

Language Acquisition among adults using Listening skills

V.Moses Jayakumar

*Assistant Professor (SG) Department of English Saveetha School of Engineering Saveetha University
Thandalam Chennai-602105 Tamil nadu, India, mosesjayakumar.v.sse@saveetha.com*

Abstract:

First language acquisition refers to the way children learn their native language. Second language acquisition refers to the learning of another language or languages besides the native language. Language acquisition almost always occurs in children during a period of rapid increase in brain volume. At this point in development, a child has many more neural connections than he or she will have as an adult, allowing for the child to be more able to learn new things than he or she would be as an adult. The study of language acquisition explores the processes by which language learners (children or adults) acquire first or second languages (or more), as well as the properties of the linguistic systems that they acquire. Second language acquisition: This is the acquisition of a second language after the mother tongue has been (largely) acquired. Usually refers to acquisition which begins after puberty, i.e. typically adult language acquisition. Sometimes replaced by the term further language acquisition. Here, I am conducting listening tests to analyse and getting the accurate results of language acquisition among the adults. Listening audio tracks of guest lecture and dialogues will be used. Learning and understanding can be facilitated in learners by emphasizing organized, coherent bodies of knowledge (in which specific facts and details are embedded), by helping learners learn how to transfer their learning, and by helping them use what they learn. Among learners language acquisition will happen definitely, they will understand the words; accent, pronunciation, meanings and they will make sequence of words and speak well. We learn language by comparing what we hear to what we already.

Introduction:

The purpose of this project was to make a preliminary investigation of the processes of second language acquisition by children, adolescents and adults, and to develop a methodology appropriate to the study of second language learning. In the development of the methodology, applicable techniques from first language acquisition research were incorporated and new techniques appropriate specifically to second language acquisition were devised. The research examined the acquisition of English by engineering students in various levels. Listening skills played a major role in this project. Students received various inputs from the teachers, peer groups and the family members. These inputs put together and inculcate their mind and bring out a good knowledge in English. Their confidence level will be increased. They will interact with others and make themselves to participate in the forum. In this project I have undergone a research work how children are developing their English language learning through listening skills. I conducted various levels of assessment and I found gradual increase in their acquisition level. I have prepared analysis chart for an easy understanding.

Educational policies that impact second language (L2) learners—a rapidly-growing group—are often enacted

without consulting relevant research. This review synthesized research regarding optimal conditions for L2 acquisition, facilitative L2 learner and teacher characteristics, and speed of L2 acquisition, from four bodies of work—foreign language education, child language research, sociocultural studies, and psycholinguistics—often overlooked by educators. Seventy-one peer-reviewed journal articles studying PK-12 L2 learners met inclusion criteria. Findings included: 1) Optimal conditions for L2 learners immersed in a majority-L2 society include strong home literacy practices, opportunities to use the L2 informally, well-implemented specially-designed L2 educational programs, and sufficient time devoted to L2 literacy instruction, whereas L2 learners with little L2 exposure require explicit instruction to master grammar; 2) L2 learners with strong L2 aptitude, motivation, and first language (L1) skills are more successful; 3) Effective L2 teachers demonstrate sufficient L2 proficiency, strong instructional skills, and proficiency in their students' L1; 4) L2 learners require 3-7 years to reach L2 proficiency, with younger learners typically taking longer but more likely to achieve close-to-native results. Additional research is needed on the characteristics of successful or unsuccessful L2 learners and L2 teachers. Such research should attend systematically to the differences between L2 learning in maximal versus minimal input settings;

whereas the psycholinguistic challenges of L2 learning might be common across settings, the sociocultural and interactional challenges and opportunities differ in ways that can massively impact outcomes.

Language acquisition:

Listening awakens awareness of the language as it is a receptive skill that first develops in a human being.

Learning to listen to the target language improves language ability. The sound, rhythm, intonation, and stress of the language can only be perfectly adapted through listening.

