

UNIT

1

PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING - L1 AND L2

Introduction

This unit focuses on some basic issues of language learning like what is language?, differences between *acquiring* a language and *learning* a language, and how we acquire mother tongue (L. 1) or learn a second/foreign language (L 2). The unit focuses more on language learning than on teaching because every teacher must be a learner first and then a teacher.

LESSON

1

Understanding Language

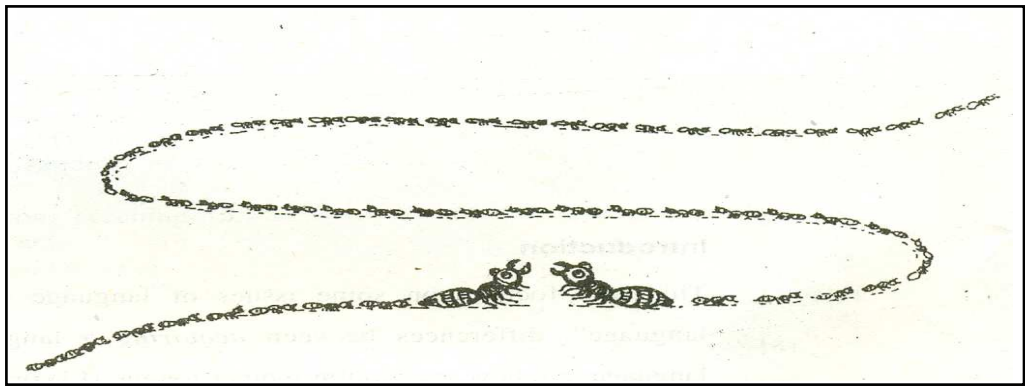
Objective:

After reading this lesson you will be able to–

- explain what language is and what its distinctive features are.

Task 1

Have you seen animals and insects communicating with each other? Look at picture 1. What are the two ants doing? How are they doing it? Write your answer in a few words.



Picture 1: Ants communicating.

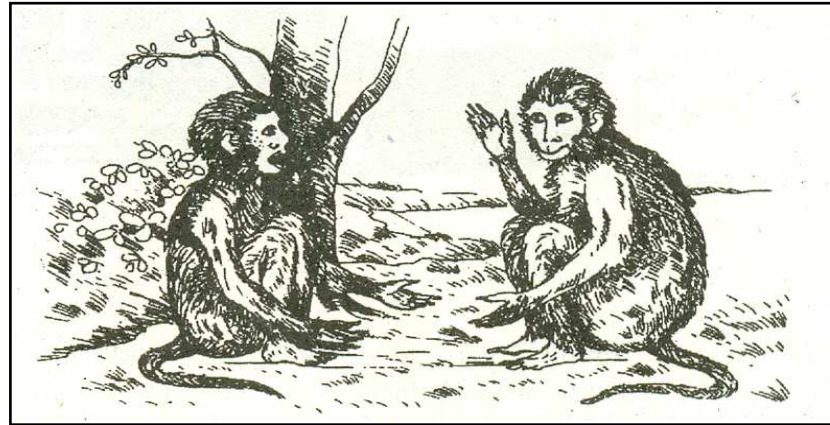
1.1 Anything with life communicates with each other. Thus communication takes place between man to man, man to animal, and animal to animal. See picture 2 a, b, c.



