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**METHODS OF TEACHING BASIC  
SCHOOL ENGLISH**

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**UNIT 1: THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE**

**Unit Outline**

- Session 1: Language Development Theories and Philosophies, their Implications for Teaching
- Session 2: The Integrated Approach of Teaching the Four Basic Skills in Language learning
- Session 3: Factors that Influence Second Language Learning
- Session 4: Classroom Atmosphere/Environment
- Session 5: Classroom Atmosphere/Environment/Current Teacher-Student Role
- Session 6: The Importance of the Language Syllabus and the Teacher's Guide to the Teacher

Dear student, welcome to our first session in PSM 102. This is the unit in which you will learn about how language is acquired. Through this you would be able to develop a good approach to teaching English as a second language.

**OVERVIEW**

**Unit Objectives**

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. tell how human beings acquire language;
2. describe the integrated approach to teaching the four basic skills in language learning;
3. state some factors that influence second language learning;
4. describe a conducive classroom atmosphere that encourages second language learning; and
5. state the importance of the language syllabus and the teacher's guide to the language teacher.





This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear; and
- difficult topics, if any.

## SESSION 1: LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT THEORIES AND PHILOSOPHIES: THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

One of the most fascinating aspects of human development is the ability to learn language. We all listen to the first "da da" sounds uttered by a six-month-old baby. We also share the joy of parents whose one-year-old baby has uttered the first 'bye bye'. In fact, language learning is an amazing issue which attracts much attention from linguists and psychologists alike. How do children develop speech? What is it that enables a child not only to learn the individual sounds but put them into words and put the words into sentences? Dear student, in this first session, we will consider three theories which have been offered as explanations to how language is learnt. These are:

INTRODUCTION

1. the behaviourist theory *imitation & habits*
2. the innatist theory and
3. the interactionist theory of language acquisition

### Objectives

By the end of the lesson, you should be able to:

- (a) identify at least three language development theories;
- (b) describe the principles underlying each of the language acquisition theories; and
- (c) state the implication(s) of each theory for teaching English as a second language.



Now read on...

### 1.1 The Behaviourist Theory

The behaviourists explain that language learning is simply a matter of imitation and habit formation. In other words, children imitate the sounds and patterns which they hear around them. As they imitate these sounds, people around them praise them and this encourages the children to produce more sounds. Thus, encouraged by their environment, the children continue to imitate and practise sounds and patterns until they form "habits" of correct language use.

Do you think this explanation is apt? What is your view about it?

According to the behaviourists, the quality and quantity of the language which the child hears, as well as the consistency of reinforcement offered in the environment, should have an effect on the child's success in language learning. This explanation is true to a large extent. You see, that is why a child speaks the language spoken around him/her. An Ewe child who lives in an environment of Hausa speakers is likely to speak Hausa instead of Ewe. An English child kept in an area where Akan is predominantly spoken is likely to speak Akan instead of English.



## 1.2 Implications

If we go by the above explanation given by the behaviourists, we can say then that if we want our children to learn a second language, some steps must be taken. Do you think the above explanation will help you in designing strategies for teaching new language learners? Of course, it should.

In the first place, you must remember that imitation is what helps the child to acquire language. Thus, if you are a language teacher, you are one of the most important people the child would imitate. You must, therefore, make sure that your speaking skills are good enough to train the child to speak. In other words the teacher must provide the child the right model in terms of:

- listening skills
- speaking skills
- reading skills
- writing skills

In the second place, the teacher must provide sufficient language items. If the items provided for the child are few, the child's language development would be very slow.

In the third place, repetition or drills must accompany your teaching of the second language. This is because the child is imitating and must be given enough material for practice so that he does not forget what he is trying to learn.

## 1.3 The Innatist Theory

The innatists hold a different view from the behaviourists. According to one linguist, Noam Chomsky, children are biologically programmed for language and that language develops in the child just in the same way as his other biological functions like his teeth develop. For example, every child will learn to walk as long as adequate nourishment and reasonable freedom of movement are provided. The child does not have to be taught to walk.

What do you think about Chomsky's view?

In fact, what he argues is that there is some in-built mechanism or structure in every human being. He calls the mechanism the "Language Acquisition Device" (L.A.D.) which helps the individual to speak. This device was often described as an imaginary "black box" which exists somewhere in the brain. For the L.A.D. to work, the child needs only samples or inputs of the natural language. I hope you

will say Chomsky is right, too! Of course, why can't a goat or cow or even a monkey speak like a human being? In fact, animals like baboons, monkeys and chimpanzees have been given intensive training to learn human language but have been unable.

### 1.3 Implications

Dear student, do you find the above explanation useful to your teaching of language to a second language learner? In what ways? Let's consider some.

