

Applied Linguistics.
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Lecture -21.
Language Teaching.

The topic of language teaching is one of the significant ones in the domain of applied linguistics. It is one of the modules where learning from the study of language, that is all kinds of research from various domains in the study of language is applied, is required and the better we know, the better we are equipped for dealing with the nuances of language teaching in any circumstances. Language is fundamental to humans, language is fundamental to society and language is what constitutes humans. It is common and well-known fact that people all over the places speak different languages. We do not speak the same language all over the world or for that matter in any small part of the geography.

The variation within language is such that it is naturally creating a new variety of language. The more we find newer languages in the sense that from one point in place, the farther we go, we observe variations, we observe several varieties emerging and at one point we start finding emergence of a completely new language. And in that situation, in that context, when people speak different languages and they move from one place to the other, they need to learn the language of the others. It is possible to learn but at times it is required to teach and people want faster results. So, take the nuances of second language acquisition in mind and also what goes in 1st language acquisition and then the issues related to language teaching begins.

Today we are going to be discussing language teaching in great details, today we are going to be discussing language teaching in some details in order to understand what goes in it. We will then look at some relevant methods of language teaching and finally we will look at how material products work and what goes in evaluations. So, we start with language teaching and its theoretical basis. We will then, I mentioned, moved to different teaching methods. Different teaching methods have been in practice in different point in time depending upon the need of the learners, therefore teaching methods have always been dependent upon what learners want and how it is possible to deliver results in that order.


However, the entire enterprise has certain theoretical foundations as well. Learning of language has been looked in at least from 2 significant theoretical perspectives, one is behavioural approach to learning of language and the other is mentalistic approach towards

the learning of language. We are going to look at both one by one and see how they have influenced the methods of teaching and what people have taken out of these methods as lessons.

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Preliminary

- A child's first language(s) come as a bonus; they are acquired naturally through the human Language Faculty in an environment that is generally full of love, care and affection.
- Why would one learn more languages?
- There could be several reasons.
- One lens to look at the objectives of language learning could be whether you learn them for need-filling reasons or for reasons of prestige.




We are going to be looking at these things one by one, as we know a child's 1st language comes as a bonus. They are required naturally, through the human language faculty in the environment that is generally full of love, care and affection. That is to say children while getting nourished in the natural environment, the learning of 1st language takes place effortlessly in our subconscious without us realising about what has undergone in the process of learning.

Why would one learn more language is another question when learning of is so effortless. We have just discussed by people learn language and why they need to learn language, because of different purposes, because of displacement and also because of the necessity in the society for faster results. There could be several reasons as we just mentioned. One, when we will look at the objectives of language learning, we find need filling or for reasons of prestige, we bring in language teaching in place. The need filling motive could result in learning a language that will help you getting a better job or enable you to travel abroad or become an interpreter or just one among many to know that language, English for long time in India has enjoyed the status.

The prestige filling motive could lead you to learn a language such as French, German, Persian, Greek, Sanskrit, English because we just enjoy greater prestige in the community of the scholars or society in general as we just discussed about English.

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- Rivers suggested the following six categories for which people might learn other languages:
 - Develop intellectual powers
 - Read classical literature and philosophy for personal growth
 - Understand how languages function
 - Engage in reading comprehension to appreciate modern know how
 - To understand people abroad better
 - Develop oral and writing skills



There at least 6 categories for which people might learn another language. It has been discussed and counted, there could be more, but these are just 6 groups, 6 categories. It is for the reasons like to develop intellectual powers, we read classical literature and philosophy for personal growth, to understand how languages function, to envision, reading comprehensions or appreciate modern literature and also to understand people abroad better and to develop oral or writing skills.

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Introduction

- Language is the most important communication tool for human beings.
- It not only reflects the reality of the society, but also has various functions to strengthen and maintain social existence.
- Language contact is a natural process of displacement and globalization.



These are some generic reasons why people might want to learn another language. So, what comes out of this discussion so far is language is the most important part of communication and it is such a significant tool for human beings. It not only reflects the reality of society but also has various functions to strengthen and maintain social existence. Language contact is a natural process of displacement and globalisation. Once again, we see these things in the context of why people would want other language and when people want other language, then comes the existence of the entire discipline of language teaching.

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Context

- Language teaching is probably one of the most oldest enterprise in human history.
- History reveals the link between philosophical, psychological, linguistic perspectives with language teaching.
- Methods, materials, classroom transaction and evaluation procedures have in some way or the other reflected the changing stances in philosophical, psychological and linguistic enquiry.



So, there are several contexts for that. So language teaching is probably one of the oldest enterprise in human history. History reveals the link between philosophical, psychological, linguistic perspective with language teaching. That is to say, language teaching has philosophical, psychological and linguistic perspectives in it. That is, several theoretical details emerging out of these disciplines like philosophy, psychology and linguistics have to contribute a lot in building and understanding the process of language teaching. Methods, materials, classroom, transactions, evaluation procedures have in some way or the other reflected the changing stances in philosophical, psychological and linguistic enquiry.