2a



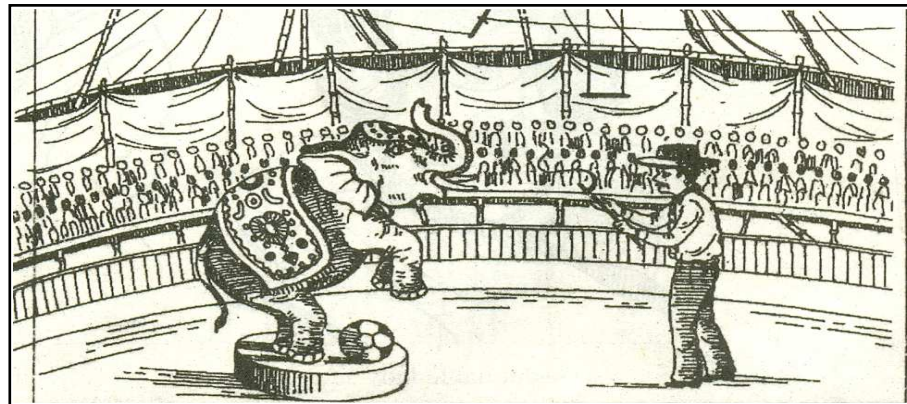
2b



2c

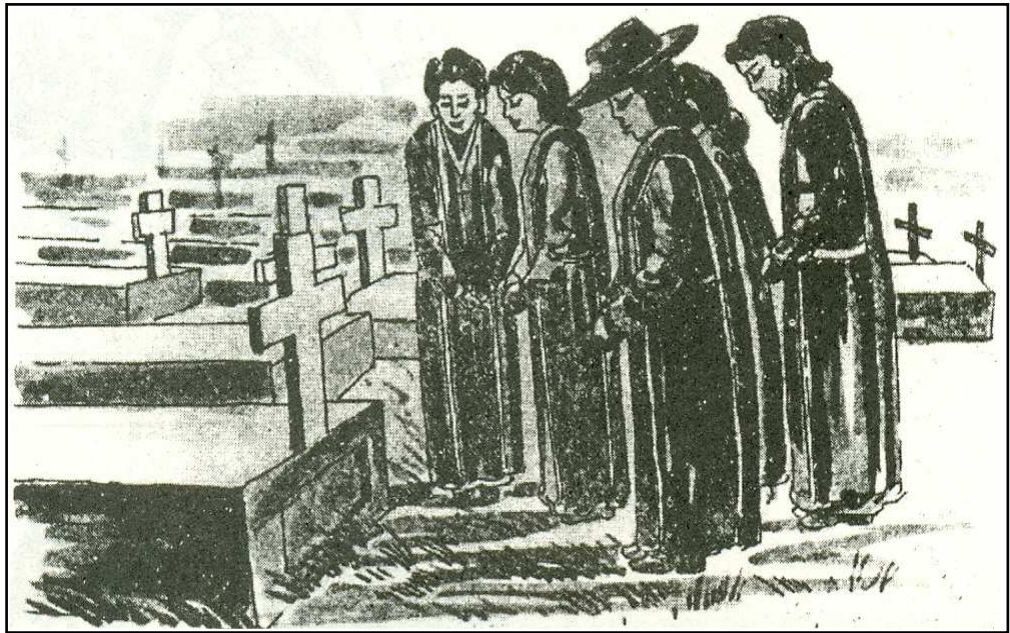
Picture 2 a, b, c: Communicating.

You must have seen on television, if not in real life, a man talking to his pet dolphin or lion, or elephant during an acrobatic show.



Picture 3: A circus show.

On the other hand, in the western society if you come across a lady dressed in all black, you immediately know she is mourning the death of someone in the family.

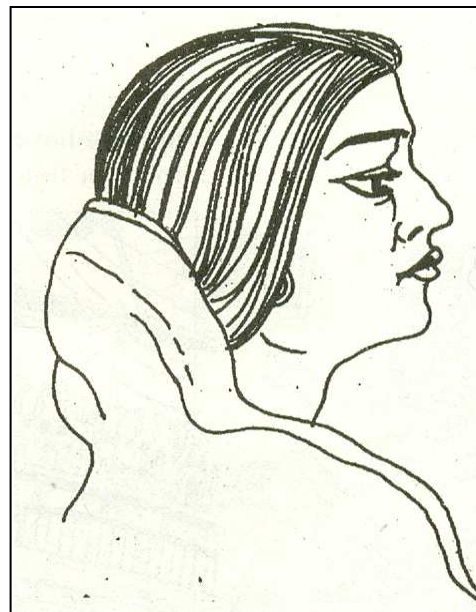


Picture 4: At the cemetery.

