

# Empowering the Learners with Second Language Skills through Psychological Aspects

A. Delbio, M. Ilankumaran, R. Abilasha

**Abstract---** *Language plays a main role in human civilization. The importance of foreign language is stressed in educational field. In the field of foreign language acquisition, cognitive function is given priority. Psychological perspective is the theoretical study about cognitive functioning in acquiring the language. This paper focuses on components and skills of language. Moreover, psychological problems in attaining the second language skills are discussed. In learning second language skills, the LSRW play the prominent role. Listening is preliminary to all other skills. Reading is a complex mechanism of decoding the messages in print. Speaking is natural expression in language, which is not always consciously regulated. Speaking implies, speaking with appropriateness to the social context. Writing is the most difficult and demanding of skills. Listening and speaking are considered to be the receptive skills and speaking and writing are the productive skills. For second language learners, all the skills are necessary in proportion of learner's requirement. The learner of second language needs to give more attention on language skills as well as the components of the language. Phonology, Lexis, grammar and pragmatics are also needed in accomplishing the communicative competence. The correct direction may help the learners to get success in their goal. The teachers have to play the main role in language acquisition, because the learners get reinforced by them. The teacher can follow some techniques to improve the communicative competence of the students. Some of the techniques are discussed in this paper. This paper also brings out the importance of language skills and the need of components of language to overcome the barriers in acquiring the second language.*

**Keywords---** *Language, Psychological Aspects, Language Skills, Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Second Language Acquisition, Communicative Competence, Components of Language.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this globalization, English language is given more importance. It opens the door of opportunities in all the fields. The instructor of second language is concentrating more on developing the communicative capability of the learners. The goal of second language skills is to develop the communicative competence of the students. The students are encouraged to practice the foreign language in their academic field. In learning the second language, listening and speaking skills can be taught at the beginning, but the students may begin to read and write in the target language.

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This may lead to be failed in acquiring the target language. The learner needs to develop the conscious and unconscious knowledge of language skills. In the act of communication grammar, vocabulary and culture of the language are organised. The learner needs to concentrate more on language skills to attain communicative competence.

## II. LANGUAGE

Language is permeating the thoughts and influence with other. It is used as means of understanding the society. English language is one of the dominated languages in all over the world. English language has been considered to be an inter or intra language with in a speech community, though it is a foreign language. English is the entryway of the knowledge in all spheres of life. English Language is considered to be the medium of communication, because the administrators, scientist, doctors, lawyers and engineers cannot utter even a single sentence without using an English word. Fluency and accuracy is very much needed to attain the communicative competence.

## III. PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF SECOND LANGUAGE SKILLS

The Learners acquire a second language with the help of exiting knowledge of the native language. Stephen Krashen says that "language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules and does not require tedious drill". Second language means learning a new language and not the language of a native speaker. Acquiring a new language creates positive attitudes, improves analytical skills and also improves in learning a new culture. Second language acquisition helps an individual in international travel, business, technology and marketing, etc. It improves listening skills and memory power. Language is an important element and there are varied factors that influence the second language learning. The learner's language faculty in the second language plays a prominent role in determining the communicative competence. In acquiring the second language skills, the learner should be boosted with cognitive aspects like aptitude, motivation, personality, cognitive style, learning strategies, background of learning, social environment, etc. These are the main factors behind in second language acquisition. The components of language and second language skills play a prominent role in acquiring the language.

#### IV. PROBLEMS FACED BY SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

In learning a second language the learner faces a lot of problems psychologically. Anxiety is a psychologically formulated thing that comes out from the fear of losing self-identity. Language learning is negatively affected by this factor. Psychologists use the phrase 'anxiety' to individualize learners who are normally anxious in different situations from those who are only anxious in particular situation. The peculiar nature of anxiety in language learning stands as an extra test to language learners as well as teachers. The demand of communication in leading language may raise the anxiety of learners and more possibility for their defect to be exposed in front of others. It makes more psychological complications in learning.

Motivation plays a prominent role in second language learning. It is an essential factor to achieve success in learning and it is a kind of an internal drive that pushes the learner in an encouraging way. Language instructors should know the relationship between motivation and its impact on language learning. Then only, they can teach the learners in an effective manner. Successful learning is always connected to the passion of an individual learner but it seems to be more effective when teachers find out the passion of the learners and find a way to connect the passion towards learning.

Self-confidence is an important psychological factor in every aspect of human life and also extremely prominent in second language learning. It means a self-belief in achieving success and competence. The learners who lack confidence level are difficult to get success in learning a new language. It is necessary to maintain a high level self-confidence among the learners. It is full and fully an inner play and others do not have any role in it because others could not easily identify the strength and weakness better than oneself. Lack of confidence definitely affects the learner's state of mind and their ability of learning.