First, we must consider every child capable of learning language. We must not condemn any child as not capable of learning language. Our duty as teachers is to help every child through motivation to learn the language we are teaching him/her.

Second, if the child has a mechanism in the brain, that develops with time, it is good that we present language items to the child according to his/her age or level of development. If we do not make a good selection of material for the child according to his age and experience, then we shall find our language teaching frustrating. This is because we might present language items that are either too difficult or too simple for the child.

Third, you will remember that Chomsky talks about input. In other words, he talks about the fact that there should be a favourable environment to enable the child to develop language. Thus, we need to present items to enable him/her learn the new language.

### 1.5 The Interactionist Position

A third theory focuses on the role of linguistic environment in interaction with the child's innate capacities in determining language development. To the interactionist, there is an interplay between the human features of the child and the environment in which he develops. Unlike the innatists, the interactionists claim that language which is modified to suit the capability of the learner is an important part in the language acquisition process. Thus, they believe that when adults speak to children, such adults modify their language by speaking slower, using a higher pitch, shorter and simpler sentence patterns and repeating their sentences frequently. These help the child to develop speech.

### 1.6 Implications

Dear student, how useful is the above theory to you? We'll consider the following: A major issue that this theory brings out is the issue of interaction. As a teacher of language, you must provide the language learner enough room for

interaction. Children learning language hardly use the new language at home. The school or the classroom in particular is where they use the language most. Therefore, it is good that the teacher creates opportunities for children to interact with their peers as well as with the teacher as they learn the language.

Having spoken about the implications of the theories so far, we must remind ourselves that the child's first language should be used very rarely. Rather the second language should be used. That is the direct method of teaching language.

We have presented three different theories of language development, each of which appears to be convincing. For instance, children imitate and practice, and that practice can explain how some language routines are learnt.

However, the imitation and practice alone cannot account for the complexity of the language knowledge that all children eventually attain. The acquisition of such complex language seems to depend on children's possession of some knowledge which permits them to process the language they hear and to go beyond these and even make simple generalizations. The discussion of the interactionists view showed that children who are exposed to language in the absence of one-to-one interaction do not develop language in the normal way. One way to reconcile the behaviourist, innatist and interactionist explanations is to see that each may help to explain a different aspect of children's language development.



### Self-Assessment Questions

#### Exercise 1.1

1. Describe briefly the three theories discussed in the session to list the implication of each theory.
2. Using examples, describe the innatist theory.
3. Which of the three theories do you consider most useful to your teaching a second language. Why?



#### Assignment

Compare and contrast any two language acquisition theories you know.

## SESSION 2: THE INTEGRATED APPROACH OF TEACHING THE FOUR BASIC SKILLS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Dear Student, it is interesting to note that for almost six decades now research and practice in English Language teaching have identified four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing as of great importance. In English language textbooks and curricula, English classes around the world tend to focus on one or two of the four skills, sometimes to the exclusion of the others. With all our history of teaching the four skills in separate segments of a curriculum, there is nevertheless a more recent trend towards skills integration. In this session we shall consider this new concept.

INTRODUCTION

### Objectives

By the end of the lesson, you should be able to:

- explain the concept of integration as a teaching method;
- state the reasons why integration is necessary;
- mention the models required in integration; and
- describe two of the five models in integration.



Now read on...



### 2.1 The Integrated Approach in Language Teaching

Integration refers to a situation in which, instead of designing the curriculum to teach the many aspects of one skill as for example reading, the curriculum designers are taking more of **whole language** approach whereby reading is treated as one of two or more interrelated skills. For instance, a course that deals with reading skills, then, will also deal with related listening, speaking and writing skills. Similarly, under this new paradigm (integration) other lessons such as,

- a pre-reading discussion of the topic to activate schemata;
- listening to a lecture or series of informative statements about the topic of a passage to be read;
- a focus on a certain reading strategy, say scanning or skimming;
- writing a paraphrase of a section of the reading passage;

will be included such approach models for the students the real-life integration of language skills, gets them to see the relationship among several skills, and provides the teacher with a great deal of flexibility in creating interesting or motivating lessons. So, you see, integration is supposed to bring variation into the lesson so as to sustain interest of students in learning language.

Apart from the above issues, the integration of the four skills is the only plausible approach to take within a communication interactive approach. This is supported by the following observations:

- a. Production and reception are quite simply two sides of the same coin; you cannot split the coin in two.
- b. Written and spoken language often (but not always) bear a relationship to each other. If this relationship is ignored, the richness in language will also be ignored.

Having considered the meaning and purpose of the integrated approach so far, Dear Student, is it possible for you to maintain an integrated approach to your L<sub>2</sub> teaching? How would you do this. Let's consider this.