Again, a very fashionable lady would maintain a hair style which is quite different from the one maintained by a fairly simple lady.



a. Fashionable lady

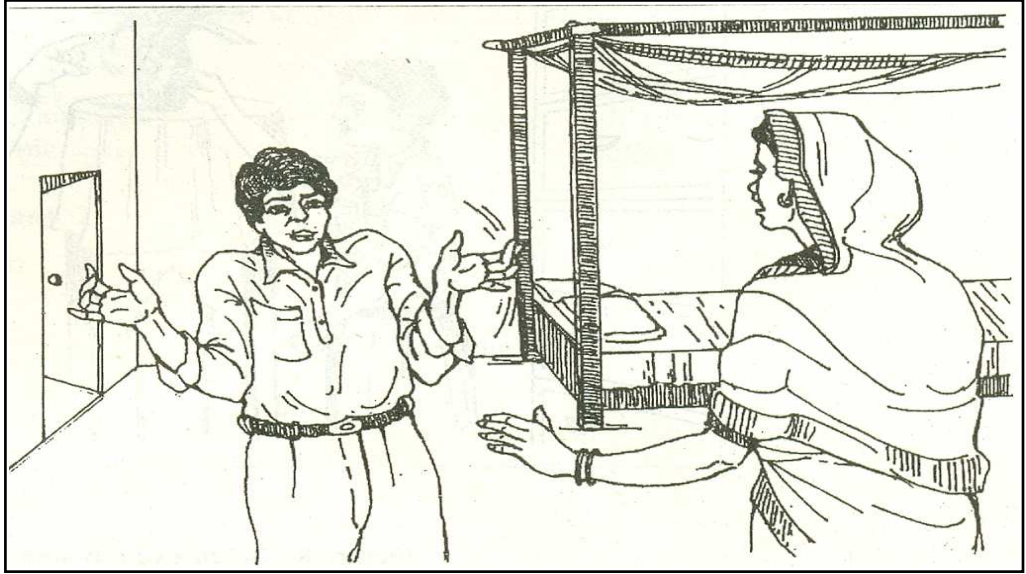


b. Simple Lady

Picture 5: a, b

Curls- বাঁকা করা
Shrugs- কাঁধ ঝাকান

One more example: if you ask your brother, 'Do you know where Zeeshan is?' and in reply, if he *curls* his lips and *shrugs* his shoulders what does it mean? It means he doesn't know where Zeeshan is.

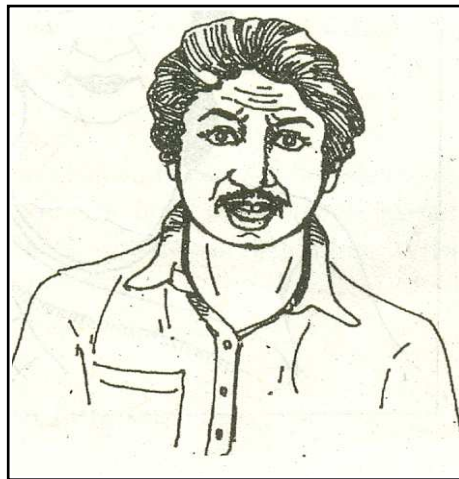


Picture 6: A boy curling his lips & shrugging his shoulders.

From all these examples we can see that messages are communicated or signaled in different ways. Each of these ways is a medium of communication and therefore **Language is a medium of communication.**

Can there be any other ways of communication?

Yes, people can communicate in many other ways. They can use facial expressions.



Picture 7

Gestures- অঙ্গভঙ্গি



Picture 8: Gestures/body movements.



Picture 9: Eye contact

People can get messages even through style and color of dress. Hair style can also tell you something about the person. In our social context if you see an old lady dressed in an all white sari, you immediately get the message, she is a widow.

Language is a medium of communication. It is a vehicle for carrying messages/information from one person to another.

Task 2

- (a) Can you think of any other ways of expressing feelings or emotions? Write them down.
- (b) What is language? Explain it in simple terms.

1.2 Forms of Language

Language can be divided into two distinct forms: (1) the phonic/spoken form and (2) the graphic/written form.

a. The Phonic Form

The word *phonic* means *of sound*. The phonic form of language means the sound aspect of language. Going back to history, language was primarily spoken. When a baby picks up a language, she first listens to its sounds and then imitates those. She learns the language she is spoken to. A person, who cannot hear, cannot speak a language. That is why we come across people who are both deaf and *dumb*.

