

**MOTHER TONGUE (L1) vis-a-vis OTHER TONGUE (L2)?****Dr Arun Behera****ABSTRACT**

Learning an additional language is often a tough issue because it involves the complexness of learning a language other than one's tongue instead of the first language of an individual. This paper proposes to highlight the prospects and edges of the skill-based learning of the L2. All learners intrinsically acquire a language by two means: a) acquisition of one's own language/mother tongue, and b) learning another language. Acquisition may be a subconscious and intuitive method, almost like that employed by a baby to choose up the primary language (L1); and also the second is aware learning, within which a learner is awake to his/her own learning method.

**INTRODUCTION**

The distances between and among nations are shrinking, and so the world now has become a global village. English is used across the globe rampantly. Keeping this in the background, we have to learn and teach English as an SL (L2). It will help us adapt to the existing system.

Globalization makes it incumbent on the learners to a language comprehensible to the entire globe. English has gained the status of a global language and is used as the first language of several countries, e.g. the UK, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada etc. because the number of the people who use English as a means of communication far more exceeds the number of the people who speak it as their mother tongue.

So far as English in India is concerned, India has been greatly influenced by the language for over two and a half centuries in almost all the spheres of life such as Education, Medicine, Technology, Media, Tourism etc. Text materials relating to the subjects of Science, Engineering and Technology, Medicine, etc. are available only in English. Moreover, there is no single language that is acceptable to the whole country. Since several languages are spoken in India, we need to

have a common language- a lingua franca.

A number of factors affect the teaching-learning process in India. The students in India can be categorized into two: the one is having the regional language as medium of instruction from the primary level and the other is having English for the same. Hence, the problem of teaching English as a second language to the Indian students starts from the pre-schooling stage. Further environment and family background play a vital role in success of learning process.

In India, at least two factors affect education: a) the poor family background, and b) lack of infrastructure. Many parents are not able to fund good education to their children. In contrast, they are willing to engage the children in different jobs in order to earn money. This is the prime hurdle affecting teaching-learning process. Secondly, the infrastructure or the lack of it. Many schools in India do not have proper school buildings, class rooms, laboratories, libraries etc. Moreover, it is also not adequate to facilitate the conducive ambiance for the same.

### **LSRW: THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS**

Using all the four language skills, viz. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing is a useful tool to learn a new language. All the rules governing a language may not be indispensable, but practicing it is surely important. Bringing all these aspects into a lesson will add variety to it - and help the learner pragmatically practice the language. Learners can actually do a whole grammar sheet without mistakes. But, when asked sensitive questions, for example, "Could you describe your father?" the learners may have problems in answering. This is generally due to the emphasis given in many school systems to learning grammar.

### **LISTENING: Listening Is Important**

Listening is rarely taught in schools because the educators assume that it can be achieved automatically. But effective listening is a skill. Like any other skill, competence in listening is achieved through learning and practice. A good listener is not just a silent receptacle, passively receiving the thoughts and feelings of others. To be an effective listener, we must respond with verbal and nonverbal cues which let the speaker know that we are listening and understanding. Listening is a precious gift. It enables even a new born baby to speak L1 without even learning the alphabet.

One can Listen effectively if she/he:-

- a) Doesn't interrupt;
- b) Is open;
- c) Pays attention to nonverbal cues.
- d) Listens carefully and try to visualize;
- e) Is attentive;
- f) Maintains the eye contact;
- g) Asks questions.

**SPEAKING:**

The high importance the employers place on spoken communication has been recognized globally across disciplines. Knowledge and technical skill are really significant, but these must be accompanied with a high standard of communication skills, especially oral. Furthermore, oral communication and presentation skills are considered the best skills for someone to get a job or enhance one's career. Speaking skill includes effective interpretation, composition and presentation of information, ideas and values to a specific audience. Individual and business relations can be maintained with the help of this skill.

It is however regrettable that in our country, particularly in certain states, speaking skill is given least importance. We acknowledge the importance and benefits of spoken communication, but we are not able to account for its significance. For instance, during our schooling we get very less opportunity and suitable platform for speaking. Because the classes are totally teacher-centered, where teachers are only teaching and the students are playing the role of mute spectators. As a consequence, when we go for higher studies to colleges and universities, the fear factor still prevails while speaking which becomes an obstacle in career progress. As a result, this apprehension dents the opportunity of enhancing the skill. This is one of the prime reasons for poor placement in technical colleges. Furthermore, the mother tongue influence (MTI) in learning and speaking the second language, causes less intelligibility of L2.

Speaking skills can be improved by if one follows the few steps suggested below:

- a) Tries to relax when she/he speaks
- b) Practices wherever and whenever she/he can;

- c) Doesn't speak too fast;
- d) Tries to respond to what people say to her/him;
- e) Tries to experiment with the English she/he knows;
- f) Builds her/his confidence.

## **READING**

Reading skills make readers move towards writing the meaning and reach the target of comprehension and fluency which are specific skills. These skills help a reader to read whatever is written and assign meaning to it. Reading aloud is another skill that also can help the learner make her/his tongue move properly resulting in proper articulation of words and sentences. In this age of information, reading is a necessary survival skill.

One can improve one's reading skill if she/he:

- a) Knows why she/he is reading;
- b) She/he doesn't need to read all;
- c) Selects the chapters and articles that are important;
- d) Scans before she/he reads;
- e) Optimizes her/his reading environment;
- f) Once she/he starts, she/he doesn't stop;
- g) Be Consistent.

## **WRITING**

Writing is somehow understood to be the most difficult skill. The learner, therefore, needs to practice a lot. Writing well is a necessary skill for a career, especially in Public Relations. In order to succeed as a professional in PR, one has to put in a lot of practice and commitment. If one is giving one's writing to anyone else to look at, accurate grammar will show that they are professional and competent, as well as making the writing look clean, neat, and generally easy to follow. Positive criticism may help the learner realise her/his mistakes in the work. In order to get attention, writing must be concise, meaningful, audience-targeted. The main objective of writing effectively is to express the ideas and not impress the audience.

Writing skill can be improved if the learner follows these steps:

- a) Plans ahead;
- b) Identifies her/his audience;
- c) Spells properly;
- d) Uses proper grammar;
- e) Reviews her/his writing;
- f) Polishes her/his writing.

### CONCLUSION

To sum up, deliberate and concerted attempt is required to learn L2. It would be a really tough task to achieve proficiency and competence in second language. It is true that we are frequently exposed to L1 at every stage and at all levels. In effect, we are less exposed to L2. The need therefore is to give our learners as much exposure to L2 as possible thereby making them use L2 with felicity.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Arun Behera is an Assistant Professor of English in Sri Sathya Sai University, Bangalore. He has over 22 years of experience in various capacities such as HoD, Principal, Senate member, Board of Studies member, IGNOU coordinator, NSS Program Officer etc. Dr Behera has published five books, edited *Expression*, reviewed *A Little Book of Language* and published 50 articles. He is in the review panel of *IJEE* and *IJEL* and editorial board of *IJSSE* and *IJEE*. He has been conferred Bharat Excellence Award and his bio-note has appeared in *Asia Pacific Who's Who*, *Asia's Who's Who* and *Famous India's Who's Who*.