### 2.3 Models for Maintaining an Integrated Skill Focus in Teaching

The following five models are commonly used in maintaining the integrated skill focus in teaching:

1. Content-based teaching
2. Theme-based teaching
3. Experiential learning
4. The episode hypothesis
5. Task-based teaching

These models pull the direct attention of the students away from separateness of the skills of language and makes the students become used to the meaningful purpose for which we use language. Let's discuss two of the above models briefly.

#### 2.3.1 Content-Based Teaching

This model which is also referred to as 'content centred' teaching, integrates or brings together the learning of some specific subject-matter content with the learning of a second language. In other words, more attention is normally focused on the subject matter than the language form or sequences. Some curricula for content-based teaching are:

- a. English for specific purposes (e.g. for engineering, agriculture, medicine, etc)
- b. Writing across the curriculum (where writing skills in secondary schools and universities are taught within subject matter areas like Biology, History, Art, etc.)

In fact content-based teaching allows for the complete integration of language skills. As you plan your lesson around a particular subtopic of your subject area,

your task becomes how best to present that topic, concept or principle.

### 2.3.3 Theme-Based Teaching

Theme-based teaching provides an alternative to what would otherwise traditionally language classes by structuring courses around topics. This way serves the interest of students in a classroom. Some activities involved in theme-based teaching include,

- a. The use of environmental statistics and facts for classroom reading, writing, discussions and debates
- b. Conducting research and writing projects
- c. Creating environmental awareness material for teaching. For example, students may create leaflets, posters, bulletin boards, booklets, etc which outline some practical things.

#### SUMMARY

We have looked at the need for the integrated approach. In an instance the integrated approach enables one to teach **language** and not **about language**. Secondly, it is more convenient in practical terms since the divisions in language such as speaking, listening, etc are artificial. Thirdly, the purpose of studying language is to communicate, and communication deals with the integration of all the skills. We have also noted that two of the five models are important so long as the integrated approach is concerned. These models are

1. Content-based teaching and
2. Theme-based teaching

Later in your course, the other three models will be discussed in detail.



### Self-Assessment Questions

#### Exercise 1.2

1. Briefly explain integration
2. Why do we need integration?
3. What models are necessary in the use of the integrated approach.
4. Explain "content-based" teaching.
5. What is referred to as "theme-based" teaching?



### SESSION 3: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

You are welcome to Session 3. In Session 1, it was pointed out that all normal children have the potential to speak and are successful in the acquisition of their first language. This is not the same with second language learners who vary greatly in their ability to acquire their second language. In this session, we will see some factors that affect one's learning a second language. That is, we shall examine the extent to which we can predict differences in the success of second language learning in two individuals if we have information about their personalities, their general and specific intellectual abilities, their motivation and age.

#### Objectives

By the end of the lesson, you should be able to:

- (a) state, at least, five factors that affect second language acquisition;
- (b) suggest some antidotes to the problems identified.

Now read on...

#### 3.1 Who is a Good Language Learner?

Is it true to say that some people find it easier learning a language than other people do? In fact the rate of developing language varies greatly among first language learners. Some children can bring together five, six and seven words to form sentences at the same time, while other children are unable to bring together even two words. Whatever the case, all normal children eventually master their first language.

In the case of L<sub>2</sub> learning, it has been observed several times that in the classroom setting, some students make good progress in learning the new language while others struggle, making very slow progress. Can you guess any reason for this?

Some characteristics that people normally associate with good language learners include:

1. Intelligence
2. Aptitude
3. Personality
4. Motivation and Attitudes
5. Learning Style
6. Age of Language Learning

Which of the above do you consider to be the most influential characteristic? We shall discuss each of the above presently.

## 2.2 Why Integration

Do you see the need for integration? In fact, some people may argue that integration of the four skills diminishes the importance of the rules of listening, speaking, of reading and of writing that are unique to each separate skill. Such an argument hardly holds under careful study and scrutiny of integrated-skills courses.

If anything, the added richness of the latter gives students greater motivation and leads to better retention of principles of effective speaking, listening, reading and writing. Rather than being forced to study a course that limits itself to one measure of performance, students are given the chance to diversify their efforts in many meaningful tasks. Of course, one skill in the integration process may be given more emphasis than other skills for a particular reason.

So you may be wondering why courses were not always integrated. After all, knowledge has no water-tight compartments. There are several reasons for this. Let us consider some.