This approach to teaching of listening is based on the following assumptions: **Listening serves the goal of extracting meaning from messages.** To do this, learners have to be taught how to use both bottom-up and top-down processes to understand messages.

Listening has an important role not only in daily life but also in classroom settings. Anderson and Lynch (2003) state that “we only become aware of what remarkable feats of listening we achieve when we are in an unfamiliar listening environment, such as listening to a language in which we have limited proficiency”.

Rost (1994) explains the importance of listening in language classroom as follows: 1. Listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin. 2. Spoken language provides a means of interaction for the learner. Because learners must interact to achieve understanding. Access to speakers of the language is essential. Moreover, learners’ failure to understand the language they hear is an impetus, not an obstacle, to interaction and learning. 3. Authentic spoken language presents a challenge for the learner to understand language as native speakers actually use it. 4. Listening exercises provide teachers with a means for drawing learners’ attention to new forms (vocabulary, grammar, new interaction patterns) in the language.

Goh emphasizes the problem of concentrating and missing the beginning of text. Goh also suggests doing more investigations about learners’ attitudes to their listening problems and how they deal with these problems.

Underwood (1989) organizes the major problems as follows:

- Speakers speed ,not in control,
- No reputations,
- the listener’s limited knowledge in vocabulary,
- failure to recognize the non-verbal communications,
- problems of interpretation,
- inability to concentrate,

- Established learning habits. Problems in listening emphasized by Field (2003) are those: Learners know the word, but get the wrong sense. Phonetic variation of a word misleads them. (reduction ,assimilation, elision, syllabification). Learners know the word in written form but not the oral version. Learners have difficulty to catch the word from a connected speech such as a dialogue. Yiching (2005), however, thinks that some barriers cause problems in listening such as belief barriers, material barriers, habitual barriers, information processing barriers, English proficiency barriers, strategic barriers and affective barriers. He introduces forgetting to activate strategies, regarding strategies as extra burdens to information processing, being challenged by the complex nature of the strategy, having problems conducting the proper strategies and even being unable to comprehend the text after applying strategies. Yousif (2006) mentions more about psychological barriers in listening, the importance of speech rate in listening and giving breaks during a long listening activity. According to him, lecturers should be more aware of their students’ listening problems and adjust activities to their students. Also the age factor. Biological changes, adolescent issues, stress, depression, want to spend time with their peers and all this not helping the learners to listen and understand what is conveyed.

One of the main problems that English language learners encounter in listening is that there are unfamiliar sounds that appear in English but not in their native language, and The importance of listening in language learning and listening comprehension problems... 2102 this leads to comprehension difficulties. For instance, even though Turkish and English have similar consonants, Turkish does not have some of the consonants of English such as /θ/ (thumb) or /ð/ (those), which are produced with the tongue tip between the teeth (Yavuz, 2006). In Turkish, the closest sound for /θ/ is /t/ which may cause confusion for Turkish students when they hear the word ‘three’. Since the /θ/ sound does not exist in Turkish, students may understand it as the word ‘tree’ or vice versa. Similarly, for the sound /ð/, it is highly possible for students to misunderstand since they may think it is /d/, so when the students hear the word ‘those’ they may think the word that they hear is ‘doze’. The use of intonation, stress and rhythm may also prevent learners’ understanding of the spoken English. For a language learner, comprehending the meaning of the spoken language requires more effort when they are compared with native speakers of that language. For instance, outside

noise or pronunciation differences affect learners more than the native speakers. Although learners are able to cope with this situation in their own language, Ur (2007) provides several explanations for why foreign language learners do not have the same ability to cope with such problems in the target language. First of all, although language learners recognize the words when they see them in written form or pronounced slowly, they cannot understand them just because of the rapid speech or they just do not know them. Secondly, learners may not be familiar with the sound-combinations, lexis and collocations which help them make guesses to fill the missing parts. Not being familiar with the colloquial vocabulary is also one of the problems by itself that students face with. Finally, language learners have a tendency to believe that for successful comprehension they have to understand everything.

