

DIGITIZATION AND SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

Language acquisition is a matter of great concern in the modern day world. Since language is a very effective medium of communication, language competence came to receive serious attention among global students. Besides, English being a world language, the competence of English became a cardinal aspect of study.

Language experiences are getting richer and enhanced with the digital world. With the research inputs from Second Language Acquisition it has been possible to help Second Language learners acquire native-like performance in English Language. Native-like performances can be acquired with these inputs, using regular teaching aids, practice, and efficient infrastructure. The present paper attempts to discuss in length, the use of digitization and child's second language acquisition, with reference to three hypotheses: The Contrastive Analysis Hypotheses, The Inter-language Hypotheses and The Creative Construction Hypotheses, for better second language teaching at primary classes.

Keywords: Digitization, Second Language Acquisition, Creative Construction Hypotheses, Contrastive Analysis Hypotheses, Inter Language Hypotheses

Introduction

Language acquisition is a matter of great concern in the modern day world. Since language is a very effective medium of communication, language competence came to receive serious attention among global students. Besides, English being a world language, the competence of English became a cardinal aspect of study.

Language experiences are getting richer and enhanced with the digital world. Use of e- books, audio books, videos, audio lingual teaching aids have not only enhanced the quality of learning, but also brought them closer to the effective and efficient learning. With the research inputs around the globe in Second Language Acquisition it has been possible to help Second Language learners acquire native-like perfor-

mance in English language. Native- like performances can be acquired with these inputs, using regular teaching aids, practice, and efficient infrastructure. Most of our schools are equipped with infrastructure but unfortunately the teachers of English, at Marathi medium primary schools in Maharashtra, lack the necessary digital knowledge. With digital awareness teachers also need to be made aware of the language acquisition process. The present study attempts to discuss in length, the use of digitization and child's second language acquisition, with reference to three hypotheses: The Contrastive Analysis Hypotheses , The Inter Language Hypotheses and The Creative Construction Hypotheses , for better second language teaching at primary classes.

¹According to noted linguist Rod Ellis, "SLA refers to the subconscious or conscious process by which a language other than the mother tongue is learnt in a natural or a tutored setting."

For many years it has been observed that the proficiency of English language of Marathi medium children has been substantially marginal. So the researcher decided to conduct a small survey on English language teaching, teaching aids used for English language and the available infrastructure at one of the rural school. It was observed that the teachers lacked the knowledge about child language acquisition. Further it was also observed that teachers did not use any specific teaching aids for English language. Preparing a new teaching aid was time consuming for the teachers.

If teaching process is augmented with digitization, the progress of language teaching will be not only optimized but also be providing effective speedy results. Education technologies like graphics, interactive language exercises, audio- video, audio lingual aids, etc should be used for teaching. In Second language learning the environment and input given will form learning experiences, which will largely influence the child's language.

The amalgamation of digitization with the three SLA hypotheses namely Creative Construction Hypothesis, Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and Inter language Hypothesis facilitates better second language teaching.

Second Language Acquisition

Learning to speak in the second language, teachers have to inculcate the habit of speaking and thinking in English. As native speakers of Marathi, children learning English, as a second language are just like the new born babies. They assimilate as much as possible from the environment. In the early years of the language learning teachers play a crucial role in the child language development. Since the child spends his maximum time in school and with peers the thought process and the language are largely influenced by

them. Hence, the teacher's competence largely impacts the language learning. This majorly influences the child's language and the performance.

²According to Freeman the teacher's "command of English is typically defined in operational terms as increased general English proficiency, fostering the assumption that increasing the teacher's capacity in the language will lead to improved classroom teaching, and thus to student learning."

For teaching of second language it is important for a teacher to understand the child language acquisition process. The study of second language acquisition was influenced by the behaviorist view since 1960's. According to the behaviorist view language learning was a result of habit formation. These habits could be reinforced by existing habits. In 1957 it was Robert Lado who brought the concept of the Contrastive Analysis Hypotheses in his book *Linguistics across Cultures*. This Hypothesis is based on the assumption that second language acquisition is the development of a new set of habits. In it, errors mostly occur because of the interference of first language. According to him Language learning was the result of habit formation and was highly influenced by the behaviorist view of conditioning. Difficulty of a particular error depends on the differences in the first and second/ target language. The latest hypothesis states that if the mother tongue or first language is completely different from second language it is easy to learn the target language. In this study the first language is Marathi and second language is English.