Dumb- বোবা

The sound/phonic aspect is actually the one that keeps a language alive. There are books written in languages that have lost their spoken form. As nobody speaks in those languages they are now dead. Latin and Sanskrit are such dead languages.

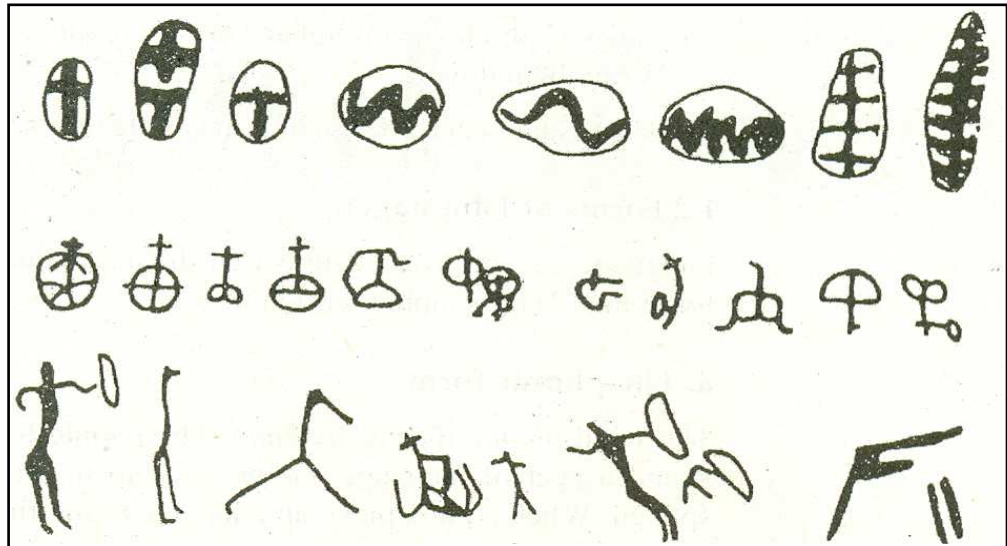
Task 3

- (a) Go through the social science books (পরিবেশ পরিচিতি- সমাজ) of your school, classes 4 and 5. Find out how many tribes (উপজাতি) have languages which have both forms - phonic and graphic. Write the names of the languages and the forms they have.
- (b) Explain the phonic form of language

b. The Graphic form of Language

Though human language was originally sound based, with the development of our civilization it had gained its written/graphic form. Before the written form of language appeared, pictures/symbols of animals and other objects were drawn on the walls, stones and hills. These pictures/symbols represented words which conveyed messages. This system of writing is known as *hieroglyphics* or hieroglyphs i.e. writing a language with pictures to represent words. Before the modern development of science and technology, it was the graphic/written form of language that helped in the transmission of knowledge from one end of the world to the other and again from one generation to another. Even today written language occupies a large portion of the medium of communication.

Hieroglyphics–
চিত্রলিপি বা চিত্রের মাধ্যমে
লেখা



Picture 10: Hieroglyphics.

Task 4

- Can you explain the graphic form of language?
- What do you mean by hieroglyphics? Explain.

1.3. Features of Language

Language has certain characteristic features. They are sometimes salient and sometimes covered deep in the language. Those that stand out are symbols, both spoken and written. Those that stay covered in the language are (1) system, and (2) arbitrariness.

a. Language and Symbols

Language is a combination of symbols. When spoken each sound/ utterance stands for an object/action. The sound is then a symbol of the object or action it signifies. For example, the word *mom* means mother. When you hear somebody pronouncing this word, you know what/who she means. Even when you see this word written you know what it means. Therefore, the word *mom*, *mummy* or *mother* is the symbol of the object/person it signifies. Symbols can be both written and spoken. Symbols can even signify actions, e.g. the words *eating* or *dancing*. Therefore, symbols are a salient feature of a language.

Task 5

Read the following statements and say whether they are true or false. Write T for true and F for false.

