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LANGUAGE LEARNING AND RECEPTIVE SKILLS

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Abstract

Language learning is not just learning the aspects like syntax, morphology, phonology and semantics. It is the process of learning the culture aspects of a particular language. First language (L1) is not 'taught' but 'caught'. A child learns the language through the innate skills that he or she has. This innate skill in learning a language consists of LSRW which are the basic needs to learn a language. These innate skills are broadly divided into two categories: receptive and productive. Receptive skills consist of listening and reading. A child learns the L1, L2, L3., by adopting these skills. Hence receptive skill is more important in acquiring a language. This paper focuses on how the language can be taught effectively using these receptive skills.

Keywords

Listening Skills, Reading Skills, ELT, SLA, Receptive Skills, and Language Acquisition.

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Introduction:

Language learning is a skill. It involves a lot of practice in a regular interval. Just like learning to ride a bicycle or learning to swim, a person need to practice a few things to learn a language. These skills include the four basic skills of a language: Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing (LSRW). These four skills are broadly divided into two: receptive and productive. A learner of a language uses the receptive skills listening and reading to imitate the art of speaking and writing. A learner while listens or reads, he adopts the usage of language in terms of the linguistics. He learns the phones, morphemes, syntax and semantics. Hence, receptive skills are very essential in learning a language.

Language Skills:

As mentioned earlier, Language learning is a mixture of these four skills. Listening and reading makes the students to acquire the usage of language; Speaking and Writing makes the learner to apply those learnt skills. These receptive and productive skills make the learner of a language to use it as the native speaker. Mastering these skills need a lot of practice. Receptive skills are acquired by the constant observation and Productive skills are being tested by application.

Receptive Skills:

According to Merriam Webster, Receptive is defined as : able or inclined to receive but for the learners of English, Receptive means willing to listen to or accept ideas. According to Oxford Dictionary the word *receptive* is defined as *able or quick to receive impressions or ideas*. These receptive skills of language are used to receive the structures and signs of the language and use it effectively. There are two receptive skills in language learning namely Listening and Reading.

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Productive Skills:

After a person receives the knowledge he needs to apply those learned knowledge. This makes them to produce the skills by their own writing and speaking. While writing the learner writes with the apt usage of language structure and vocabulary which he has learnt. This productivity of the skills is called Productive Skills.

Receptive Skill and Language Learning

Language learning is closely connected with receptive skills, as these skills play an inevitable role. Receptive Skills consist of Listening and Reading. Through listening and reading a language learner learns the basic components of a language. These skills teach the learners the usage of language and its application.

Reading Skill

Reading skill is very important in acquiring a language since the literatures of that particular language teach the student's knowledge of using this appropriately. Marlow Ediger in his *Teaching English Successfully*, points out some aspects of this complex skill. He calls it a complex skill since it involves a number of simultaneous operations.

A student who learns this skill will be able to comprehend, understand the lexical and structural meanings of words, phrases and sentences, can find the necessary passages while skimming, can distinguish between writer's opinion and statement of facts, understand the mood of the writer, and recognise the meaning of various graphic signals.

Types of Reading

Reading skills are of two: silent and loud reading. Marlow Ediger says, reading is not possible without giving some phonetic value to the graphic symbols even silent reading which is mostly done by the readers they 'subvocalise' i.e., mentally pronounce the words. Loud reading on the other hand, like other speech work it is useful means of mastering the language code. The sign board on the highways also give meaning to the person who sees it though it has nothing lexical or syntactic. For instance, a right curve symbol is used to show the direction on the right and a left curve for the left. it is not necessary always to read loud or the passage to be in the full lexical content.

The main objective of the reading skill is to make the reader comprehend and understand the meaning of it. There are three stages of reading. They are 1. Recognition stage, 2. Structuring stage and 3. Interpretation stage. These stages have a close connection in learning the skill of phonology, syntactic and semantic respectively. While reading a text, the reader has to understand a chronological sequence, a listing of descriptions, a comparison or contrast, and the causes or effects of an event.

