberty or 12 years of age. After this brain become little hard wired to adapt language by default. One has to work hard for L₂ acquisition. Children don't learn L₂, but they pick it up very rapidly.

2. First Language Acquisition

Language learning in comparison to the acquisition is a process when a human learns all languages other than Mother Tongue. All human being have a natural ability to learn 3-4 languages easily and they can make the difference without any confusion as humans learn 4-6 subjects easily. But second language can be learned actively and consciously with lot of instructions. Language learning requires explicit instructions in speaking and hearing. For example, a child can speak flawless English as his first language is English but he has no idea of the rules of Grammar, he only speaks subconsciously. But when that child learns a second language, he learns it with the rules of grammar and semantics also. So, second language becomes a little bit of an exercise of the brain. There are four major things which work on language acquisition:

1. **Language Immersion** – A method by which L₂ can be learned and it becomes target language. Example if a Hindi speaker wants to learn English. To get English as Target Language, parents allow their children to study in a school where medium of instruction is English. Initially, child may face problems but eventually he will cope up one day and achieve his TL at its best.
2. **Second Language Acquisition**– Although L₂ can be achieved through many learning programmes and computer based online courses but sometimes they fail due to lack of atmosphere. Then Acquisition theory works well. A linguistic atmosphere with everyone using the same language works really well.

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3. **Language Learning Programmes** – Language learning programs are shaped and structured so well that a person can learn a language easily with their help especially English. They teach Grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation too. Once they learn all these rules and vocabulary, it becomes easy to speak, read and write any language.

Although first language acquisition differs from second language learning because first language comes innately and passively and second language is learned actively and with instructions. However, first language acquisition and second language learning has some or the other similarity. If we provide some linguistic atmosphere as first language, I think the situation will improve faster. As in the language immersion technique, good results come.

3. Treatment of the Second Language

3.1. Major rules of Second Language Acquisition

The theory of 'National Approach' created by Krashen connects well with second language acquisition. He gives five major rules:

1. **The Input Method** – Means to understand a piece of language structure in language teaching process and learner converts it with similar situations as use of Tenses.
2. **The Affective Method** – Where the learner has to learn and connect with faster use of language such as listening music, songs of the second language and connecting and understanding with them.
3. **The Acquisition Method** – When a Language is taught with the help of grammar, vocabulary and culture and learner is supposed to use it.
4. **The Monitor Method** – When a learner has knowledge of second language, but he has to practice and use language correctly.
5. **The Natural Approach** – To introduce basics of second language and wait for some time and it is supposed that by passing of time and continuous use of primary second language will make one understand all about L₂.

3.2. Stages in Speaking Second Language

The second language acquisition can be easily understood and adopt with the help of the Natural approach. It helps both the learner and the teachers. It makes the learner comfortable with the use of language and teacher also feels happy seeing his student gaining results from time to time. There are also four major stages in second languages learning as first language acquisition –

1. **Pre speech** – attention to intonation
2. **Babbling** – utterance of speech
3. **Holophrastic stage** – when learner tries to speak words
4. **Combining words** – sentences without proper constructions
5. **Started speaking unerringly** with some corrections

4. Connections in Languages

Language acquisition has some common facts as first language comes naturally to everyone and second language comes with some more efforts. But in present scenario bilingualism or multilingualism has become the need of the hour. It is observed that children sometimes understand two Languages very easily and speak too, but they normally feel force to communicate in the language they listen in the linguistic environment. But in present global arena bilingualism or multilingualism has become mandatory as it opens:

- New career opportunities
- More travelling options
- Communications behind the borders
- Further studies options in Universities.

5. Language Acquisition and Learning

In 1990, a survey reveals that language acquisition gives a positive effect on brain development. It tells that if a child is given an opportunity at the age of 3, he may be able to grab 2 languages simultaneously and very easily. So, parents are also entitled to provide the conducive atmosphere and learning environment for multiple language acquisition. Second language acquisition has many benefits such as:

1. **Personal Benefits** – It's obvious to all of us that a person versatile in two or more languages will always grab a lot of understanding human and humanity as a whole will increase.
2. **Cognitive Benefits** – Studies reveal that bilingual students are more creative and better in solving problems.
3. **Academic Benefits**– Naturally, learning a second language will open new shutters for reading, writing and verbal skills in L₂. One can go around the world and acquire education in an interested field.
4. **Societal Benefits**– When we talk about society, we really have the example of US and UK. Both of them progressed well just because of their language acquisition. So, in the present scenario, L₂ is the cause of progress. Presently, all parents must introduce L₂ at early childhood to their children as their first language. So, children can learn elementary L₂ right from the beginning of their speaking exposure. It will expose them to second language and hesitation of speaking will be removed from their personality.

6. Difference between First and Second Language Learning

There is always a difference between first language and second language acquisition. The need is the systematic study of how languages are learned. We all know the FL acquisition is a natural process, but the second language is known as Target language. It can only be achieved with special and cognitive efforts.

Yule (1985) says that the readiness of the human mind, to accept and learn a new language, is present at an early age. But it does not mean that one cannot learn it at later stage. The most recognised facts about second language acquisition are:

1. Normally, learner tries to apply First Language Grammar in Second Language.
2. Learner tries to learn SL systematically and errors are not random but many a times they turn into a habit.
3. Knowledge of Grammar is not as good as compared to the First Language.
4. Pronunciation also faces some problem as many a times, they tend to speak in First Language accent and sounds.

Second language learner needs to develop capacity and understanding. The traditional methods of learning a language through grammar and sentences have become old. I teach undergraduates whose FL is Hindi and they are learning English as SL. When they are supposed to speak, they can't speak even basic conversation as they are coming from non-English speaking background. I experimented with them in the form of the following formula, but their FL is so much intoned in their tongue, that they can't come out of it. But, when new experiments, as explained below, are completed, we got success to some extent.

1. Increasing their vocabulary day by day.
2. We give meanings in their FL too, so that they can come to know about its use properly.
3. They are given the task of making small sentences with given vocabulary and use of basic grammar.
4. Then, they are given full knowledge of Grammar and use of vocabulary.
5. In the meantime, they were given sentences in FL which they translate in SL and sentences in SL which they translate to FL.

7. Conclusion

A language teacher faces many challenges in teaching SL. First of all, time schedule and lack of time is a great hurdle, as language teaching is a time-consuming and never-ending process. Teacher normally can't give such a long time to a single student especially in India where we have large classrooms. But still second language acquisition give good results despite the fact that FL always remain present on the tongue

howsoever hidden it is. When learning a Second Language, the best thing is to focus on Vocabulary, Grammar and semantics one by one as they three comes step by step. First thing is the vocabulary, to make a strong step ahead in second language acquisition.

8. References

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