- a. Language is a combination of symbols.
- b. Symbols are only spoken sounds.
- c. No symbols can be used for actions.
- d. When one thing stands for another, it is a symbol.

b. Language and System

Words and sentences are essential parts of a language. They work together in such a systematic manner that a break in the system is a break in communication. For example, if you say, *pen write a with I* you would be giving your listener some isolated words with a little meaning, but not complete meaning. To give a complete meaning to your idea you have to say, *I write with a pen*. i.e. S+V+O. This shows that the words in a sentence work in a regular set pattern. You can write a lot of sentences using the same structure. This shows that language is systematic by nature.

Task 6

Read the following sentences and find out the structures in them. Do you think they work in a systematic manner?

- a. This is a table.
- b. This is Sabina's family.
- c. Runa, stand up.
- d. Hassan, come here.
- e. There is a glass on the table.
- f. There is a chair near the table.

c. Language and Arbitrariness

Language is arbitrary. That means, it is not based on reason. There is no reason why a rose is called a *rose* in English and গোলাপ in Bangla, or why *but* and *put* are pronounced in two different ways though there is similarity in spelling. Another example of arbitrariness is given below.

In the sentence,

I eat rice.

we are placing S+V+O. But if you say the same thing in Bangla, you would say,

আমি ভাত খাই।
S + O + V

If someone asks you, 'Why do you place your verb after the object in the Bangla sentence when in the English sentence the verb comes before the object?', you can answer, "That's how we speak. No special reason." This explains how language is arbitrary.

Task 7

Can you now explain how language is arbitrary?

REVIEW

- Language is a medium/vehicle for carrying messages from one person to another. Therefore, language is a medium of communication.
- Language has two forms:
 1. The phonic form which means the sound form, and
 2. The graphic form which means the written form.
- Language is a collection of symbols. Every word stands for an object or action. Therefore, every word is a symbol.
- Language functions in a systematic manner, i.e. the words and structures in a language operate in a regular pattern.

Example: I love music.

S+V + O

- We can have many more sentences following this pattern.
- Language is arbitrary. There is no good reason why a dog is a 'dog' in English and KzKzi in Bangla.
- It is the phonic form that keeps a language alive. A language is dead if it is not spoken or used in real life.



Acquiring a Language and Learning a Language

Objective:

After studying this lesson you will be able to–

- explain the difference between acquiring a language and learning a language.

2.1 Introduction

The terms, *language learning and language acquisition* have been confusing to many language teachers. We talk about language learning on a very broad basis, and language acquisition comes up in discussions and books only occasionally. But what do we actually mean by these two terms? In this lesson we will try to sort this out. It will then be easy for us to follow the next two lessons.

Acquisition– অর্জন

2.2. Language Learning

There are two basic modes of gaining control of a new language: **learning** and **acquisition**. Children, *adolescents* and adults either learn a language or acquire it. In this section we will see how a student gains control of a new language by using the learning mode.

Adolescents–
কৈশোরপ্রাপ্ত

Here is a situation. Nasima is a student of Class Three. She goes to school and learns English along with other subjects. She is given a syllabus and a textbook to study. The teacher teaches her according to the syllabus and she learns her lessons as per the instructions of the teacher. She learns *explicit* rules of grammar: structures, forms and functions. In case of errors her teacher helps her with the correction.

Explicit– পরিস্কারভাবে
বর্ণিত

The situation above shows how Nasima is learning a new language in a formal, artificial environment. Through regular practice, she *assimilates* the new language and gains proficiency in the use of it. Nasima is said to have learnt the new language i.e. *L2* which means both second language or foreign language, while *L1* stands for mother tongue.

Assimilates– রপ্ত করা
L1– মাতৃভাষা
L2– ২য় ভাষা অথবা
বিদেশী ভাষা

Picture

This is Ms Farida Huq, the English teacher. She will tell us how she teaches English. Do you think her students learn English or acquire it? My students of class 3 have been learning English as a foreign language since they were in class 1. We have a syllabus and a textbook which is prescribed by National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). What they learn on a particular day is what I decide to teach. I prepare a lesson plan. The students, generally, do not have any say in the matter. I teach them different structures, pronunciation, vocabulary, reading and writing. I try to speak to them in English and encourage them to respond in English. Sometimes I make them practise different structures and vocabulary items in class. The language items gradually get registered in their minds, and they begin to use the new language.