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was succeeded by the Inter Language Hypothesis. In 1972 American professor Larry Selinker published an article. In his article he states that the learners have not reached the proficiency level of the second language.

The learner's language will have extended patterns of first language. They will express themselves using the meaning and grammar of the first language. For example a child learning to say My name is Nisha will say, My name Nisha.

The 1981 Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was succeeded by the Creative Construction Hypothesis, with the joint efforts of Heidi Dulay, Marina Burt and Stephan Krashen. The Creative Construction Hypothesis was based on first language interference and states that first language acquisition is equal to second language acquisition. Children form mental structures of the second language to be learned on the basis of the knowledge of first language.

Digitization is the process converting all the available information into digital format. In layman's term digitization, means enhancement of user experience and efficiency building. Efficiency drives saving of operational cost. Effectively both add to the process optimization, when augmented with digitization, it

will give progress based output. Here the teaching process is optimized using digital aids for the effective teaching of Second language.

Proposed Model

For the teaching process to be optimized teachers need to be equipped with plenty of pictures of words, sounds, objects etc. These pictures could be used for preparing flash cards, matching sets, domino sets, and other type of such teaching aids. This will save a lot of teacher's time in terms of preparing teaching aids and planning their usage. While working on the teaching aids teachers get an opportunity to review the activity planned for the lesson. This indirectly becomes a practice session for the teachers, providing them an opportunity to prepare for the class. Without digital aids most of the teacher's time is spent in preparing the teaching aids. This provides less scope for review and practice. It is important for a teacher to understand the basic competencies of English language. The English language text book prescribed by state government of Maharashtra briefs on the competencies through guidelines provided in the text book. These competencies can be developed using appropriate teaching aids and lesson plans.

The competencies and the syllabus were mapped by the researcher to the teaching aids to be used. Teaching aids and competencies were based on the three hypotheses. The researcher extensively used technology for the preparation of lesson plans, training the teachers to teach English language in the rural school, with the help of power points, word file, and various other resources.

Methodology

To give a brief view of the proposed model here are a few things that the researcher had implemented. A Google group was created using the email addresses of the teachers. Teachers were trained to use Google drive of the researcher. All the required resources like, pictures, lesson plans, vocabulary exercises, activities, games, dictionary links, presentations, word files, poems, rhymes etc. were stored in the Google drive. So the drive acted as the knowledge hub for the teachers. Teachers would just login from their accounts and click on the link of the Google drive. This helped the teachers to prepare their lesson plans for teaching. The researcher would interact with the teachers on regular basis using what's app and video calling facility. As a result the interest of the teachers was developed. The researcher would conduct a formal training session every month, for the teaching of acquisition and phonology. The training session provided a scope for personal interaction with teachers. The regular interactions boosted the morale of the teachers. The resources used by the researcher were exclusively downloaded from various English websites and teaching forums online.

Through the trainings and discussions teachers themselves learned to correlate the acquisition theory and teaching methods. During the training sessions teachers were trained with the help of children from class 1 to class 4. Actual lesson plans were demonstrated to the teachers using games and activities. Teachers and children together learned the significance of English language.

The first language of the teachers was also Marathi. Hence teachers were exposed to English language using stories, poems, pictures, flash cards and discussions. The teaching aids were actually prepared using images from the internet with the help of teachers.

As per the latest trend of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis acquisition of two different languages will be easier and same. Marathi language is linguistically distinct from English in terms of alphabets, phonology, lexis, syntax. Hence acquisition of Marathi language is equal to acquisition of English language. According to the Creative Construction Hypothesis children have a mental representation of structures of the language to be learnt on the basis of first language knowledge. While teaching the second language child have their own structures. For example while saying- I like Mango, they would say I Mango like. Many times the words used English words are used in Marathi example bus, pen, pencil etc. So they constructed simple sentences using these words.

Teachers can use teaching aids and videos to improve listening skills of children. This in turn will help children to listen to the target sounds and pronunciation, using flash cards and matching sets for practice. At this time children are exposed to the different language forms, gradually taking them to the next stage.