1. In the past, the focus on the forms of language almost exposed curriculum designers to segment courses into the separate language skills. Therefore, seemed logical to draw a syllabus that dealt with, say, pronunciation of phonemes in English, or stress and intonation patterns. Thus, students seemed to be taught **about language** instead of being taught language it-self.
2. Administrative considerations still make it easier to programme separate courses in 'reading' and 'speaking' etc, as a look at current intensive and university English courses reveal. Such divisions can be regarded as important when one considers the practical issue of bringing together three-hour-per-week courses, ordering textbooks and placing students into the courses. You see, a proficient teacher using the integrated approach would never conduct say a 'reading' class without using speaking, listening and writing in class.
3. A third reason is that not all classes are integrated. In fact there are certain specific purposes for which students are studying English. In an academic setting such as a university, for example, specialized workshops, modules, tutorials, or courses may be constructed to improve on certain skills. Thus, a module in listening comprehension might include instruction on listening effectively to academic lectures, to fellow students in the classroom etc. Such a course might bring together phonological morphological, syntactic, lexical, semantic and discourse elements.

### 3.1.1 Intelligence

One major factor that affects L<sub>2</sub> learning or teaching is intelligence. Over the years, many studies using different intelligence quotient tests (IQ) and different methods of assessing language learning have found out that intelligence levels were good means of predicting how successful an L<sub>2</sub> learner would be. Also, some recent researches have shown that intelligence may be more strongly related to certain kinds of L<sub>2</sub> language learning abilities than others.



Do you believe this? An example is one study in French immersion schools for children in Canada. It was found out that, while intelligence levels of the children helped in the reading, grammar and vocabulary of the L<sub>2</sub> learner, it was not helpful in oral productive skills. This is probably because oral production is based more on imitation. Some of the researches support this.

Therefore, intelligence seems to be a strong factor when it comes to teaching and learning second languages in the classroom, particularly when the instruction is formal. When the instruction is less formal (that is, when it involves more communication) intelligence plays a less important role.

### 3.1.2 Aptitude

There is much evidence to show that some people have an extraordinary aptitude or desire for learning language. Is this also your view? Lorraine Obler (1970) reports that a man he calls CJ, has a specialized ability. CJ is an English speaker who grew up in an English home. When he was 15 years, he was taught a second language, French. Then later, German, Spanish and Latin while in high school. At age 20, he could speak all these languages. He worked in Morocco where he learnt Moroccan Arabic and then spent some time in Spain and Italy. Within a matter of weeks, he could speak Spanish and Italian. This is a remarkable achievement. Do you know anybody like CJ? Such people are not rare anyway. A few Ghanaians behave this way. In the cities, this happens mainly because many languages are spoken in the same environment.



Although, there have been a number of studies examining this aptitude factor, we cannot say the results are conclusive. This is because it is not clear what abilities constitute aptitude. Some issues that you consider as part of aptitude may be attributed to intelligence or personality. Also the abilities which are associated with success in an academic course, may not be as closely connected to the success some people have in picking up a language.

Other personality features that are often considered as affecting language learning are self-esteem, empathy, dominance, talkativeness and responsiveness. Do you see that yourself? You can observe such habits in people and draw a conclusion. However, in general, available research does not show a clearly defined relationship between personality and second language learning, many researchers believe that personality will be shown to have an important influence on learning a second language. Their view is that personality alone may not influence language learning, but when it combines with other factors that contribute to language learning, it influences language learning.

### 3.1.4 Motivation and Attitudes

Dear student, it is interesting to note that there is a great deal of research on the part that attitudes and motivation play in second language learning. The overall findings show that attitudes and motivation are greatly related to L<sub>2</sub> learning. Unfortunately, the researchers have not been able to state precisely how motivation affects learning. In other words, we do not know whether it is motivation that produces successful learning or it is the successful learning that enhances motivation. What is your view? Are learners more highly motivated because they are successful or they are successful because they are highly motivated?

You will see, then, that motivation in L<sub>2</sub> learning is a complex issue which can be defined in terms of too factors:

- i. learners' communicative need
- ii. learners' attitudes towards the second language community.

With the first one would say that if learners need to speak the language to fulfil some social situation as for example marriage, or to fulfil some professional ambition, they will be motivated to learn the language.

With the second one, it can be said that, one is more willing to learn the language of a friend than that of an enemy. One factor which often affects motivation is the power relationship between the languages. That is, members of a minority group may have more positive attitudes and motivation when learning the language of a majority group than those members of a majority group learning a minority group's language.

### 3.1.5 Learning Styles

One area of research which has received a lot of attention in education is the issue of learning style. That is, how one approaches studies. It suggests that different learners approach the learning task differently. There are people who cannot learn

something unless they see what they want to learn. Such learners are referred to as 'visual' learners. There are other people who learn, not by sight, but by just getting to hear what they want to learn. They are referred to as "aural" learners. Yet, there are some learners who are good at memorizing whilst others can learn only by practising.

Of course, all of us can learn in all the above-mentioned ways. Thus, when the learning style adopted by a learner is suitable for his environment, he would be able to learn his language faster than when he finds himself using a learning style which does not suit him. It must, therefore, be understood that a particular language teaching method will be more suitable for some learners than others. That is why it is necessary for you to vary your language teaching method. It is also necessary to encourage language learners to use all means available to them as they work hard to learn another language.