Self-esteem means a positive or negative attitude towards self-worth. It is an intrinsic personality factor in second language learning. The learners have the self-esteem and they themselves can impart their willingness to communicate with others. If they have self-esteem, learning will not be difficult for them. Self-esteem is a positive personality factor which helps to improve the ability within oneself.

Attitude is an undeniable factor which indirectly influences the second language learners. A positive attitude towards language helps to facilitate learning. Every learner has some kind of positive as well as negative attitude towards language learning and it is shown in their behavior. Attitude includes the way learners feel about the teachers, classmates, classroom, and even learning things. Gardner (1985) proposes that "attitude is the human incitements and feelings, prejudiced fear, preliminary feelings and condemnations regarding any indicated topic." Learners must have positive attitudes in approaching the second language learning, to its speakers and teachers.

Lack of confidence is a common factor seen in new learners. It normally occurs when the listener has not understood what the speaker has conveyed or when they do not understand others speech. Learners should have

confidence in speaking in the present context. Positive mental status helps to improve learners in language learning. When the teacher knows the learners psychological problems, they could contribute a suitable and delightful atmosphere through lowering anxiety, help to develop self-esteem, and motivate them to learn. If the learners are psychologically motivated, they will automatically attain the self-confidence and find success in language learning.

#### V. LANGUAGE SKILLS

Communication plays a main role in human life. To attain a communicative competence the learner needs to acquire the four skills. There are four skills in language, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. The four skills are discussed here.

#### VI. LISTENING SKILL

Listening skill is very much needed to acquire the target language. An individual acquires the mother tongue only with the help of listening skills. The introduction of foreign channel on the TV through satellites helps the non-native speakers of English. Through this, the foreign accent is familiar to them. The two processes of listening are bottom-up method and top-down method. Listening comprehension consists of decoding every bit of language and store in its sequence. This process is known as bottom-up view of listening. In the second method the listener may not act as a tape recorder, but they try to build up the own version and enrich the elements with information stored in their memory. This process is called top-down view of listening and it frames a new model of storing.

#### VII. TYPES OF LISTENING SKILLS

Listening skills is the main skill to be cherished and to be developed. It is the most important skill among interpersonal skills. Effective listening skills frame the strong foundation with society, educational field and in workplace. The international listening association tells that listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning, responding to spoken and non-verbal messages. The two main types of listening are discriminative listening and comprehensive listening. Discriminative listening is developed in the beginning stage of the child. In this type of listening, the meaning of the word is not understood by the child, but the different sound pattern can be identified. During the childhood stage the child made a distinguish between the sounds of different person. Discriminative listening develops from childhood to adulthood. The individual gains more life experience when he grows older. At this juncture, they can identify the way of sound is produced. Discriminative listening may distinguish the regional accents and emotion of the speaker. Through this skill, the body language and emotion of the speaker is recognised their performance.

Comprehensive listening is also the same like discriminative listening. It is also a fundamental of listening subtypes.



In this listening stage, an individual involves themselves in understanding the message. The Learners need to acquire some vocabulary in this listening type.

### VIII. SPECIFIC LISTENING TYPES

Discriminative and comprehensive listening is the fundamental for specific listening types. In interpersonal communication, there are three types of listening. They are Informational listening, Critical listening, Therapeutic or Empathetic listening.

### IX. INFORMATIONAL LISTENING

In informational listening, an Individual involves in listening to learn something. This type of listening engaged in educational field, working place, in listening to the news, etc. All types of listening skills are active, because it requires more attention and mindful effort for understanding. Comparing to other types of listening, informational listening is less active. In this type of listening, the learner involves in learning new information and facts. They may not analysis the gatherings. Informational listening involves in note taking and recording the key information and so it is less active.

### X. CRITICAL LISTENING

Critical listening is active than informational listening and it involves in problem solving or decision making. Critical listening is similar to critical reading. Both involves in analysing the information received and compare it with existing knowledge. Judgement is made in critical listening. Decision makings are done based on critical thinking.

### XI. THERAPEUTIC OR EMPATHIC LISTENING

Empathic listening involves in understanding the feelings and emotions of the speaker. Counsellors, therapists use therapeutic or empathic listening to understand their clients and help them accordingly. It does not involve in making judgement or giving advice. It encourages the speakers to elaborate on their feelings and emotions. Empathic listening may practise with friends and family.

