

Q. What is the difference between Native Language and Non-Native (foreign lang) language teaching. Discuss.

All human infants are born with the potentiality of acquiring language. He will learn the language in which he is exposed, or in other words the language that is being used around him, no matter what this language is. Ethnicity and race are irrelevant to the input. For him, this language will be his native or first language (which may or may not be his mother tongue). Here it is also necessary to point out that in acquiring the native language the child needs no linguistic or phonetic knowledge.

A child may learn two or more languages simultaneously if he is exposed to them during his formative period. Usually, children learn one language; those who later learn a second language may do so at any later period of life, but studies suggest that it is definitely more easily acquired at the early age. After 8 or 9 years when the maturation begins, it becomes somewhat more difficult. There are some important circumstances that will favour the process of learning the language. (A) Early start, (B) Extensive use at frequent intervals (C) Strong motivation, which are all present in the highest degree for the normal child during his acquisition of the first language. The child starts learning his native language from (1) his mother's lap, and (2) he has many hours a day for years in which he learns slowly and steadily. Here (3) the motivation is also very strong, as the input has a strong desire to communicate. On the other hand, in learning a second language the circumstances are less obvious. The student usually learns a second language (1) at a later stage. He is not surrounded by people speaking the foreign language, so he does not hear it continually as he heard his native language. He has only (2) one or two hours a day, for his effort to be able to grasp the lang further. Here, the motivation is also not so strong as is found in a child. Although the student has the desire to learn another language but this desire is not so acute because he has already learned his native language for communication.

The child learns his native language from his older siblings, his parents, other children and other adults, with whom he comes into contact. He imitates and speaks what he hears. In the course of learning the language the child makes 'mistakes' at all levels - phonetic, phonological, grammatical and lexical. Such errors are self-correcting. By the time the child goes to school most of such errors have already been eliminated, and a few that remain soon disappear.

In the teaching of a native language in the first years of school, the main task is the teaching of reading and writing. Hence the 'natural order' of skills in which the child learns his native language will be as follows:-

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| ① Comprehension | ③ Reading |
| ② Speaking | ④ Writing |

The student brings the first two skills or abilities to himself, all by himself. The teacher helps him in the second two skills.

The same 'natural' or proper order is not appropriate for learning a second language because the situations in both the cases are quite different. The most obvious difference is that the infant learning his native language, is at the same time, ^① trying to control his organs of speech, ^② exploring his environment, ^③ concepts are being formed and this ^④ physical and mental developments are taking place simultaneously. It is obvious that for him hearing must precede speaking, because what he eventually speaks will be the learned imitation. It is equally obvious that he is dependent on what he hears, because he has not yet learned to read. On the other hand the learner of the second language ^① has learned to control his speech organs in a certain way and has a great difficulty in learning a new speech habit, different from what his speech organs are used to. He has already ^② formed concepts about his environment and are embodied in the language which he has learned to speak. ^③ He has learned this language so well that it comes automatically to his lips when he wishes to communicate

and so intrigues with his efforts to express himself in a new language. (d) He is not surrounded by people speaking the foreign language, so he does not hear it continually, as he heard his native language. (e) Again he can hardly devote few hours a day and for seven years as compared to a child who has many hours a day and for years, which helps him learn his native lang slowly and steadily. He has been to school when he has learned to read, to study and has been rightly guided to extract much valuable and correct information.

II Further, a child begins with simple words, phrases and sentences, switching gradually to more complex grammatical structures. On the other hand in foreign lang teaching the student is expected to learn complex sentences of complex grammatical patterns from the very beginning.

III Furthermore, when the infant has a tremendous desire to communicate, the student of a foreign lang, though has the desire to learn another lang, the desire is not so acute because he has already learnt a ^{native} lang that helps him communicate easily.

IV These situations are so dissimilar that it is unreasonable to adopt the same order or method in foreign language learning from the way the child learns his native language. In foreign lang teaching we can take some visual support for the oral presentation, on the fact that people learn more rapidly from the visual than from the materials. This can be seen in schools where people learn mostly from visual materials. The access to a written script helps the student in verification, at places where he has failed to understand, enabling them to concentrate their energies on acquiring new skills.

For example, in foreign language it is difficult to understand predictable items and sequences. There is also a need for training in the discrimination of sounds of the foreign language. Further, he has to distinguish word groups and to examine different syntactic organization. If the beginner is left in a completely oral situation he would be left in a difficult position. However, if some of the material is presented in written form, he will be able to study it at his leisure, to examine its construction, and to organize what

he is hearing and speaking. Moreover, a written script also gives a student a tangible aid to memorise and also decrease their dependence on the teacher.

In this way we find that the order of skills in a foreign language teaching is not similar to the 'natural or proper' order of native lang teaching, as the situations, tasks and aims of both are different from each other.

So far as the method in foreign language teaching is concerned, we usually use (a) direct method, (b) grammatical translation method and (c) language laboratory method. There is no need of the direct method in native lang. teaching because the children know complete phonology and much of the vocabulary as well as the structure of the sentences. The grammatical translation method leans upon the formal description of the language and upon exercise of translation into and out of the mother tongue. This is of no use in native lang. teaching. The language laboratory method can be used in both native and non-native language teaching. But it is more useful in the non-native lang teaching where repetition is required again & again. This can be obtained by any electro-mechanical device because here the speaker is not surrounded by the speakers of the lang he is learning.

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