Methods of teaching Reading:

There are various methods in teaching the reading skills to the learners of a language. Marlow Ediger broadly classifies the methods into two groups: 'atomistic' and 'holistic'. He says that these groups as the two sides of a scale. Starting from the atomistic end the following methods constitute the scale.

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1. **The Alphabet Method** – emphasis is on learning the names of the letter in their sequential order. Students are then made to memorise the words with the sequence of letters, e.g., matter – em ei tee tee ee ar
2. **The Phonic or Syllabic Method** – emphasis is not on the names of the letters but on the sounds of those letters. Non-English speakers and also English speakers find it very useful since it helps them to learn the pronunciation of a new word.
3. **The Whole-Word Method** – In this method the learner is taught to read each word as a word picture, without attention to individual letters.
4. **The Sentence Method** – This method relies heavily on the principle of situational teaching. It also focuses on the conditions like the context and structure.
5. **The Story Method** – This method is an extension of the sentence method and regards the entire discourse as the unit of thought.
6. **Intensive Reading** – In this method, the readers read not only for detailed comprehension of meaning but also for mastering the structures and vocabulary. It is regarded as highly potent means of learning language since a learner can practise the language even without the help of a teacher.
7. **Extensive Reading** – In this, the readers read for information or simply for the pleasure of reading. The primary object is general comprehension; not language study. This enables the learner to ignore certain paragraphs or passages and concentrate on the ones he is interested in.

Listening Skill:

Listening is one of the four skills that have an important role in mastering the target language, especially in the university level. This skill is very useful to help college students to do some academic activities that involve attending lectures or speeches, presenting materials or finding some resources to do their assignments. Based on a research, listening problems include lack of vocabulary mastery, less understanding grammatical forms, e.g: speakers' utterances, unclear pronunciation and speed of speech, unclear contents of the passages, and physical setting including uncomfortable class; and lack of facility and background noise.

Definitions on Listening Skill

According to Howatt and Dakin, Listening skill of a language involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and grasping the meaning. It also makes the listener to identify and understand what the speaker is saying about. The listener who understands can recognise the characteristic English speech sounds, distinguish sounds from similar in his mother-tongue, understand the lexical meanings of words in context and grammatical meanings of structures, grasp the meaning conveyed by stress and intonation patterns, anticipate words and structures from the context for understanding speech at normal conversational speed, guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word from the context.

Nurul in his article *An Analysis on How to Improve Tertiary EFL Students' Listening Skill of English* says Thomlison's definition of listening includes "active listening," which goes beyond comprehending as understanding the message content, to comprehension as an act of empathetic

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understanding of the speaker. Furthermore, argues that empathy is essential to listening and contends that it is more than a polite attempt to identify a speaker's perspectives. Rather more importantly, empathetic understanding expands to "egocentric prosocial behavior". Ronald and Roskelly define listening as an active process requiring the same skills of prediction, hypothesizing, checking, revising, and generalizing that writing and reading demand; and these authors present specific exercises to make students active listeners who are aware of the "inner voice" one hears when writing.

Methods of Teaching Listening

- 1. Word level** – In this method, a word or two is repeated and asked the students to find how often they hear it.
- 2. Sentence level** – In this method a sentence or short phrase is repeated and the students are asked to find the number of words
- 3. Listening for comprehension** – the students are made to listen to a familiar text which is aided by visuals.
- 4. Listening and short response** – The students are given instructions and asked to follow the directions.
- 5. Listening and making longer response** - The students are given instructions and asked to follow the directions.

According to Rubin "For second language/foreign language learners, listening is the skill that makes the heaviest processing demands because learners must store information in short term memory at the same time as they are working to understand the information" Peterson defines top-down processing as the higher level process "driven by listeners' expectations and understandings of the context, the topic, the nature of text, and the nature of the world". On the other hand, he defines bottom-up processing as the lower level process "triggered by the sounds, words, and phrases which the listener hears as he or she attempts to decode speech and assign meaning"

Conclusion

The skills of Listening and Reading i.e., the receptive skill is indeed plays a vital role in developing the language acquisition. Listening and reading skills elevate the language learning students to develop their language abilities.

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