### XII. SPEAKING SKILLS

Speaking is the most important skill in language learning. It is the basic skill on which the other language skills are built. One can learn to speak a foreign language only by speaking. It is like driving or swimming. One can learn to drive only by driving it. The structure of language and vocabulary is needed in language learning. In speech, there are certain formats that are conventional and predictable. Halliday and Hasansays that "there cannot be just one right way of either speaking or writing. What is appropriate in one environment may not be quite so appropriate in another" There is genres of speech depending on the field of discourse and the speaker can be given special role for communication. Wilga M. Rivers suggests that students can be offered a choice of tasks like doing things, finding out things, solving problems, etc. There should be a real motivation to achieve this skill of communication. He also

gives fifteen areas for speaking naturally in a second language.

- Establishing and maintaining social relations.
- Seeking information.
- Giving information about oneself.
- Learning or teaching how to do or make something.
- Expressing one's reactions.
- Hiding one's intention.
- Talking one's way out of trouble.
- Problem solving.
- Sharing leisure activities.
- Conversing over telephone.
- Entertaining others.
- Displaying one's achievements.
- Acting out social roles such as those of a hostess, a guest, an employee, a leader, etc.
- Discussing ideas and opinion.
- Playing with language like having jokes, puns, words games, crosswords puzzles and so on.

After practicing all those things, there is unending scope communication and interaction.

### XIII. STEPS TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILL

The act of building the vocal sounds is known as speaking. In simpler words, speaking means the conversation or expressing one's thoughts and feelings in spoken language. Speaking may be both formal and informal. Speaking skills provide the ability to communicate effectively. This skill helps the speaker to convey his message to his listener in a very passionate, thoughtful and convincing manner. A perfect knowledge in speaking skill helps to guarantee that one may not be misunderstood by those who are listening.

Practice is the only thing that can develop one's speaking skills. It is very important to build one's confidence. To develop the speaking skills, the learner should undertake experiments in target language. The learner needs to respond with the people and do not speak too fast to attain fluency. They can use natural rhythm of speech to get accuracy. The speaker needs to be more confident. Learner needs to develop the English speaking environment. Chesterfield identified a natural order of strategies in the development of a speaking skill. Repetition, memorization, formulaic expressions, verbal attention getters, answering in unison, talking to self-elaboration, anticipatory answers, monitoring, appeal for assistance, request for clarification, and role-playing helps to improve the skill.

### XIV. READING SKILL

Reading is a complex skill involves in various activities. Reading skill helps to improve the target language and its components. It helps to improve vocabulary, spelling grammar and writing. Reading makes the learners to develop the language intuition in the correct form. The characteristics of good reading skills are as follows: Selection, Purpose, Strategies, Speed and Contextual understanding.



### *Selection*

Selection is the most important aspect in the process of reading. Even in the mother tongue, the readers do not read everything. In newspapers too, they read only selectively and not everything in it. Many of them choose reading materials according to their interest and personal appeal. The process of selection and choice of material is important in reading.

### *Purpose*

Everyone starts reading for some reasons. The readers may read novels and short stories for pleasure, a newspaper or a railway timetable for information, a scholarly article in a journal for knowledge, an instruction manuals for a particular need and so on. The learner shows some purpose in reading.

### *Strategies*

In a reading process, one may not read a railway timetable in the same way as they read a novel or a short story. For example, the legal documents are read several times in order to understand the meaning clearly. On the other hand, the newspaper reading is quite different. Therefore, different strategies are employed to understand texts, depending on the nature of the text and the purpose for which the readers read it.

### *Speed*

An efficient reader reads not only selectively but swiftly and silently. Often readers read silently and privately. This helps them to read quickly, because reading aloud takes more time.

### *Contextual understanding*

The readers read a great deal every day such as advertisements, sign boards, posters, reports, newspapers, letters, etc. Readers may not understand every word but they guess the general meaning from the context. The readers do not always keep a dictionary with them. Often, they read through difficulties and become more and more fluent. The students may be encouraged to read for some purpose as well as set some goals for the reading task.

## **XV. METHODS OF READING**

The phonic method teaches the sounds commonly represented by the letters and not the names of the letters. This helps the young learners to establish the correct association between sounds and letters. E.g. Pin, win, spin. The alphabetic method is the traditional method. In this method, the letters are taught by their names in the alphabetical order. Then, words are built by putting the letters together. E.g. book. The word method tries to teach the word as the unit of reading. It directs the attention of the child to the whole word and not to the letters as in the alphabetic method. The sentence method is an improvement on the word method. The sentence is considered to be the unit of reading and not the words. However, the teachers can combine these methods according to the needs of the classroom.

