

THE MAGNITUDE OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AMONG INDIAN GRADUATES

Dr.M.Janet
Assistant Professor of Commerce
Geetha Jeevan College of Arts and Science
Kurukulalai
mjanetsundar@gmail.com

Language is one of the indispensable proponents that binds humanity and endorses the overall growth of the human environment. There is a stifling stipulation in the utilization of the common word. Living in the second decade of this new age, language has developed a high demand for universality. People are required to work in a system that works on the speculated and specialized donation of coordinated labor. Hence, it is prerogative for the functioning of the whole world to adhere to the command of a single language. The only practical difficulty in choosing the right mode or channel of communication is the plurality of languages available at our disposal. In India, based on current official reports, there are twenty-two official languages. Comparatively the world speaks about a hundred different ones. The practical liabilities in communication are solved by the recognition of a common tongue. English is given the position of “Lingua- Franca” i.e., bridge language or trade language. It is the language that is used by the world to run all aspects of human trade. According to Philip Shaw, “Speakers who appear not to know this language (English) well will be addressed in what appears to be their first language if possible, but as long as both sides show that they know the lingua franca, it is the preferred option. Lingua franca use has always needed negotiation and adaptation and each situation is different.”

English, if it is not spoken originally in a nation, it is given the privilege of being used as the second language. Roughly speaking, including India, English is hailed as the second language in almost all the countries of the world. It is also referred to as the Additional Language. The second language of a country is said to hold a dominant position since it is used as the primary mode for internal and external communication. Miao tells that, “The term ‘second language acquisition’ in a broad sense refers to the learning of a non-native language after the first language (L1) (i.e., the native language) has been learned, either in a naturalistic setting or in a formal classroom setting”. (Miao). When English is taught to natives of a country where English is not the native language, it is called Teaching English as a Foreign Language in ESL. There are various approaches to impart language acquisition to non-native speakers. English has a wide reach all over the world. In some countries, English is a strict part of the general educational curriculum. It is the medium of instruction in many educational institutions. Many countries, despite using English as an acquired tongue have developed deep discourses in linguistics, literature, and approaches to teaching English. A fair amount of research and development of Second Language Acquisition is seen in all the countries of the world.

Statistics show that India gives the second language more priority for improvement in contrast to other Asian countries like Japan, Korea or Taiwan. Data confirms that apart from Singapore, Malaysia, and Hongkong, India shows stability in the proficient use of the language. In many sectors of the country English is more or less the language of communication. Unlike other nations like Japan and Korea India is very much prone to use the second language. Indians are the leaders in BPO; they are highly influenced by other English-speaking nations on a day to day basis. English as a medium for basic communication has become such a commonality due to the advent of technology. Everyone is directly or indirectly exposed to English language through apps, television, internet and even in the usage of smartphones. This exposure does not entirely proceed to be a sustainable source for influencing proper language fluency. Many people struggle to form words together to speak. Many young minds, despite their abundance of subject knowledge find great trouble in communicating them in English. The proper foundation required for learning the language is often crippled by improper schooling. Grammar has been insinuated as a complicated algorithm rather than a correctional tool that shapes the language. No general effort is taken on the societal level to improve second language acquisition. Graduates are inadequate in performing in their field of employment due to their lack of fluency. Some are pitiful enough to be completely ignorant of the language.

After reaching certain age it is psychologically arduous to acquire new skills. It is highly improbable that anyone of the current generation has never been exposed to the language. But laying the proper groundwork for the accurate use of the second language takes a considerable amount of focus and attention that aging always does not guarantee. SLA (Second Language Acquisition) is a neurological process. It cannot be said that all learners grow at similar strides. It is well known that there is a dire difference in acquiring the first language as compared with the second language. Hence there is considerable need to focus on the language acquisition of young adolescents; age is considered as a psychological perspective. Birdsong believes that, “The underlying logic is that language learning is biologically destined to be successful if begun in during a critical maturational epoch in early childhood, and that the failure of late learning to attain nativelike competence is the inevitable result of having passed a critical period of neural plasticity”.

Despite being prone to difficulty, the process of SLA is very much a possibility. Changes in attitude and character are considered to be major stimulants for SLA. The collaborative research of Gardner and Clement concludes that, “In many of these studies, attitudinal variables were related to the measures of motivation, leading to the conclusion that a sustained motivation to acquire a second language was related to attitudinal characteristics of the students. In 1966, Gardner proposed that a considerable proportion of the variability in second language achievement was related to a particular attitudinal/motivational configuration which he referred to as an Integrative Motive” (Gardner, Robert & Smythe).

