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FOUNDATIONS OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT
English language teaching can be applied at all ages and at all levels, it is a process that must be taken very seriously. Foreign language teaching at an early age is increasingly taught in our country in recent years. Language teaching and learning is gaining great focus and importance. The active exposure of an ESL (English as a second language) learner to language content during the early years of language acquisition by an English language teacher promotes the learning of a second or foreign language. The ESL programs designed for young learners, usually referring to school-aged kids less than 12 years, help these non-native speakers of English to become comfortable with language use. This is demonstrated through reading comprehension, spoken fluency, and effective writing. The ESL teachers must focus on appropriate language teaching methodologies and strategies which can be effectively incorporated in teaching English as a second language for developing English language competency during early education.
KEYWORDS: *ESL, second language teaching, activity-based learning, English language teaching, principles and stages of SLA*

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a conscious process of learning another language other than the First Language (L1) of the learner. The First Language (L1) refers to the language the child is exposed to and learns from birth. It is generally the language of the parents or caregivers, and it is possible to have more than one L1. The Second Language (L2) refers to the language learned after L1 has been acquired. The teaching of English as a second language (TESL) or as a foreign language (TEFL) refers to teaching the English language to students whose mother tongue is not English. These students have different first languages/native languages. An ESL learner implies that this English language learner has already learned and acquired another language, generally the native language, before learning English.

Language teaching and learning is gaining great focus and importance. Today, the start of the language learning is begun at five or six years of age. There are certain critical periods or ages in a child's language development. Without the necessary cooperation of the family and the environment, serious issues can arise in successful language teaching. There are the two main schools of thought in language development in young learners. The two main theories for abstract thinking in younger learners are produced by L.S. Vygotsky who has investigated the role of social and cultural factors in the making of human consciousness and by J. Piaget who has investigated first to make a systematic study of the acquisition of understanding in children.

Jean Piaget explored highly influential issues on the stages of mental development among children. According to Piaget's theory, we can reach full human intelligence passing down four stages of cognitive development:
1. Sensory Motor Stage (0-2 years). This stage focuses on learning through touching, looking and grasping.
2. Pre-Operational Stage (2-7). This stage involves learning things with words and images;
3. Concrete Operational Stage (7-11 years). This stage is directed on logical thinking about concrete events;
4. Formal Operational Stage (11-15 years). This stage involves learning with abstract reasoning.
Generally, Piaget recognized that the conditions are necessary not only for language learning but also for any type of learning.

Conversely, Vygotsky rejected Piaget's ideas that children develop independently specific stages as the result of social interaction. Vygotsky stated that there is no any fixed connection between cognitive development and age progression, but it is essential how social factors contributed to cognitive development. He claimed that we have born with four elementary mental functions attention, sensation, perception and memory. It is considered our cultural and social environment and it allows us to use the basic skills and develop to higher mental functions. Besides, through being in communication with other people, we acquire our cultural values, beliefs and problem-solving skills.

According to these theories we can classify into 6 stages of first language acquisition:
1. Pre-talking stage (0-6 months). Children produce vowel sounds.

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2. Babbling stage (6-8 months). At this stage kids start to use vowel and constant sounds.
3. Holophrastic stage (9-18 months). Children begin to produce complex sounds, try to structure their first, full word.
4. The two-word stage (18-24 months). Children produce the sentence that it contains two words but they leave prepositions of the word.
5. Telegraphic stage (24-30 months). At this stage children can form more than two-word phrases according to the grammar structure.
6. Later multi-word stage (30 + months). Children has higher potential on expressing more complex ideas and having more vocabulary.
In general, children can acquire new language through communication of parents, teacher or peers, social interaction, memorisation and repetition.

THE PRINCIPLES AND STAGES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

There are few stages of second language acquisition:

1. Pre-Production stage. This stage is also considered the silent phase because they begin to learn vocabulary but they produce a few new words. They can understand more than producing them. In this stage we can use flashcards and pictures to check their understanding and motivate them to say the word.
2. Early Production stage. At this stage children begin to list new words and try to use them in short phrases. They are able to understand question forms but still the output is limited. Learners of this stage is useful to practice substitution drilling. They practice to complete full sentences and also use their vocabulary.
3. Speech Emergence stage. Learners are ready to communicate by short phrases and sentences. They are able to understand more and equally to produce more. We can use picture activities that learners consolidate more vocabulary and describe the picture using adjectives.
4. Intermediate Fluency stage. Learners have higher potential of overall understanding and producing language. Learners begin to form complex sentence structures by related clauses and conjunction words in communication. They are able to think in the second language and it is the sign of the beginning of real conversation.
   For the learners at this stage, we can give them the tasks to prepare debate arguments. They can utilize vocabulary in their arguments and compare different aspects of the argument.
5. Advanced Fluency Stage. This final stage may involve extended period of time. They train to reach the higher levels of fluency and accuracy of language. Children at this stage are almost recognised the equal to a near-native level of speech. Role-plays, debates, working with authentic materials are beneficial to develop their skills.
   Furthermore, there are the main principles of teaching young learners English as a foreign language.

THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

1. Classroom management is essential for teaching young learners. Teachers should introduce a set of classroom rules and standard during the very first lesson. Starting from setting classroom rules and expectations help learners to understand what is expected of them. There are some examples of setting classroom rules in a classroom:

- Arrive on time for class;
- Arrive prepared for class (with pencil, notebook, textbook or other materials);
- Look at the teacher and listen while they are speaking;
- Speak English as much as.

Young learners have shorter attention. Another important guideline is creating a safe learning environment where each learner can explore their new skills, build good relationship with other learners and demonstrate their talents. Setting classroom rules, diversifying activities and building rapport are a few ways to effectively manage your class of young learners.

2. Language acquisition is important principle in teaching second language to young learners. Young learners acquire second language by real-life example, they can listen to parents, teacher or peers. Besides, young learners like to imitate and they are often not aware of themselves and usually they are ready to enjoy activities. Teachers always model the language first and learners repeat it several times.

There a wide range of ways to motivate and engage young learners in the classroom:
1. Use a range of materials and teaching aids. Using a coursebook is essential at the lessons but incorporating other authentic materials such as videos, songs, quizzes make your lessons more productive and interesting. Moreover, the usage of visual aids and realia are essential in engaging young learners in a class.
2. Setting clear goal and having clear aim is beneficial to young learners. Even young learners want to know what is the aim and what can do to achieve from each lesson.

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3. Set clear rules and expectation from the start. It is a good strategy to keep discipline under control in the classroom. It assists learners how to behave in the classroom, understand what rules they should follow.
4. Don't over correct. Learning another language is a huge challenge but mostly learners are getting over the fear of making mistakes. If we continually correct our students mistakes, they may get embarrassed in front of the their peers. Let your students talk freely, and even if they don't use perfect grammar, refrain from correcting them. The teacher should observe their learning process and at the end of the lesson you list their mistakes in your note and correct them all together at the end of the class.
5. Give praise and rewards.
It is important to reward good behaviour and effort. This can be verbal such as Well done! Good job! and can reward for behaviour and work such as giving a sticker or any certifications.
6. Add a competitive element into the activities.
A competitive element encourages students to complete a task in limited time. The teacher can divide students into groups and set up activities in limited time. This can encourage students to win in completion of activity.

Moreover, we have beneficial learning techniques to engage young learners in a class. For example, learning through stories is productive way of interacting young learners to the lesson. They like story time, bring story events to life pretending in different roles and really love getting into character.

Also, marathon story is good way to interact learners in narrating story events. They do the activities in standing position and start with a sentence, the next person adds to the sentence, the next person adds to the sentence so that it makes sense and moves on. Teachers need to keep in mind that we should not teach grammar explicitly, instead we can use some sample sentences and learners should repeat the sample. Next, the teacher can personalize the target language and involves the student one-to-one. One more way, the teacher can use "Simon says" game in teaching grammar. For example, in teaching active verbs we can use this game.

Simon says "Jump and down"
"Touch your knees".
Finally, using topic-based teaching can be beneficial for young learners. Topic-based learning can involve a wide range of activities. This type of learning is beneficial for learners who are shy and reluctant to participating in oral production. It also permits students to explore subject matter at greater depth and to make better connections among different areas of learning. This provides a deeper understanding of the content being taught and allows students to transfer what they have learnt from one subject to the next.

Teaching a language to children is not an easy job. However, if the appropriate methods and approaches are utilized, it will result in success. Language teachers need to have some characteristics to create a good language-learning environment. First, a language teacher needs to be patient, knowledgeable about individual differences, know the techniques and methods of language teaching, know about language acquisition and the learning stages, different age groups needs and interests, material evaluation and production. In addition, a successful language teacher should speak clearly and must show native language models, use real language users' conversations in the classroom, bring reality to the classroom, pay attention to the classroom setting and seating arrangement of the children, and use body language effectively.

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