## **XVI. WRITING SKILL**

Writing skill is considered to be an important part of communication. The good writing skill allows the message to reach the distant audience. In English language teaching, writing is considered academic skills and complex skills. Krashen says that writing is considered the master skill while comparing to other communicative skills like reading, listening, and speaking. According to Zamel, the writing skill is shown as a meaning-created process. In a writing environment, the language teachers teach the English language as well as the simplicity the complex writing process. In the process of learning, writing is considered an integral part. The main role of the teacher is to motivate the learner in the learning process of writing. Writing is a productive skill and well planned activity. An orthographic representation of words and thoughts play a major role in communication process. Raimes says that process approach helps the learning to reinforce the grammatical structures, idioms, vocabulary which taught to learners. Teaching writing helps the learners to be the creative writers.

Students develop functional language skills, such as proper natural language in creative ways. Thus, the majority of the students are more prone to memorizing and imitation. They fail to integrate critical thinking into creative writings. In model-centred learning, the students are encouraged to concentrate only on examination and evaluation. The students give poor performance in their essays. Students problem includes inability to generate ideas, organize discourse, control sentence structures choose appropriate vocabulary, and use of effective styles. There are different kinds of writing skill. The main types are factual and imaginative writing. Reports, descriptions, explanations, similar explanatory and instructional material come under factual writing. Creative writing includes all kinds of literary pieces of emotions and imaginative perception of the experiences based on life and nature. Everyone writes in a fictional, narrative and descriptive writing. Journalistic writing and literary writing have their own styles and imaginative writing forms another important genre. Precis writing is an exercise can be given to the learner to improve the writing skill.

## **XVII. COMPONENTS OF SECOND LANGUAGE**

The components of language are essential to improve the learners' capability of learning the target language. The components are lexis, grammar, phonology and Pragmatics. In psychological point of view, it is stressed about the storage and retrieval of the components. During the development of the child language, communication skills are unfavourable one. While thinking about communication, speech and language are needed. Language has the capability to create and understand both the written and spoken forms. Language can be understood on the basis of psychology.



### **XVIII. LEXIS**

Lexis is the term used in linguistics and it is vocabulary in language. The study of lexicon or a collection of words is called lexicology. Learning a vocabulary is called lexis. Psychologically, the terms reception and production are used for learning a new language. It analyses the ways of learner identifying or assuming the new words. Knowing vocabulary is the main thing in language acquisition. The new words can be revised often to store it in long term memory, so that the students can easily retrieve the knowledge. Vocabulary is given prominent role in learning the language skills and components of language. Mehta states that “vocabulary is the first and foremost important step in language acquisition.” Before learning the complex structure of language, vocabulary is needed. In the field of academic journey, vocabulary plays a prime role.

### **XIX. GRAMMAR**

The first language learners need not worry about the grammar, because they acquire it automatically. On the contrary, the second language learners need to put an extra effort to learn the grammar rules. The new learners may not worry about the grammar and structure while speaking, but in writing process, grammar and structure is very much needed. At this stage, there are many methods to teach the target language. Among them, grammar translation method is one of the greatest methods, which teaches the grammar rules and teaches the language. An individual with communicative competence should have the clear picture about grammar. Clear communication is not possible without grammar.

The idea of innate linguistic knowledge is introduced in ‘nativist theory’ by Chomsky in 1957. This brings uprising in psychological thinking about language. At that time, there is an association between linguists and psychologists about the first language development and language functioning. As a result, they adopt the Chomsky linguistic theory called innate universal grammar. He says human’s language learning ability, which arises from innate universal grammar. The role of cognition is given more importance in language acquisition. In linguistics, it is assumed that the innate universal grammar is the primary factor in first language acquisition. The innate universal grammar knowledge includes four causes.

- Development of language involves in acquiring the rules of governed system, which gathers the facts from universal, complex, and arbitrary. It is not acquired naturally.
- On the basis of inadequate input and difficult structure, the language is learned within short time. It is not acquired properly.
- The input provides the learner with incorrect sentence and confusing phonetic representations.
- The correct form of the language system is not acquired by the learner due to innate universal grammar.

These are the four major issues found in innate universal grammar. The universal grammar theorist says it is impossible for the learner to develop the language with innate grammar. It is considered Plato’s problem that is the

learner may not attain a language with innate knowledge. Chomsky’s modern linguistic works have an analysis of the Plato’s problem. Chomsky agreed that parameters approach is a suggested solution to it. This approach analyses the linguistics knowledge and competence of language. Different environment may help the learners in acquiring grammar. As Plato’s view, the innate capacity may not teach the grammar of the language, but the learner needs to acquire it from outside force.