Anderson and Lynch (2003) state that effective listening involves a multiplicity of skills and they list four steps that make up the process of listening in face-to-face conversation: 1. The spoken signals have to be identified from the midst of surrounding sounds. 2. The continuous stream of speech has to be segmented into units, which have to be recognized as known words. 3. The syntax of the utterance has to be grasped and the speaker's intended meaning has to be understood. 4. We also have to apply our linguistic knowledge to formulating a correct and appropriate response to what has been said.

Listening is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process.

Listening is a key to all effective communication, without the ability to listen effectively messages are easily misunderstood.

Listening is not just about being Quiet while someone else is speaking.

Listening should happen with the Mind.

Hearing with the senses.

Listening is conscious.

Listening will help us to improve our interpersonal & oral exchange.

In the workplace, effective listening contributes to fewer errors, less waste time and improved accuracy. Effective listening helps build friendships and careers.

Language acquisition is **the process by which humans acquire the ability to comprehend and produce language, either as their first or**

second (third, etc.) language. The study of language acquisition provides evidence for theoretical linguistics and has practical applications in language pedagogy.

Learners acquire language through a subconscious process during which they are unaware of

grammatical rules. This happens especially when they acquire their first language. They repeat what is said to them and get a feel for what is and what is not correct. In order to acquire a language, they need a source of natural communication, which is usually the mother, the father, or the caregiver. Language learning, on the other hand, is the result of direct instruction in the rules of language. Language learning is not an age-appropriate activity for very young children as learning presupposes that learners have a conscious knowledge of the new language and can talk about that knowledge. They usually have a basic knowledge of the grammar.

It is a continuous process of learning Language through various inputs. The listener will hear sounds and does focus on them. Listening begins with physical hearing of the message and taking note of it. Sensing is, thus, the first step of the listening process. Hear sounds and concentrate on them in order to receive the message. Recognizing unit boundaries phonologically as it is important for you to recognise phonologically as it is important for you to recognise phonological difference. Once can able to recognise the sound patterns then we should decode and interpret the message.

What is Chomsky's language acquisition theory?

- Chomsky concluded that **children must have an inborn faculty for language acquisition.**
- According to this theory, the process is biologically determined - the human species has evolved a brain whose neural circuits contain linguistic information at birth. ...
- He stated that all human languages share common principles.

Language acquisition will happen in both first language and second language. In the case of first language child will learn language from the inputs of mother, siblings and grandparents.

These inputs will help a child to learn native learning on continuous practice of listening various inputs. Through a process of trial and error, a child (or a second language learner) will be able to learn correct grammar. Language acquisition, in this view, is a stimulus-response mechanism.

A child will get to the correct form of the language when he observes reinforcing behavior from those around him—a smile, a nod or being handed a spherical object

when he says “ball.” These all tell him that he’s thinking in the right direction. In the 1960s, the field of behaviorism came under serious attack from the likes of Noam Chomsky, a man recognized as the father of modern linguistics, and about as decorated a scholar as any.

The Five Stages of Learning a New Language:

- **Pre-Production**

During this stage, the student is normally silent while listening to new words and gaining an understanding of the language.

- **Early Production**

At this stage, students start to practice pronouncing new words, and typically learn at least 1,000 new words and their meanings. They also start using their new words to speak in short phrases.

- **Speech Emergence**

Vocabulary continues to expand, and students will know a minimum of 3,000 words by the end of this stage. They start to speak in longer phrases and sentences, and to ask questions. In addition, at this stage they will start reading and writing assignments.

- **Intermediate Fluency**

Students start to think and form responses in the new language. By the end of this stage, most people have learned well over 6,000 different words and their meanings. They are also speaking more fluently and continuing to improve upon their reading and writing abilities.