### 3.1.6 Age of Language Learning

A learner's age is a feature that is sometimes regarded as affecting L<sub>2</sub> learning. However, this is highly debatable. It has been widely observed that children from immigrant families eventually speak the language of their new community almost as fluently as the natives. The parents rarely achieve such high levels of mastery of the new language. Adult L<sub>2</sub> learners may become capable of communicating well in the language, but there will be differences of accent, choice of words etc, from that of native speakers.

The explanation for the difference is that, as in the L<sub>1</sub> acquisition, there is a critical period for L<sub>2</sub> acquisition. That is, there is a time in human development when a learner can receive new items.

Apart from the above, younger learners in informal language learning environments usually devote more time to language learning than older learners. Therefore, the age of a learner is occasionally regarded as a major factor in L<sub>2</sub> acquisition.

Dear student, in this session, we have looked at the ways in which intelligence, aptitude, personality and motivation, characteristics, learning styles and the environment of the learner, have been found to influence L<sub>2</sub> learning. We have learned that the study of individual learner variables is not easy and that the results of research are not satisfactory. The reason is partly the lack of clear definition and methods of measuring the individual features. Another reason is that the variables interact in complex ways.

Therefore, it is difficult to make precise predictions about how a particular individual's characteristics influence his or her success as a language learner.

## **Self-Assessment Questions**

### **Exercise 1.3**



1. What factors influence second language learning?
2. How does age as a factor affect second language learning?
3. Explain how learning styles influence second language learning.
4. Describe one research which indicates that intelligence has a part to play in second language learning.



### **Assignment**

Discuss any five factors that influence the learning of a second language.

INTRODUCTION

**SESSION 4: CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE/ENVIRONMENTS**

Dear student, you would agree that learning a second language in a natural situation as for example on the street is more effective than learning the language in a formal context. The reason is probably that most successful learners have had exposure to the language outside the classroom. Is there anything special about natural language learning? Should it be possible for us to create such an informal environment in the classroom? Should we create it? In this section, we will look at second language learning in the classroom setting and see what strategies can be adopted to make it effective.

**Objectives**

By the end of the session, you should be able to:

- (a) describe a natural language learning situation;
- (b) describe the communicative language teaching classroom; and
- (c) tell the differences between the natural instructional setting and the communicative language teaching classroom; and
- (d) identify five proposals relating to teaching and learning a second language.

Now read on...

**4.1 Informal/Natural and Formal Language**

**4.1.1 Learning Differences**

Before we go further, let us take a moment to consider the differences between the natural and instructional language learning settings. We will then look at some proposals related to second language teaching and learning.

**4.1.2 Natural/Informal Setting**

By natural language acquisition context or setting, we mean those language learning situations in which the language learner is exposed to the language at work or in a social interaction. In other words, if the learner is a child, then he is learning the language in the community play-ground or in a school situation in which most of the children are speaking the same language. That is when most of the children are native speakers of the language the child is about to learn. For example, this is when a child is trying to learn Akan in a school in which most of the children speak Akan.

In the formal setting or traditional instructional environment, the language is being taught in a group of second or foreign language learners. In this case, the focus is on the language itself instead of being on the information which is carried by the language. Here, the teacher's goal is to see to it that the learners learn the vocabulary and grammatical rules of the target language. Thus, the goal of learners in such courses is often to pass an examination rather than to use the language for daily communication.

#### 4.1.3 Features of the Natural Acquisition Setting

The goal is to internalize the grammatical rules. In the natural language acquisition setting, the following features are observable:

1. Learners are rarely corrected. If their listeners can understand what the speakers are saying, they do not remark on the correctness of the learners' speech. The listeners would consider it impolite to make any 'bad' comment on the speakers' language.
2. Language is not structured or planned step by step. In communicative interactions, the learner will be exposed to a wide variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures.
3. The learner is surrounded by the target language for many hours each day. Some of it is addressed to the learner.
4. The learner encounters a number of different people who use the target language proficiently.
5. The learner observes or participates in many different types of language events like greetings, commercial transactions, argument etc.
6. Learners are forced to use their limited second language ability to respond to questions or get information. In this situation, the emphasis is on getting meaning across clearly.
7. Modified input is available in some one-to-one conversations. In a situation where many native speakers are involved in the conversation however, the learner often has difficulty in getting access to language he can understand.

Let us now look at the features of formal learning situations. Begin to compare them with what we have discussed.

#### 4.1.4 Features of Formal Learning Situations

In a traditional learning situation, the following features are observed contrary to the above.

