

LIMITATION OF TEACHING SECOND LANGUAGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES

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Abstract

Teaching language at the kinder-garten is more effective than teaching the same at colleges. A careful analysis on the progress of language-learning during the primary stages of life may help us to understand the demands of language teaching and learning. A child learns his first language at the start involuntarily and mostly unconsciously from random exposure, even if no attempts at teaching are made. When it comes to school to learn a second language, it takes usually more time for the second than for the first i.e. learning the second language is not as rapid as that of learning the first. On the other hand a child, who does not share the mother tongue with his counterparts, learns the language of his immediate environment faster than the language of instruction.

Key words: Conditioning, Dependency, Oblige, Reinforcements, Sustain

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As mentioned above, in the cases where there is a rapid learning, it is recognizable that the environment is also a determining factor for effective teaching and learning process. The theories of Jean Piaget, concerned with the growth and development of children during the Preoperational Stage, roughly from age two to age six or seven, say that the child learns to manipulate its environment symbolically through inner representations, or thoughts about his external world. During this stage it learns to represent objects by words and to manipulate the words mentally, just as it manipulated the physical objects during the first stage of life namely, the Sensorimotor Stage. During the third stage, the Concrete Operational stage, from age 7 to 11 or 12 there is a beginning of logic in the child's thought process and on the classification of objects by their similarities and differences.

During the Preoperational Stage, the child attempts to interact with the external world so as to communicate, share, collaborate, and to contribute his part in making sense of the world it lives in. At this stage of life, child becomes an active participant in the environment, thereby learning from the environment and at the same time, modifying its environment to suit its needs.

The participation of the child is natural on the basis of trial and error learning, through imitation and by various forms of Conditioning and Social Learning. A child is basically a helpless being who is dependent on its monstrous parents for its physical need, comfort, health and security. It is forced by its dependency to react to its parents with out any other option and even there be an option it is not known to it.

The second aspect to be noted is the fact that the child is free from social inhibitions and withdrawal. The third feature to be noted is the reinforcements that the child receives from the people around him and the amount of opportunities that he gets to correct and learn more.

The fourth feature that assists the rapid learning of a child is its involvement out of its joy that it experiences in stimulating his physical self and experiencing the change he brings about in his environment by his deeds.

On the contrary, the college environment is devoid of the nourishing features at the home environment that promoted the child to act, think and speak its mother tongue with greatest ease and comfort. They have no compulsion in learning and there is always an option for them to escape it.

A college student as an adult is always conscious of his surroundings and situations and his sense of self is in a dynamic mode; constantly shifting its interest to one's immediate gratification of needs and peer approval.

The opportunities that one gets as a student in college mostly go unnoticed by the weight of the options that the student has or secures to gain pleasure and secure peer approval, when compared to that of child in a school or in the hands of parents. The view of sacrificing immediate pleasure for a future goal is strange with college students. It is remarkable that a child takes all the opportunities even that of others' as his own and personalizes it. On the other hand an adult usually would not bother about activities that do not concern him.

The encouragement at the college level is very less and in fact the conscious self of an adult would not invite to bring about taking an opportunity that does not guarantee him success. Only a sure sense of success and the sure possibility of establishing himself recognizably would oblige an adult to pick up opportunities. The emotional commitment into the exercises and activities in the class room is naturally limited and so one can find that the effect of the regular class activities are not satisfactory. Thus, it is clear that few of these important attributes required to enhance effective teaching and learning are unavailable in the atmosphere of a college classroom.

Awareness of elementary grammar is always essential but with out performance in the form of activities students' knowledge in grammar remains stagnant. The syllabus may contain a list of programs like Speech generation, speaking about other people, Asking questions,

Persuasive speaking, Principles of Communication, Presentation Skills etc.,but without the creation of an atmosphere of compulsion, opportunities, positive reinforcement and involvement, the above mentioned activities may not yield the desired harvest. It remains as a matter of routine with little life in it.

An adult is never expected to be put into a compulsive situation in which he has no other chance but to follow it. Educational organization and system can only limit his freedom but will not bring cooperation from the part of a student. Here it becomes necessary to enhance their training in situations in which each individual has to respond by all means, along with the awareness of basic rudiments that may help to learn and communicate effectively. For example, a group assignment given to students from different states (political) which necessarily extracts conversations among the students may help the cause. In the situation where there are no non-locals group activities that demands communication in the language to be learned under strict supervision may be helpful.

Getting the young people involved into the activities and exercises is a difficult task. However, it can be achieved by creating situations in which they are interested in and in which they would naturally react. Young people would love to watch movies, sing songs, and speak like living heroes and celebrities in the movies. Discussions over movies, heroes in history, sportsmen, and politician will make them to render full involvement and attention. Activities should be based on the areas of interest of an individual and his attitude. For example discussion over a cricket match immediately after the match may make any one to share his or her opinion.

Reinforcements at the college level for learning language go unattended as they are not considered to be that important, when compared to vital subjects that would provide employment. Students at the college level have the tendency to take efforts only if there is a possibility being admired or rewarded. They will not be interested to take up some thing if they are not sure of the change or measurable success in various stages of the development. Exercises and activities based on visible progress will invite young students to pick up opportunities. Stage performances, that would attract every ones attention, will be something that young people would love to target at. Preparation for a big occasion will motivate them than marks in the examination.

Encouragement is really a rare thing in college life and unlike schools though the lecturers are available always there is a distance between them. Here there is a requirement of guidance and role model which would make them to behave like him or her. Students should regularly practice their language and present it. Creation of a taste to imitate the language of the native speakers and a feeling that they would learn a better kind of accent may encourage them. Students of the same category with limited number will have co-operation for learning. Comparison done in front of them and expression of the opinion may be avoided, because this might help few but demoralize many. Competitions between them in small groups may also help them to put extra effort and the victories that they get will really be an encouragement.

Thus activities based on curriculum that generate compulsion to undergo, giving consistent opportunities, encouragement with regular short term targets and achievements and most importantly inviting total involvement of the students, would sustain language learning and teaching to be more effective.

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