Task 1

- Do you think your teaching helps/would help the students learn English?
- Think of how you were taught English in school. Did that help you?

2.3. Acquiring a Language or Language Acquisition

Target Language— যে
ভাষাটি শেখান হচ্ছে, সেই
বিশেষ ভাষাটি।
In Full Context—
পরিপূর্ণভাবে যেখানে
পরিস্থিতি ও ভাষা এক সাথে
আসে।

Language is acquired in a more natural process which is almost like developing one's first language. Here the learner is completely exposed to the *target language* which comes to her/him *in full context*. There is no special presentation of the new language, no organized drilling, no error correction done in class, and no formal testing. Yet the learner learns the language and is able to use it quite proficiently. How does that happen?

Think of this Situation.

Mashuk is a young man with a Class 8 passed certificate. He had managed to deposit a large sum of money and go to the Middle East with a work permit. Mashuk's level of proficiency in Arabic was zero when he first went there. But now he has been in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia for two years. He did not attend any Arabic language course but is able to communicate in Arabic fairly well. He can do his shopping, buy stamps and post letters at the post office, and even find out his way when lost, all in Arabic. He developed this proficiency by observing people in different situations, and by listening to the language in those particular situations.

Unlearn– ভুলে যাওয়া।

He can now produce appropriate sentences in different situations. He has listened to the language and assimilated it. And all of this is done without his conscious effort, informally and in a natural situation. Thus Mashuk has acquired the language. People generally acquire their mother tongue. Acquired language is easy to produce and takes a longer time to *unlearn*.

Task 2

Read the situation and answer the question given below.

- (a) Sohel is a Bangladeshi boy who lives in Malaysia with his parents. He was born there and brought up in a typical Malaysian environment. He goes to an American school and is therefore fluent in English. He speaks Bangla at home and Malay with his friends.

Which of the three languages has Sohel learnt and which one(s) has he acquired? Give reasons for your answer.

- (b) What are the differences between language learning and language acquisition?

REVIEW

Language learning and language acquisition are two different ways of gaining control over languages. Learning is a conscious process, whereas acquisition is a sub-conscious process.

Learning involves a course, syllabus, teacher, and classroom, presentation of the target language, practice and correction techniques. On the contrary, language acquisition takes place in a natural situation. There is no fixed teacher, classroom, syllabus, etc. The learner is involved in the learning process without being aware of it. Input comes from the natural surrounding where the target language comes to the learner in context. We generally acquire our mother tongue and learn a second or foreign language. What we acquire stays longer than what we learn.

LESSON

3

How Mother Tongue is Acquired

Objective:

After reading this lesson you will be able to–

- describe how a baby learns her mother tongue.

3.1 Introduction

Language learning is basically ear training and practice of all four skills-

Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). In this lesson we will see how a baby acquires her mother tongue or L1.

3.2. From Birth to Four/Five Months

Cuddle–
জড়িয়ে ধরে আদর করা।

When a baby is born everybody in the family becomes very happy. They laugh and cheer while the baby announces her arrival with a cry. They *cuddle* and speak to her. She just listens and listens without producing any sound.



Picture 11: A baby at birth crying.

চার/পাঁচ মাস বয়সে শিশু
কিছু অর্থহীন শব্দ উচ্চারণ
করে।

When the baby is four/five months she produces some meaningless sounds, especially when she sees her mother or other members of the family or when she is very happy. The baby is now *cooing* or *babbling*, that is producing sounds repeatedly. This cooing or babbling is said to be the beginning of language learning.

Task 1

- (a) Explain what you mean by cooing or babbling.
 (b) Why is cooing important for a baby?

3.3. Between Six to Nine/Ten Months

As the baby grows her nerves and vocal cords become stronger and clearer. At six months the baby concentrates on the sounds she hears and tries to *imitate* those. The baby can now communicate with her mother and others in the family by moving her limbs and through babbling.