The next stage was the Inter-language phase. The Inter-language Hypothesis claims to be a middle stage of language development. Gradually children start using the exact terms when heard frequently. This phase is a pivotal phase as children achieve a between stage of the first language and second language. They will use borrowed patterns from the first language, start expressing meanings using the grammar of first language or try to translate the actual word. At times children tend to use the parallel Marathi word for the English word example. I play ball to like, instead of saying I like *to* play ball.

It is from this phase teachers started recording the progress of children with reference to listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Teachers had followed a holistic approach for teaching of language forms using effective teaching aids, activities and worksheets. At each level she checked and clarified if the child has attained native-like or closer to native- like performance using performance tests. The results of the tests were indirectly acting as feedback for improvements in teaching.

Current Situation

Looking at the plight of corporation schools in Maharashtra where Marathi is the first language, having an expensive native speaker or proficient English teacher is unaffordable; besides qualified English teachers do not apply for corporation schools as a career making opportunity. Most of the corporation schools are in far off remote places. In this situation training the teachers or making them aware is a challenging task. This challenge can be partially achieved by using appropriate technology. For teachers to teach correctly it is important that they know the errors and corrections. If the teachers make too little corrections or ignore the errors completely this will lead to fossilization. This will be a part of their teaching and children will learn the same. Learning will take place but with full of errors. At this stage errors will end up becoming part of learner's Inter-language system, especially if they are not corrected or explained.

For example while teaching of sound /v/ if the pronunciation is not clearly understood or the teacher learns /w/ sound for /v/ then while saying the term *Van* she/ he will say /wxn/. In a similar way, words like *vase* or *very* will be articulated like /weis/ and /weri/, instead of the usual /veis/ and /veri/. Similarly the words and their spelling if not understood may be pronounced wrongly. The word 'know' begins with the letter 'k'; new learners of English are likely to pronounce this word as /no/ instead of the British R.P. /nəʊ/ or GIE /no:/ This is just the case of pronunciation. If we consider other features of the English language say grammar, contextual use of the words, its meanings can be taught to teachers with the help of technology.

To help teachers improve on their pronunciation and use online resources the researcher used a few of the interesting websites that not only helped the teachers but also gain confidence in preparing their own lesson plans and activities. The websites and activity sheets reduced some of the teacher's workload to some extent and utilize their time for teaching. A few websites are shared below that helped them to prepare the lessons and improve their English too.

1. www.iosun.org : a wonderful search engine that allows searching content in the form of power point files, word or Pdf file format as per the requirement.
2. www.busyteacher.org/18855-teach-english-to-3-year-old-esl-teachers-ask: a website that allows one to ask questions, have discussions and have lesson plans.
3. www.teachingenglishgames.com/esl-games-for-kids: this website shares many games, stories, flash-cards and tips for teaching of English as a second language. Teachers can alter the content as per their need of the class.

4. www.jumpstart.com/parents/activities/english-activities: Another interesting website that offers teaching of English with the help of activities and teaching aids. These teaching aids can be downloaded and printed or directly printed from the website.
5. www.greenbeankindergarten.org/kindergarten-lesson-plans/lesson-plans: this exclusive website offers lesson plans with teaching aids and guidelines for teaching at early years only for kindergarten.

Other popular websites like Salman Khan Academy, British council and BBC offer many online programs and discussion forums for teaching of English as a second language. These websites also offer printable worksheets for class activities.

Demerits

Technology usage too has its drawbacks. Too much of dependence on the technology might hamper the creativity of children and teachers. Another issue regarding the websites is that the content and material available needs to be monitored. All the available content may not be relevant to the teaching of English as a second language in the Marathi culture. So a guided effort needs to be followed while amalgamating technology with language acquisition theories.

Conclusion

Teaching of English as a second language is the need of the hour and indeed a cardinal aspect of study. The three hypotheses mentioned above have their own limitations, but can be definitely useful to understand the language acquisition process. The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and Creative Construction Hypothesis could be considered from teaching perspective and Inter- language Hypothesis could be considered from the learning perspective. A proper execution of the above proposed model could act as a crucial factor for the second language teaching – learning at rural areas.

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