1. Errors or mistakes are often corrected. Accuracy tends to be focused on instead of meaningful interactions.
2. There is limited time for learning. For instance, we have, only a few hours a



3. Input is structurally simplified and sequenced. Language items are presented and practised in isolation, one at a time.
4. There is a small ratio of native speakers with whom the second language learner is in contact.
5. Students experience a limited amount of language discourse types. The discourse types are teacher made; like teacher asks questions → student answer → teacher evaluates students' responses.
6. Students often feel great pleasure to speak or write the second language and to do so correctly from the very beginning.
7. When teachers use the target language to give instruction or in other management situations, they often modify their language in order to ensure comprehension and compliance.

In fact, not all language classrooms are alike. The conditions for learning differ in terms of theories of language and the psychology of language acquisition. The physical environment, the age, and other variables. Classrooms also differ in terms of teacher competence and the principles which guide teachers in their language teaching methods and techniques.

There is a design of communicative language teaching programme that has sought to replace some of the features of the traditional classroom instruction described above. This design makes the communicative language learning programme simulate the natural acquisition context.

We shall consider the features of the new design.

#### 4.1.5 Features of the Communicative Language Teaching Classroom

In the communicative language teaching classroom, we may find the following:

1. There is limited error correction, and meaning is emphasised at the expense of form.
2. Input is simplified and made more comprehensible by the use of contextual cues, gestures and props rather than through structural grading that is presentation of one grammatical item at a time, from simple to complex structure.
3. Learners usually have only limited time for learning. Sometimes however, subject-matter courses taught through the second language can add time for language learning.
4. There is a limited contact with proficient or native speakers of the language.

language. It is often only the teacher who is a proficient speaker. However, in communicative classrooms, learners have considerable exposure to the second language speech of other learners. This naturally contains errors which would not be heard in an environment where one's interlocutors are native speakers.

5. A wide variety of discourse types are introduced through stories, role playing, the use of 'real-life' materials such as newspapers, television broadcasts and field trips.
6. There is little pressure to perform at high levels of accuracy, and there is often greater emphasis on comprehension than on production in the early stages of learning.
7. Finally, modified input is a feature of this new approach to instruction. The teacher in these classes makes every effort to speak to students in a level of language they can understand. In addition, other students speak simple language.

In this session, we have looked at the two main classrooms associated with second language learning. These are, the informal and natural acquisition setting and the formal learning situation. The differences between these two settings lie mainly in attitudes to errors, kind of inputs, time for learning and structure of the courses. Deriving from these a third setting or design has been brought up. This is the communicative language teaching design.



## Self-Assessment Questions

### Exercise 1.4

1. Give five features of the natural acquisition setting.
2. Mention any five features of the formal learning situation.
3. State three differences between the natural setting and the formal traditional setting.
4. Mention five features of the communicative learning situation
5. State the five proposals meant to enhance the use of the communicative

**SESSION 5: THE CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE/ENVIRONMENT  
CURRENT TEACHER/STUDENT ROLE**

Dear student, in the previous session we started looking at the effect the environment has on learning a new language. We mentioned that when the environment is informal, learners appear to learn the new language faster than when the environment is formal. In this session, we shall consider some proposals for classroom and the role the teacher as well as the student should play towards the second language learning.

**Objectives**

By the end of the session, you should be able to:

- (a) identify five proposals meant for classroom teaching of English
- (b) describe briefly each of the proposals
- (c) state the role of the teacher in second language learning classroom; and
- (d) state the role of the learner in his quest for learning a second language

Now read on...

**5.1 Five Proposals for Classroom Teaching**

Theories have been proposed for the best way to learn a second language in classroom, and teaching methods have been developed to implement them. The question is, which theoretical proposal holds the greatest promise for improving language learning in the classroom?

The answer is, through research which specifically investigates the relationship between teaching and learning.

In fact, formal and informal researches are needed. A formal research involves careful control of the factors which may affect learning. It often uses a large number of teachers and learners in order to limit the possibility that the unusual behaviour of one or two individuals might create a misleading impression about what one would expect.

Informal research often involves small numbers, perhaps only one teacher, and the emphasis here is not on what is

particular about this group or this teacher.

Five proposals that have come up from Research finding are:

1. Get it right from the beginning
2. Say what you mean and mean what you say.
3. Just listen
4. Teach what is teachable
5. Get it right in the end

Let's consider each of the proposals in detail.

### 1.1.1 Get it right from the beginning

The 'Get it right from the beginning' proposal for second language teaching probably describes the way in which most people were taught second language in school. It shows that behaviourist view of language learning in assuming that second language learners need to build up their language knowledge gradually by practising only the correct forms of the language. Teachers avoid allowing beginning learners to speak freely because this would encourage the new learner to make errors. Thus, repetition of correct forms becomes the order of the day, and students sometimes hardly think of what they say or repeat. Do you think this method is a good one for teaching a second language? This has allow often been criticised. Do you think the practice has any merits?

