

Language Acquisition and Personality Grooming

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Abstract

Acquisition of language is one of the most important soft skills found among individuals. Human beings learn language in the early years of their life. Language acquisition involves mastery of basic speech and grammatical patterns and essential vocabulary through the basic skills of understanding speech, reading and writing.

Though different scholars have different opinions about how a language is learned by a child but everybody agrees that a particular language that a child speaks is culturally and environmentally transmitted to him. And one's personality development has a close relationship between language learning and its usage in his inside and outside world.

KEYWORDS : Language acquisition, soft skills, vocabulary, grammar, personality development.

Language acquisition is a pioneer skill among other soft skills. Soft skills are personal attributes that describe an individual's ability to interact with others. Soft skills also known as people's skills complement hard skills to enhance an individual's relationships, job performance and career prospects. Soft skills which are interpersonal and broadly applicable across job titles and industries are often described in terms of personality traits such as optimism, integrity and a sense of humour. These skills are also defined by abilities that can be practiced as leadership, empathy, communication and sociability.

Discussion

Among various soft skills, communication skills play a pivot role in the life of not only human beings but also plants, trees, birds and animals. Whereas communication among non human is static and far less diversified, communication among human beings is the most essential part of their existence. Human beings can communicate through the use of different languages other than their mother tongue. They learn language in the early years of their life. But one of the fundamental questions asked by many is How is language learned by a child, does he learn by merely imitating the sounds he hears ? How does a child select the sounds that belong to the language he is exposed to and ignore all other sounds ? Does the learning of the mother tongue involve the same processes as the learning of a second or a foreign language ? Is language a result of stimulus – response, imitation repetition and reinforcement or of exposure etc. Psychologists have attempted general theories of language acquisition and language use. Some have argued that learning is entirely the product of experience and that our environment affects all of us in the same way. Others have suggested that everybody has an innate language learning mechanism which determines learning or acquisition of language for each of us. These two schools are

known as 'empiricists' (behaviourists) and rationalists (mentalists).

The Empiricists are of the opinion that language acquisition is the result of stimulus – response activities. Imitation, repetition, memorization, reward and re-enforcement facilitate this process of language acquisition. The behaviourists argue that learning is controlled by the conditions under which it takes place and that, as long as individuals are subjected to the same conditions, they will learn in the same way. Variations in learning are caused because of the difference in learning experience, difference in past experience of learning, difference in aptitudes, motivation, memory and age. So for them, there is not a theory of language learning as such but merely the application to language of general principles of learning. So, according to them, language learning is basically a mechanical process of habit formation which can further be strengthened by mechanical drills and exercises, imitation and repetition.

The rationalists contradict the empiricist at every point. According to them, children learn a language not because they are subjected to a similar conditioning process but because they possess an inborn capacity which permits them to acquire a language as a normal maturational process. The language learning capacity is universal and a child learns a language by his exposure to it in society and by unconsciously forming certain hypotheses about language which he goes on modifying till he comes to the adult model to which he is for the most part exposed. Language acquisition is species – specific and species – uniform and the ability to take and understand language is inherited genetically. But the particular language that a child speaks is culturally and environmentally transmitted to him. So, children are over the world acquire their native language without tutoring. Whereas a child exposed to an English speaking community begins to speak English fluently, the other one exposed to a community of Hindi speakers begin to use Hindi fluently. Only human beings can acquire language. Language acquisition thus appears to be different in kind from acquisition of other skills such as swimming, dancing or gymnastics. So, a language is not something we know by instinct or inherit from our parents. It is the result of our exposure to a certain linguistic community. It is the part of that whole complex of learned and shared behavior that anthropologists call 'culture'. By this, it does not mean that language is acquired ready-made. It is created anew by each child by putting together bits and pieces of environmental raw material. The human child does play an active role in this process; he actively strains, filters, re-organizes what he is exposed to. His imitations are not photographic reproductions but artistic recreations. A child is a linguist in cradle. He acquires a language more easily than adults. He discovers the structure of his native language to use that language; no one hands it to him ready to use.

Thus, language acquisition is one of the quintessential human traits which enables him to develop his personality. Personality development or personal development, in fact, is the art of enriching one's physical, emotional and psychological being. The personality of an individual is viewed as one's inner characteristics that organize one's behavior. According to an article in Ed-Resource, "Personality development fundamentally means grooming and enhancing one's inner and outer person to living

in the positive change of your life. Each and every individual features a distinct person that could be polished, refined and developed. This technique includes improving communication, language speaking abilities and boosting one's confidence, developing certain hobbies, extending one's scope of understanding of skills, manners and studying fine etiquette including grace and style, walk and talk and total imbuing oneself together with liveliness, positive outlook and peace." Thus, one of the key factors that affects one's personality is the language he speaks. One can make or mar one's influence upon others through the language he speaks. Here, language does not refer to verbal, explicit and internal transmission of message alone. The concept of communication through language would include all those processes by which people influence one another. So, language is the process of social interaction in which people interact and try to tangibly influence the ideas, attitudes, knowledge and behavior of each other. In today's time of growing competition in all spheres of life, in order to survive, one needs to have such a personality which overshadows others and influence them to the core. And the kind and extent of success that an individual can achieve depends, along with attitude, behavior and thoughts upon the language he uses.

Consequently, personality development has a very close relationship with language learning and its usage. In fact, an individual's personality enhances with the ability to acquire effective, impressive language and to utilize it properly in inside and outside world. No doubt, part of one's development of personality is derived from what he has learnt from others. But at the same time, if he has no command over the language and refuse to do something about it, surely he is blocking the doors of his personality growth. Being able to acquire the language and to express oneself through that language is essential to build relationships with people. But if he keeps on holding back and decline an opportunity to improve, then nothing good will ever come out of it. Truly speaking, a person's use of language as the basis for his representing and exploring the world around him channelizes his thinking process. It affects the ways in which he abstracts from his experience, the ways in which he establishes a sense of his relationship to others, the ways he generates and manipulates symbols and images about himself and the ways in which he makes his experiences available to the world.

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