Gardner and Clement tell that the necessary motivation stems from a number of wants or need. The urge to communicate or interact with the members of the target language is a major

cause for motivation. They also claim that the love for the language also determines the rate in which ELA is acquired. It is also a key point to note that the cultural situation of an individual also taps his or her motivation to learn.

It has been rightly pointed out by David Annousammy that SLA is a failure in many countries of the world. It is so, as he mentions, it is due to the fact that English is treated as a subject rather than a mode of communication. He throws light upon the flaw of the methodology being used. The written form is given more attention than the oral. Hence, language becomes dry with the constant reference towards grammatical rules. Furthermore, Second Language is not seen as a language as it is made unreal by constant focus on everything except the oral. Annousammy also implicates the difference in learning determined by motivation. He says that, "One of the secrets of nurturing motivation is to make room for the success which releases energy and sustains the effort. Since the real intake, which is the amount of input that is absorbed, depends on motivation, the teacher should carefully avoid creating failure complex"

It is important to note that age and motivation play a very major role in SLA, psychologically speaking. As Annousammy puts it, Malleability in younger minds makes SLA a more promising endeavor. As proficiency of English in young graduates is the topic of the day, it is imperative to understand that the older one gets the vaguer will be the possibility of SLA.

The system of primary education, which is the foundational stone to SLA, in our country is highly flawed. It is in fact true that many schools in the private sector offer proper development of ESL skills. Graduates from highly expensive institutions that follow CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education), ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education) and ICU (International Cambridge University) are very much in proper alignment for proper growth of SLA. But on a larger scale, the other classes of society apart from the top layer, are educated through less effective educational systems. In such institutions where education is both economically and qualitatively cheaper, SLA has less to no room for any improvement. Students who graduate from state board are left crippled with lack of proper training in the Second Language.

In the higher education arena SLA can be infused along with the mandatory curriculum. The problem is not completely solved here either. As the student reaches young adulthood, SLA has more chance for being gratified by self-interest rather than by institutionalized programs. When the graduate reaches the point where employment is a must, the struggle is mostly due to the lack of communication skills stunted by poor foundational SLA. In an article of *The Star* it was mentioned that, "Niagara College has contacted more than 400 students admitted to its January 2019 programs who had taken IELTS tests at locations in India, telling them they had to undergo a second English test or risk losing their offer of admission" (Nicholas).

It is indeed a predicament of great handicapping when a majority of a country is unable to understand what the vast majority of the world can. A recent article in *Forbes Magazine*

illustrates that, “The statistics on English speaking ability tends to be unreliable for a host of political reasons, but it is generally accepted that somewhere in the range of 30% are able, to varying degrees, speak English—though only a third have some semblance of reading and writing aptitude.” (Aulah)

The major part of the nation or more accurately about 70% of the population are extremely wanting in SLA. This may be subject to many reasons. One of the seminal reasons would be the economic background of the individual. It may be an asinine thought to entertain, but English is indeed the language of the wealthy and elite. A student is not liable for the lack of appropriate education provided by fiscal barriers. The deficit of fundamental education is the irrefutable state of affairs for some people even in this day and age. Education and education of the standard type may be an unfeasible regulation in India, but the power of the individual is far more sufficient for necessary progress. India only evaluates up to moderate proficiency in the EF EPI (English Proficiency Index). Half the country is literally unable to comprehend or use the Second Language. The current picture of the nation’s proficiency of English is conspicuously deplorable and dismal. Nevertheless, English for basic communication and business communication is much feasible to realize.

Freshly graduated job seekers find it a Himalayan task to execute decorously in interviews and other screening procedures to get employed. They falter and trip even to properly introduce themselves. As young adults they feel it to be a painful humiliation that could best be veiled rather than diagnosed and healed. Even though they are well equipped with the knowledge and the skills required for the job, the youngsters of today have a horrendous flaw in making these requirements perceptible to the selection committee. Group discussions give stage frights and hence make young minds deaf as well as mute. When it is too late to sit in classrooms, many do not seek the apt channel to educate themselves. Only a handful seek academies and institutions to make themselves fluent. IELTS (International English Language Testing System) organized by the British Council is an intricate barrier for most of the Indian youth. English used for business and employability is practical. It necessitates dynamic implementation in an environment that has the Second Language as a major source of communication. The proper ground work for SLA is of prime importance to the contemporary generation.