### 5.1.2 Say what you mean and mean what you say

This is the theoretical view based on the interactionists hypothesis. It emphasises the necessity for learners to have access to meaningful and comprehensible (understandable) input through conversational interaction with teachers and other students. The argument is that when learners are given the opportunity to engage in conversations, they are compelled to negotiate meaning. That is, they express and clarify their intentions and opinions, in a way which permits them to arrive at a mutual understanding.



Do you find this proposal useful? Do you think it would help a second language learner? At what stage of L<sub>2</sub> learning will it be most helpful?

### 5.1.3 Just listen

This proposal is based on the assumption that it is not necessary to drill and memorize language forms in order to learn them. However, unlike the interactionists' emphasis on providing opportunities for interaction the emphasis here is on listening and reading activities. Several researchers agree that this

proposal is useful in teaching a second language. The teaching of comprehension is one example of the 'just listen' proposal.

### 5.1.4 Teach what is teachable

This is one of the proposals which have received increasing attention in second language teaching and learning. Manfred Pienemann is the researcher associated with the proposal. He and his associates are concerned with being able to explain why it often seems that some things can be taught successfully whereas other things, even after intensive teaching, seem to remain a problem for learners. They claim that their research provides evidence that some linguistic structures, as for example, basic sentence word order (both simple and complex) develop along particular lines. Such structures can only be taught at latter stages like 4,5,6 and not at stage 1 for example.



Don't you think that this view is convincing?

### 5.1.5 Get it right in the end

This proposal is very similar to teach what is teachable. Its proponents recognise a role for instruction, but also assume that not everything has to be taught. That is, they assume that much will be acquired naturally by learners, through the use of language for communication. They also agree that some things cannot be taught if the timing of the teaching fails to consider the learners' readiness (stage of development). This proposal differs from the 'teach what is teachable' proposal, however, in that it emphasises that idea that some aspects of language must be taught. For example when an error that learners make is a result of transfer from their first language, the structure must be taught.

## 5.2 The Role of the Teacher

Teaching is usually regarded as something that teachers do in order to bring about changes in learners. A central component of methodology is how teachers view their role in the teaching and learning process. The following are some of the roles teachers may consider for themselves in the classroom:

- i. monitor of student learning
- ii. motivator
- iii. organiser and controller of pupil behaviour
- iv. provider of accurate language models.
- v. counsellor and friend to the learners
- vi. needs analyst

- vii. material developer
- viii. evaluator

### **5.3 The Role of the Learner**

The role of the learner in the classroom relates to,

- i. approaches to learning
- ii. attitudes to learning
- iii. preferred learning styles and strategies
- iv. preferred learning activities
- v. patterns of learner-to-learner interaction
- vi. degree of control learners exercise over their own learning
- vii. how learners characterise effective teaching
- viii. how learners characterise effective learning

If the above roles of teachers and learners are well performed, teaching and learning a second language will be effective.

The session has considered five proposals that researches have brought up to enhance second language teaching. These include,

- i. Get it right from the beginning
- ii. Say what you mean and mean what you say
- iii. Just listen
- iv. Teach what is teachable
- v. Get it right in the end

SUMMARY

A combination of some of the above proposals will be more useful than holding on to one particular one. The session also looked at the roles of the teacher and the learner. It is hopeful that if teachers and learners play their roles efficiently, second language learning can be exciting.

### **Self-Assessment Questions**

#### **Exercise 1.5**



1. How were proposals got for classroom teaching?
2. Mention the 5 proposals meant for good classroom teaching.
3. Which of the proposals regards repetition as very necessary.
4. Give an example of the 'just listen' proposal of teaching.
5. Mention five roles of the teacher.
6. Mention any five roles of the student.



### **Assignment**

Prepare a lesson plan based on one of the proposals to teach a topic of your choice.

SESSION 6: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LANGUAGE SYLLABUS AND THE TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE TEACHER

INTRODUCTION

Second language teaching is often viewed from a narrow perspective, that is, from the art of teaching. Therefore, much of the literature on second language teaching deals with teaching methods or with the design and use of instructional material. If students are not learning, it is assumed to be the fault of the method, the material or the teacher. Yet the success of a language programme involves far more than the art of teaching. In the previous session, we looked at the importance of setting goals for teaching. We observed that setting good instructional goals contribute to the success of the second language teaching programme. In this session, we shall consider two important components of the second language teaching programme. These are the syllabus and the teacher's guide.

**Objectives**

By the end of the session, you should be able to:

- (a) identify a syllabus and the teacher's guide;
- (b) state the importance of the syllabus to the teacher; and
- (c) state the importance of the teacher's guide to the teacher.

Now read on...