- **Advance Fluency**

People who reach this stage continue to improve upon and expand their vocabulary and abilities in their second language

Acquisition is carried out in the first years of childhood and leads to unconscious knowledge of one's native language which is practically indelible. Note that acquisition has nothing to do with intelligence, i.e. children of different degrees of intelligence all go through the same process of acquiring their native language. Learning (of a second language) is done later (after puberty) and is characterized by imperfection and the likelihood of being forgotten. Learning leads to conscious knowledge.

- **FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION** is the acquisition of the mother tongue. Chronology is

important here (see below). The degree of competence acquired may vary from individual to individual and may be checked by later switching to another language. Note that language acquisition is largely independent of intelligence, although individuals can and do differ in their mastery of open classes such as vocabulary. **BI- AND MULTILINGUALISM** is the acquisition of two or more languages from birth or at least together in early childhood. The ideal situation where all languages are equally represented in the child's surroundings and where the child has an impartial relationship to each is hardly to be found in reality so that of two or more languages one is bound to be dominant.

- **SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION** is the acquisition of a second language after the mother tongue has been (largely) acquired. Usually refers to acquisition which begins after puberty, i.e. typically adult language acquisition. Sometimes replaced by the term further language acquisition. **ERROR** is an incorrect feature in language acquisition which occurs because of the stage at which the child is at a given time (acquisition is as yet incomplete). Errors are regular and easily explainable. **MISTAKE** Here one is dealing with a random, non-systematic and usually unpredictable phenomenon in second language learning. Mistakes are sometimes termed 'performance errors' to emphasize that they arise on the spur of the moment when speaking and are not indicative of any acquisitional stage. **COMPETENCE** is the abstract ability to speak a language, i.e. knowledge of a language independent of its use.

Example of Language Acquisition?

For example, a child may correctly learn the word "gave" (past tense of "give"), and later on use the word "gived". Eventually, the child will typically go back to using the correct word, "gave".

Factors That Influence Language Learning in Children

- Exposure to the New Language. When learning a new language, the most important factor is exposure. ...
- The Age of the Learner. ...
- The Learner's Native Language. ...
- The Learner's Motivation.

The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis acknowledges that **students learn faster as they are given more comprehensible input**. Inversely, a lack of comprehensible input delays language acquisition. Total

Immersion Language Teaching, for example, succeeds so well is because it provides lots of comprehensible input.

Krashen is most widely known for his "**comprehensible input**" hypothesis, which suggests that learners acquire language by taking in and understanding language that is "just beyond" their current level of competence.

Krashen claims that **learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, a low level of anxiety and extroversion are better equipped for success in second language acquisition.**

- **NATURAL** is characterized by continuous exposure to language data. This data is not ordered, i.e. the (child) learner is exposed to the performance of adult speakers of the language he/she is acquiring. There is little if any feedback to the acquirer with regard to this intake.
- **CONTROLLED** is intervallic if not to say sporadic. Furthermore it takes place against the background of another language, usually the first language of the learners. In exceptional cases acquisition can be both natural and controlled, i.e. where one obtains formal instruction (or gives it one to oneself) and lives in an environment where the target language is spoken. Controlled acquisition is further characterized by an ordered exposure to the data of the language.
- **GUIDED LANGUAGE ACQUISITION** is an intermediary type between the two just discussed and is characterized by prescriptive corrections on the part of the child's contact persons, i.e. mother, father, etc. Corrections show the transfer of adult grammars to children whereas natural language acquisition shows the gradual approximation of the child's grammar to the adult's.

The logical problem of acquisition

- The logical problem of language acquisition is that it would seem impossible to learn anything about a certain language without first already knowing something about language in general. That is the child must know what to expect in language before he/she can actually order the data he/she is presented with in his/her surroundings and ascribe meanings to words he/she encounters.

The Evidence of Deaf Children

Deaf children start by babbling and cooing but this soon peters out because they have no linguistic input. However, they would seem to seize on other communication systems and if

people in their surroundings use sign language then they pick this up. The interesting point here is that the children usually learn the sign language more perfectly than the people from whom they learn it (note: sign language has grammar with inflections just as does speak language). They are creative in this language and create sentence structures if these are not present in their input. This would seem to suggest that deaf children use sign language as a medium for activating their knowledge about language which is innate.