Imitate – অনুকরণ করা।

At nine/ten months the baby is able to imitate and repeat the sounds she hears and draw the attention of the people around her by producing those sounds. When the baby is twelve/thirteen months old, she can produce some simple and easy words like 'mama', 'dada', 'baba' etc. If you show her the feeder she becomes excited and says, 'dudu'. At this stage she is more active in listening than speaking. She tries to associate words with objects, getting the meaning clear.

নয়/দশ মাস বয়সে শিশু
শব্দ শুনে অনুকরণ করতে
পারে।

Task 2

Write a paragraph describing a baby's verbal and non verbal behaviour between 6 - 12 months of age.

3.4. Between Twelve to Eighteen Months

Between twelve to eighteen months the baby communicates in single words instead of sentences. At two years she is able to speak in two or three word sentences. At three years she speaks in correct, full sentences. She can now express herself in her mother tongue fairly well. By the time she goes to school (4/5 years) she becomes a proficient user of her mother tongue using two basic skills: Reading and Writing, at the same time increasing her vocabulary. Finally, the baby has acquired her mother tongue or L1 from her surrounding using her natural instincts. She has received the language in context and is therefore, able to use it in context.

This is how a baby acquires her mother tongue or L1.

Task 3

How does a baby develop her verbal skills from 12/13 months till she is ready to go to school?

REVIEW

মাতৃভাষা শেখার ক্ষেত্রে শিশু প্রথমে বা করে। ১২/১৩ মাস বয়সে সে কিছু শব্দ উচ্চারণ করতে পারে।

১২-১৮ মাস বয়সে সে ছোট, ছোট বাক্য উচ্চারণ করতে পারে। তিন বছর বয়সে সে মাতৃভাষায় মোটামুটিভাবে মনের ভাব প্রকাশ করতে পারে।

A baby acquires her mother tongue by listening to the language from birth till she is about four/five months old. Then she produces her first meaningless sounds called cooing or babbling. She listens to the particular sounds of the language, imitates them and produces them repeatedly. This cooing or babbling is the beginning of her language learning. When she is twelve/thirteen months, she is able to produce some simple, easy words. Between twelve to eighteen months she is able to speak in one or two word sentences. By the time she is three years old, she is able to communicate in her mother tongue or L1 fairly well. Upto this stage she has basically practised listening and speaking skills, and when she starts going to school, she practises reading and writing skills.

A baby acquires her mother tongue from the natural surrounding. The language comes to her in context.

LESSON**4****How a Second or Foreign Language is Learned**

Objective:

After reading this lesson you will be able to–

- raise an awareness in your students (SS) about how a second or foreign language (L 2) is learned, and
- motivate SS to be effective L 2 learners.

4.1. Introduction

For learning a second or foreign language you have to go to an institution and take a course. This is especially true in the case of foreign language learning. In the case of second language learning the society around you helps a lot. Everyone outside home speaks that language and so you pick it up. You speak your mother tongue (L1) at home and L2 or second language outside. For example, a Bangladeshi boy, born and brought up in London, will speak Bangla at home and English anywhere outside home. So, English for him is his second language. Foreign language is used to talk to foreigners only.

Before you begin an L 2 course, ask yourself the following questions and try to get an answer:

- Why am I doing this course? (Purpose)
- What do I expect to get from here? (Outcome)
- Do I have sufficient time to do the course?
- Am I motivated enough to continue the course?

If your answer is 'yes` then go ahead with the course.

4.2. Purpose for Learning L 2

People have different purposes for learning a second or foreign language, i.e. L 2. Some people need to learn L 2 for academic purposes while others need it for business purposes. Some people learn it to appreciate the literature and culture of another country. Some people enjoy learning foreign languages and so they learn them, while some others do it to *enhance* social prestige. Whatever the purposes, you must learn another language (L 2) to make your life a little more comfortable and easy, specially when you are in the company of a foreigner.

Enhance– বৃদ্ধি করা।

Task 1

Write a paragraph explaining your purpose for learning English.