**6.1 The Syllabus Defined**

A syllabus is a programme of activities explicitly organised by teachers in a school as a means by which pupils may attain through learning, a set of objectives.

It is a selection of the kind of present experiences that lives fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences. In other words, it refers to whatever is deliberately selected by teachers or educationists as worthwhile knowledge and actions in society, to be taught with appropriate methods, to learners and may be evaluated with appropriate feedback.

**6.2 Syllabus Design**

In standard models of curriculum processes, curriculum planners progress systematically from needs assessment, to goals and objectives, to specification of the instructional content of the programme. Taba's (1962) model of curriculum process consists of:

- 6.3**  
The second...  
1.  
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5.

- Syllabus
- Step 1 : Diagnosis of needs
  - Step 2 : Formulation of objectives
  - Step 3 : Selection of content
  - Step 4 : Organisation of content
  - Step 5 : Selection of learning experiences
  - Step 6 : Organisation of learning experiences
  - Step 7 : Determination of what to evaluate and means to evaluate

In language teaching, steps 3 and 4 above are usually known as syllabus design. A syllabus design is concerned with the choice and sequencing of instructional content. One must make a choice of instructional material and arrange the material in a particular order. This implies that developing a syllabus would involve examining instructional objectives and arranging them by priorities, and then determining what kind of content would be required for attaining the objectives.

In reality, a language teaching syllabus has traditionally been the starting point in planning a language programme. The concept of a language syllabus has been fundamental in the development of language teaching practices in the twentieth century. Thus, in the works of some British language teaching specialists like Harold Palmer, Michael West and A.A Hornby, as Charles Fries and Robert Lado, issues concerning the linguistic content of a language programme were considered primary and a necessary basis for planning a language programme. This shows that many applied linguist were trained as linguists rather than as educational planners.

### 6.3 Kinds of Syllabuses

The following kinds of syllabuses are commonly found in current English as a second language course and material.

1. Structural (organised primarily/around grammar and sentence patterns)
2. Functional (organised around communicative functions such as identifying, reporting, correcting and describing issues)
3. Notional (organised around conceptual categories such as duration, quantity and location)
4. Topical (organised around themes or topics such as health, food, clothing etc)
5. Situational (organised around speech settings and the transactions associated with them such as shopping, at the bank, at the supermarket etc.)



6. Skills (organised around skills such as listening for a gist, listening for specific information, listening for inferences).
7. Task or activity-based (organised around activities such as drawing, following directions, following instructions).

In practice a combination of approaches is often used.

#### 6.4 The Importance of the Syllabus

A syllabus is important for the following reasons:

1. A properly constructed and planned syllabus is believed to assure successful learning, since it represents a linguistically high introduction to the target language.
2. It is essentially a job specification and as such sets out precisely what is to be done and the standards or criteria to be met by those who do it. It also provides sample situations as a guide to the teacher.
3. It is also a guide for material writers. In fact, writers of textbooks refer to the topics outlines in the syllabus to do their work well. Their writings should exemplify the principles of the syllabus.
4. It is a document that teachers consult to know the day to day schedule of what is expected to be taught to learners. Of course, teachers are free to adapt and supplement the syllabus.
5. It is a historical document which keeps a record of all language teaching activities of an institution. Like a lesson note, a teacher may refer to a previous syllabus to see which topics were taught in the past and what changes should be made in future.

#### 6.5 A Teacher's Guide

A teacher's guide is a document or handbook that serves to explain the textbooks on a particular teaching programme. It provides explanation and answers to questions in the textbooks. It is important to the less experienced teacher because:

- i. It provides explanation to the materials in the textbooks meant for teaching and learning programme.
- ii. It provides answers to the exercises provided for evaluating learners.
- iii. It also suggests methods and strategies to be used in teaching some topics. For example, if there is to be a discussion or role play, the handbook will specify it.
- iv. The teacher's guide suggests some teaching materials or aids to be used by teachers are to use in teaching a particular topic.
- v. Finally, it provides alternative strategies for the experienced teacher.

The session has looked at the importance of the syllabus and the teacher's guide. It was made clear that a properly constructed and well-planned syllabus is believed to assure us of successful learning. Similarly, a good teacher's guide is an aid to good teaching. Therefore, it is important for teachers to ensure that they get good syllabuses as well as guides before they engage in teaching a group of people.

### Self-Assessment Questions



#### Exercise 1.6

1. What is a syllabus?
2. What major issues are involved in designing a syllabus?
3. Mention and explain two kinds of syllabuses.
4. Give two reasons why we need a syllabus in language teaching.
5. What is a teacher's guide?
6. Why do we need a teacher's guide? (Give two reasons)



#### Assignment

Discuss the importance of the syllabus and the teacher's guide to an inexperienced teacher.