So, the linguistic enquiry to some extent, to a great extent and also philosophical and psychological enquiries have contributed in our understanding of how language works and therefore these things put together have enriched how we understand the process of language teaching. This is the context and the requirements in which we are going to be looking at and evaluating theoretical model methods, theoretical models underlying language teaching. So, also as mentioned earlier, there are several theories in place to primarily that comes in discussion when we talk about language teaching.

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Theories in Language Teaching

- Behaviourist psychology and Structural linguistics dominated the scene of language teaching methods.
- Shift towards an autonomous Language Faculty forced changes in the approaches to language teaching.
- Cognitive revolution brought about another set of changes which we will look at in other modules.




1st is behaviourist psychology and which and structural linguistics that dominate the scene of language teaching methods for long time. The shift towards autonomous language faculty forced change in that approach of language teaching over a period of time. And that became one of the most dominant position from where the entire enterprise of language teaching, teaching has been drawing a lot. Cognitive revolution has also brought about another set of

changes which we will look at in other modules. We will be looking at what cognitive revolution has brought into language teaching as per.

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- Major names associated with behaviourism include
 - Watson (1878-1958)
 - Pavlov (1849-1936)
 - Guthrie (1886-1959)
 - Tolman (1886-1959)
 - Skinner (1904-1990)
 - Thorndike (1874-1949)
- Main idea:
 - no mental constructs can be posited and that all science has to be based on whatever is observable and measurable



So, let us start evaluating 1st behaviourist approach in language teaching and then see what was the major things that behaviourist had to propose and how they in a way influenced the method of teaching or rather described it in a particular way. So, some of the major names associated with behaviourist approach are Watson, Pavlov, Guthrie, Tholman, Skinner, Thorndike and others, this is just to name a few. Out of these 2, we are going to be discussing in particular Pavlov and Skinner. These are 2 prominent names in behaviourist psychology. So, the main idea of behaviourist psychology and what is also commonly known as behaviourism is the following.

It says that no mental constructs can be posited and that all science has to be based on whatever is observable and measurable. So, the 2 terms observations and measurement becomes very significant in the entire behaviourist psychological approach in language teaching as well. Hence, we need to understand this main idea and translate it into simpler ways for us to understand their implications for language teaching.

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Pavlov and Behaviorism

- The basis for psychological enquiry existed only in objects that could be touched and actions that could be observed.
- He denied the existence of internal mental processes dismissing them as superstitious magic.
- Learning was essentially a question of establishing a relationship between a Stimulus (S) and Response (R).
- This response could be turned into a habit through reinforcement; it could lead to extinction if the S-R association was not repeated often enough. One could plan a manipulation of S in terms of frequency and delay and could control the process of learning.




So, we want to 1st look at Pavlov. The basis for psychological enquiry existed only in objects that could be touched and actions that could be observed. So, touching and observation are significant for psychological enquiry being possible.

Pavlov denied the existence of an internal mental processes and he completely dismissed them to superstitious magic. I do not have much to add to why he would go to the extent of dismissing some ideas to superstitions. Probably some of the major approaches in mentalistic theory will have 2 located in some detail or the other little later. But he still continued and believed that learning was essentially a question of establishing relationship between stimulus and response. The responses could be turned into a habit through the enforcement. It could lead to extension if the stimulus response association was not repeated often and enough. One could plan a manipulation of stimulus in terms of frequency in delay and could control the process of learning.

So, this was his contribution in dominating and prescribing learning. That was, the route was reinforcement and engineering between stimulus and response and there exists an association between stimulus and response and a particular way to manipulate the stimulus for desired response would be the significant part in learning, the control of frequency or the control of time. However, if it is not done to reinforcement, it could die.

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- The most popular model that we know of about the basic implementation of the behaviourist principles of learning is from Pavlov.
- His model is called Classical Conditioning in which a dog is made to learn through a pairing of an Unconditioned Stimulus (US) like food with a Conditioned Stimulus (CS) like the bell-ringing.
- The dog eventually learns to salivate just to the bell sound (CS) and produce a Conditioned Response (CR), without there being any food around.



The most popular model that we know about that we know of about the basic implementation of the behaviourist principle of learning is coming from Pavlov. His model is called classical conditioning in which a dog is made to learn through a pairing of an unconditioned stimuli like food with a conditioned stimulus like the ball, the bell ringing.

So, the dog eventually learns to salivate just to the bell sound and produce a conditioned response without there being any food around. So, this was an experiment done on the conditions of behaviourist principles by Pavlov. So, food was unconditioned stimulus and ringing of the bell was conditioned stimulus. And the dog, the manipulation of the both in the process leads the dog to learn to salivate and just to the bell sound and in the process it so happens the dog starts during this without any food being around it. So, that is one experiment which is based on the principles of Pavlov and had great influence. The takeaway points from Pavlov are the terms like stimulus, response, reinforcement, observation and condition.