4.3. What will the Course Contain?

A good second or foreign language course will contain the following areas/components.

a. Functions

The language you learn in the course should help you do certain functions, e.g. you should be able to ask for and give information in the target language, i.e. the second or foreign language you want to learn. You should be able to describe a situation, or express your opinion in the target language. A good L 2 course should help you do these activities.'

b. Notions

Notions– ধারণা।

A good L 2 course will help you develop concepts or ideas about things like time, quantity, location, frequency, notion etc.

c. Structures/Grammar

A modern language course will present you different structures and help you practise them. Unlike theoretical grammar where Ss memorise rules, you have to practise structures highlighting different situations. By memorising rules you cannot become a good language user. You have to practise speaking the language. Take a structure and produce as many sentences as you can. This practise will help you learn the language.

d. Vocabulary

Vocabulary–
শব্দ ভান্ডার

The course will also teach you a list of words to express yourself. These words will add to your total stock of words, i.e. vocabulary. You have to pronounce these words correctly, and use them in sentences. Whenever you come across a new word, notice the context in which it is used. Get the meaning and try to use the word in similar situations.

e. The Four Skills: LSRW

Language learning basically means developing four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). Every L 2 learner must be able to receive messages/information through listening and reading,

and produce language to give information through speaking and writing. Hence L+R are known as Receptive skills and S+W are known as Productive skills. The figure below will help you understand the point better.

| Skills | |
|---------------|--------------|
| Receptive | Productive |
| Listening - L | Speaking - S |
| and + | and + |
| Reading - R | Writing - W |

Fig 1: The four skills.

f. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation

Another component of your course is *pronunciation*, *stress* and *intonation*. Every language has its own sound system, i.e. certain sounds are peculiar to that language. You have to learn those sounds and produce them clearly for better understanding. Similarly you have to learn stress i.e. pronouncing certain sounds more boldly than others, and intonation, i.e. the rise and fall of voice. These are mechanical aspects of the speaking skill, and a good language course will help you master these skills.

Pronunciation–
উচ্চারণ
Stress– জোর
Intonation–
কণ্ঠের উঠা-নামা

g. Error Correction

While practising the four skills LSRW, there might be a lot of errors. The thought of these errors often *deter* you from using the target language. You wonder if your grammar is all right, if you are using the right word, etc. These thoughts slow down the process of your learning. Therefore ignore the errors, or consider them positively and treat them like stepping stones to proficiency in the use of the language. Your teacher will sometimes point out the errors, and sometimes ignore them. Listen carefully and find out how your teacher and others in and outside class use the language.

Deter–
বাধা দেয়।

Follow them. Once you know about your errors try to correct them immediately. Then practise the correct form. Radio and television programmes can give you some *input* and so can newspapers, magazines and journals.

Input–
ভাষার নতুন শব্দ, বাক্য ও
ব্যবহারের দিকগুলো যা
থেকে শিক্ষার্থী শেখে।

4.4. Methods of Teaching

- A modern language classroom should first of all provide learners with a *non-threatening environment*. They should feel free,

Non-Threatening
Environment–
শ্রেণিকক্ষের পরিবেশ
যেখানে শিক্ষার্থীদের মধ্যে
কোন ভয় ভীতি থাকে না।

| |
|------------------|
| Peers– সমকক্ষ |
|------------------|

comfortable and motivated to learn in this warm and friendly environment.

- Secondly, the input learners get from the teacher and *peers* (classmates) should be a mixture of known and unknown information. The unknown language should be slightly higher than what the learners are capable of using at the moment. On the basis of the known, the learners learn the unknown or new language.

Another important point about learning a second or foreign language is taking responsibility of your own learning. The teacher is only a facilitator and controller of the learning activities. The learners have to be more active than the teacher in class. Take part in group work and pair work. Practise the skills both in class and at home.

Do not use your mother tongue in the classroom unless it is essential. Use a good dictionary and practise the language.

REVIEW

To learn a second or foreign language you have to go to an institution and take a course. In the course you will be introduced to-

- language functions
which means actions you will be able to do using the target language
- notions
concepts or ideas about time, quantity, location, frequency, etc.
- structures
- vocabulary
you need to increase your stock of words, and
- the four skills: LSRW
you need to practise each of these skills to be a good user of the language.

To learn your L2 better, you have to make best use of the classroom environment which should be warm and friendly. Try to make yourself more active than your teacher and get involved in group work and pair work.