The prospect of failure is a big reason for de-motivation. The student should be made to apprehend that he is developing. Teachers should give up on making the student quaver in fright or be bamboozled. Students are not always complete beginners. Some may have prior knowledge that are taken from the unofficial channels of pop culture or entertainment.

The traditional and age long methods of ELT like the Grammar Translation Method or the Direct Method have proven to be less effective than those methods that involve oral development of the Second Language. Through extensive research and practice teachers have come to take “Principal Eclecticism” as a more applicable method for ELT. It is much different than all the older methods as it breaks the “one size fits all” pedagogy of language teaching. It is

more of a student friendly strategy that looks for the subjective nature of the student's aptitude and inability in SLA. The student is provided with relative resources that stimulate his need for using the language. The four aspects of a language - listening, speaking, reading and writing - are given individual attention. The language user who seems lacking in fluency and proficiency can acquire a good teacher to solve his issue. On the other hand not everyone can afford to spend the same energy, time, and resource. Hence, as mentioned earlier only motivation can serve as a medium to make one a better speaker of the language. The internet can come to the aid of those who are unable to spare their time for a tutor. You Tube channels, online classes and Google in general are effective in developing SLA.

In the work place, institutions are expected to make the essential programs to augment or develop English on the part of their employees. They can organize seminars or workshops to improve communicative English. But in this way English can only be taught on a shallow level that could only make the individual functional within the confines of the office. The needed efforts are also to be taken by the individual who is employed. Despite his busy hours, he could make good use of the internet or the various assorted choices of self-help books available. English can also be acquired on a sub conscious level, that is, when the subject finds himself in an appropriate environment where only the second language could be used. An environment as suitable as this may not be available for all, but it is proven to speed up SLA.

A general awareness of the inevitable dependency on the Second Language should be provided to the student community. This could act as a major correspondent to inculcate motivation. The college can be considered as the final chance for students to be trained in language acquisition. A separate course should be made a part of the regular curriculum that focusses entirely on SLA. Language acquisition is more or less replicating the process of driving a car. It should be made a part of one's everyday routine. It has to be practiced without fail. Graduates should on the whole take the needful steps for their own self improvement to learn English.

Fluency and potency in English has a wide array of benefits in the modern world. One acquires the aptitude to unbolt many doors that lay open to manifold avenues of employment. India is the leader in areas like I.T and BPO. Many are waiting to solicit those who can communicate with a decent level of English competency. Every field of employment, one could perhaps think of entering, makes English fluency a dynamic component of the criterion required. English is just a language and it should not be colored with anything that is cultural or political. The youth of today will find themselves in a very deplorable condition if they do not take heed to the predicament at hand. The coming years would only attest to be more complicated to function as adults in the civilized world.

Works Cited

- Shaw, Philip. "Conditions for Success in Lingua Franca Interaction." *ASp. La Revue Du GERAS*, Groupe D'étude Et De Recherche EnAnglais De Spécialité, 1 Oct. 2014, journals.openedition.org/asp/2514.
- Miao, Ruiqin. "Second Language Acquisition." *Second Language Acquisition - an Overview / ScienceDirect Topics*, www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/second-language-acquisition.
- Birdsong, David. "Plasticity, Variability and Age in Second Language Acquisition and Bilingualism." *Frontiers*, Frontiers, 18 Jan. 2018, www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00081/full.
- Gardner, Robert & Smythe, "Second Language Learning: A Social Psychological Perspective" *Canadian Modern Language Review*. Vol. 32, 1976, pp. 198-213.
- Anoussamy, David. "Psychological Aspects of Language Acquisition." *Journal of The Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 2006, vol. 32, No. 2, pp- 84-92.
- Keung, Nicholas. "More than 400 Students in India Told to Retake Language Tests after Niagara College Flags Concerns." *Thestar.com*, 9 Dec. 2018, www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/12/08/400-students-in-india-told-to-retake-language-tests-after-niagara-college-flags-concerns.html.
- Aula, Sahith. "The Problem With The English Language In India." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 6 Nov. 2014, www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2014/11/06/the-problem-with-the-english-language-in-india/#59204344403e.