### **XX. PHONOLOGY**

It deals with the sound pattern of the words. The study of speech production and description of speech sound is called phonology. The incorrect pronunciation may lead to wrong meaning. The learner can listen to the speaker of native language, so that the accurate pronunciation can be learned. Audio lingual method is the best method to learn the correct pronunciation.

### **XXI. PRAGMATICS**

Pragmatics is the subdivision of linguistics that deals with the study of language. It studies acts, conversational utterance and talk in interaction. The purpose of language teaching is to improve the communicative competence of the students. The competency in communication is considered a tool which is used for pragmatics and communication, by this approach the meaning is conveyed over communication. Dr. M. Ilankumaran, in his article “Developing Communication Skills of Students – An Analysis on Pragmatic Performance” says that Pragmatic competence refers to the capacity to comprehend and express the meanings which are more exact and applicable for the cultural and social situations where the communication occurs. In brief, pragmatics is the way of communication and the culture. English language is being used in various levels of communication. The speaker has to be clear about the pragmatic foundations to improve the ability and coherence to respond in different circumstances.

### **XXII. TEACHING LANGUAGE COMPONENTS**

A language comprises language skills and language components. Teaching the second language is a challenging task. The teacher can follow some phases or techniques to teach the components of language. Some of the techniques are discussed below.

### **XXIII. TEACHING SOUND SYSTEM**

The learner needs to know the sound system of the language. The sound system includes supra-segmental structure of the language. Phonetics and phonology are related supra-segment. It comprises vowels, consonants stress, pitch and juncture to form intonation pattern, etc. Teaching of sound is a primary role in language teaching. There are three phases in teaching sound. They are discrimination, repetition, and free-production.



In the discrimination phase, the teacher may give some task to the students. For example, the instructor may give minimal pair exercise, like /pin/ and /bin/ to differentiate the sound pattern between /p/ and /b/. The second phase is repetition. In this the teacher may ask the students to repeat the words and the tape them to repeat in the group to learn the sound pattern. In the third phase 'free-production', there is no model for imitation. The students are let to learn the sound by giving different pronunciations like /pen/ and /pin/.

#### XXIV. TEACHING GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE

Grammar is the essential part of communicative competence. The student of second language finds difficulty in learning grammar. The instructor can give some exercise for teaching the grammatical structure. There are three phases for teaching the grammatical structure.

- Mechanical drills
- Meaningful exercises
- Communicative exercises

##### *Mechanical drills*

The instructor uses the mechanical drills to teach grammar. This technique is categorised into four drills. They are pattern drills, transforming, expansion, and combination. In the pattern drills, the students may not understand with the definition of the term. They comprehend it through some exercises. The teacher may give a sentence and a suggestion, the students can rephrase it.

Eg. Teacher: Jeffy is reading a novel. (Anto)

Students: Anto is reading a novel.

##### *Meaningful exercises*

In this phase, comprehensive passage is given to the student. They can understand the text and produce the answer.

##### *Communicative exercises*

The teacher may ask some general question only in the target language. Speaking practice is given to them and the teacher may correct the mistakes.

#### XXV. TEACHING OF VOCABULARY

Teaching of vocabulary is taken for granted and is done at random in the classroom as words occur in the text. Words are not easy to learn and its meaning cannot be easily defined. There are several ways to help memorization of words. The teacher can make use of visual picture, matching cards, drawings and connecting them with cognate words etc, can be used in the classroom. Vygotsky has said that a word is a microcosm of human consciousness and words expand the consciousness. Oral repetition and visual perception strengthen the impression on the mind. The teacher can write a new word on the board and pronounce it clearly. Regular conversation in the target language is necessary to enhance the vocabulary.

#### XXVI. CONCLUSION

In learning process, there are four skills, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW). According to Field "Psycholinguistic models of these skills are heavily

influenced by an information processing approach, which tracks a given piece of information through a number of stages, at each of which it is transformed". The first language learner has followed the LSRW pattern, so they succeed. The second language learning classroom, the teacher may not follow in correct order. Reading and writing are given more importance than listening and speaking. Thus, the target language acquisition ends in failure in most of the times. The teaching methods can help them to overcome the barriers. The students need to be motivated to learn a new language. Teachers can repeat the lessons to the students for making them good memory power, so that they cannot forget the important terms, grammar and vocabulary in target language. This paper focuses on psychological way of attaining the language skills and communicative competence. It also brings out various methods to follow in the language classrooms.

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