Is there any Language Gene?

There is a pathological medical condition called Specific Language Impairment which covers a range of defects, all of which have in common that children continually make grammatical mistakes in their mother tongue, i.e. they would seem to be unaware of the existence of grammatical rules. Now as the Canadian linguist Myrna Gopnik has shown in her study of a family in Britain, some 16 of 30 members over three generations suffered from the defect. This would seem to imply that it is genetically transferred (it looks like a defective gene which is dominant in the family) which would also imply that the ability to grasp the rules of grammar in first language acquisition is genetically encoded.

How is language transmitted?

Language is obviously passed on from parents to their children. But on closer inspection one notices that it is the performance (in the technical sense) of the previous generation which is used as the basis for the competence of the next. To put it simply, children do not have access to the competence of their parents.

- 1) Linguistic input from parents (performance)
- 2) Abstraction of structures by children
- 3) Internalization (competence of next generation)

The above model is the only one which can account for why children can later produce sentences which they have never heard before: the child stores the sentence structures of his/her native language and has a lexicon of words as well. When producing new sentences, he/she takes a structure and fills it with words. This process allows the child to produce a theoretically unlimited number of sentences in his/her later life.

Language acquisition for any generation of children consists of achieving mastery in four main areas, i.e. acquiring:

1) A set of syntactic rules which specify how sentences are built up out of phrases and phrases out of words.

2) A set of morphological rules which specify how words are built up out of morphemes, i.e. grammatical units smaller than the word.

3) A set of phonological rules which specify how words, phrases and sentences are pronounced.

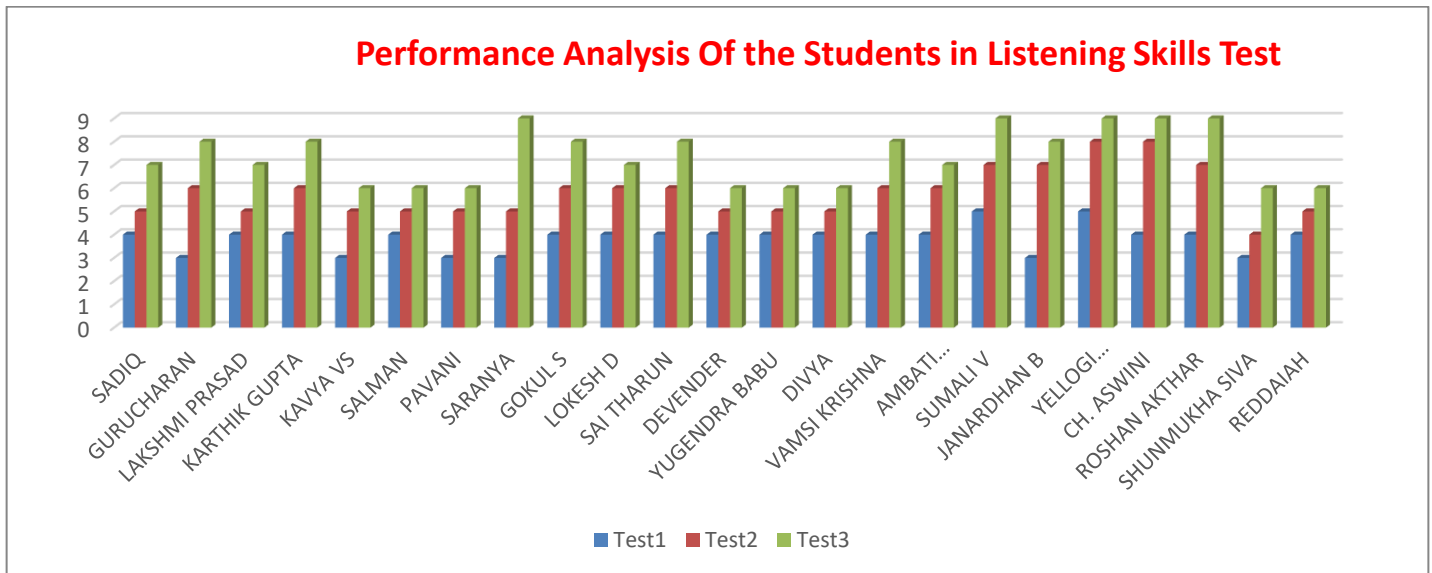
4) A set of semantic rules which specify how words, phrases and sentences are interpreted, i.e. what their meaning is.

- **Competence** According to Chomsky in his Aspects of the theory of syntax (1965) this is the abstract ability of an individual to speak the

language which he/she has learned as native language in his/her childhood. The competence of a speaker is unaffected by such factors as nervousness, temporary loss of memory, speech errors, etc. These latter phenomena are entirely within the domain of performance which refers to the process of applying one's competence in the act of speaking. Bear in mind that competence also refers to the ability to judge if a sentence is grammatically well-formed; it is an unconscious ability.

Now, I am submitting the tests marks of the students. These tests conducted using listening skills. Students were asked to listen the audio files of lectures and conversations and guided to do Note making, MCQ'S and FILL UPS questions. Also submitting the analysis through chart.

S.No	Name	Test1	Test2	Test3	Total
1	SADIQ	4	5	7	16
2	GURUCHARAN	3	6	8	17
3	LAKSHMI PRASAD	4	5	7	16
4	KARTHIK GUPTA	4	6	8	18
5	KAVYA VS	3	5	6	14
6	SALMAN	4	5	6	15
7	PAVANI	3	5	6	14
8	SARANYA	3	5	9	17
9	GOKUL S	4	6	8	18
10	LOKESH D	4	6	7	17
11	SAI THARUN	4	6	8	18
12	DEVENDER	4	5	6	15
13	YUGENDRA BABU	4	5	6	15
14	DIVYA	4	5	6	15
15	VAMSI KRISHNA	4	6	8	18
16	AMBATI VENKATESHWARLU	4	6	7	17
17	SUMALI V	5	7	9	21
18	JANARDHAN B	3	7	8	18
19	YELLOGI RAGUNANDHANA	5	8	9	22
20	CH. ASWINI	4	8	9	21
21	ROSHAN AKTHAR	4	7	9	20
22	SHUNMUKHA SIVA	3	4	6	13
23	REDDAIAH	4	5	6	15



Conclusion:

The purpose of this paper was to review the basic concepts related to the place and importance of listening skill in learning English as second or foreign language, and to focus on listening comprehension problems experienced by English language learners. In the light of the aforementioned arguments, it can be stated that listening skills should not be disregarded in the language classrooms and teachers should be aware of and should try to address and minimize listening comprehension problems experienced by the students. The following suggestions from two researchers can help language teachers design and implement better listening lessons. Peterson (2001, p. 89) suggests the following six principles for teaching listening in the second language classroom: increase the amount of listening time in the second language class, use listening before other activities, include both global and selective listening, activate top-level skills (e.g. giving advance organizers or script activators), work towards automaticity in processing, and develop conscious listening strategies. Brown (2001, p. 258-260) suggests the following principles for designing listening techniques: make sure that you don't overlook the importance of techniques that specifically develop listening comprehension competence, use techniques that are intrinsically motivating, utilize authentic language and contexts, carefully consider the form of listeners' responses, encourage the development of listening strategies, include both bottom-up and top-down listening techniques. Listening has an important role both in daily life and in academic contexts as it is crucial for people to sustain effective communication. Emphasizing the importance of listening, Anderson and Lynch (2003) state that listening skills are as important as speaking skills because people cannot communicate face-to-face unless both types of skills are developed together. Listening skills are also important for learning purposes since through listening students receive information and gain insights.

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