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Skinner and Behaviorism

- Skinner (1957) gave the theory of Operant Conditioning in *Verbal Behaviour*.
- For him, human organism at the mental level was hollow, mind a blank slate, *tabula rasa*.
- He argued that a functional analysis of the environment was needed to describe what behaviour is likely to occur given a set of particular conditions.



So, then comes little later Skinner and here things have advanced until his time to a great extent and he had the following to add. So, he talked about it theory of operand condition in verbal behaviours. For him, human organism at the mental level was hollow. For him mind was a blank slate tabula rasa. He argued that functional analysis of the environment was needed to describe what behaviour is likely to occur given a set of particular conditions. Again, for him, it was important to do the functional analysis of the environment and this was needed to describe what behaviour is likely to occur when a particular set of conditioning is in place.

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- Skinner designed the Skinner's Box. It contained some levers that an animal can press, some lights that stimulated the organism and some food that would drop after the animal pressed the right lever.
- Skinner believed that we should simply create the environment in which the organism would act and learn.



Skinner like Pavlov also designed, which is known as the Skinner's box. It contained some levers that an animal can press and some lights that stimulated the organism and some food that would draw of to the animal past the light lever. So, Skinner believed that we should simply create the environment in which organism could act and learn. So, the learning will take place only in the conditioning of a particular type of environment.

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Mentalist Approach and Language Learning

- Chomsky's 1959 review of Skinner's *Verbal Behavior* is widely acknowledged as last phase of behaviorist approaches to human learning.
- The phenomenon of the acquisition of language(s) cannot be explained by behaviorist principles and therefore perhaps behaviorist psychology alone should not constitute the basis for language teaching.




These things were not sufficient and so after understanding the behaviourist approach through the contributions of Skinner. Hence we skip several things and go straight to mentalist approach in language learning. We want to understand why it was called mentalist approach. Let us go through it chronologically.

Right from 1957 and in particularly in the year of 1959, a famous linguist Norm Chomsky came up with a review of Skinner's verbal behaviour. This was considered the final phase of behaviourist approach to human learning. In a way in this review Chomsky rejected everything which had behavioural approach in it. The phenomena of the acquisition of language cannot be explained by behaviourist principle and therefore perhaps behaviourist psychology alone should not continue as the basis of language teaching.

This was the 2nd part that is about language teaching was not the discussion of Chomsky in perspective. However, what comes out of Chomsky's review of verbal behaviour was the phenomenon of language acquisition has lot more to do with and has several other things undergoing in it and cannot only be looked at from behaviourist principles, behaviourist perspectives.

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- Language acquisition by human children is a wonder and a matter of serious enquiry.
 - How come given so little, a child learns so much?
The point is that by the age of four all normal children nearly become linguistic adults in the sense that they acquire the grammars of their languages in all their richness and complexity.
 - We can't fault the grammar of children.
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So, what are they? The proposal was the language acquisition by human children is a wonder and a matter of serious enquiry. It is a wonder for the following reasons. However, what the proposal, not the proposal, what happens in this approach is observations and the perceptions about things like, we can only enquire about things that we can touch and feel and perceive and observe, this got demolished. And the emphasis was particularly laid on what happens in human mind and when we want to understand acquisition of language from the focus of on human mind, we need to understand the following. So, the reason why acquisition becomes a wonder is it is based in questions like how come given so little, a child learns so much.

The point here is that by the age of 4, all normal human children nearly become linguistic adults in the sense that they acquire the grammar of their languages in all their richness and complexity. It is hard to find false in the grammar of children's speech. How does it happen in a matter of no time? That is in the 1st 4 years of children's socialisation and acquaintance with the world.

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Learning of Language

- Children in different places may be learning their mother tongues and English simultaneously.
- Now all the Indian languages (except Khasi in Garo Hills of Meghalaya) have the basic sentence structure Subject-Object-Verb i.e. SOV; they are all verb-final. English on the other hand follows the Subject-Verb-Object i.e. SVO order; it is a verb medial language. SVO and SOV languages generally have some very different features.




Children in different places may be learning their mother tongues and English simultaneously. Now, let us look at what happens in India and what could possibly happen in India for children. All Indian languages except Khasi, the language spoken in Garo hills of Meghalaya have the basic sentence structure as subject, object, verb. That is all the languages spoken in India except Khasi is a verb final language in the sense that verb is the final constituent in a sentence. They are all called verb final languages.

English at the same time on the other hand follows the verb for medial construction, that is subject, verb and object. In other words, verb is not the final constituent in an English sentence. It is called a verb medial language. So, SOV, SVO and SOV languages generally have some very different features from one another.

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- For example, all the Indian languages will have postpositions as in:
mez par 'on the table'
ghar se 'from the house'.
- English on the other hand has prepositions as we say 'on the table' or 'from the house'
and not
* 'the table on'
* 'the house from'.
- How does a child figure out the word order and the language-appropriate structure of the prepositional and postpositional phrases?



For example, in all Indian languages we have post positions like “Mez Par” that is on the table “Ghar Se” from the house. In English these sentences are going to have propositions when we say on the table or from the house and not, we never say the table on, the table on is a post positional feature, the house from is a post positional feature. So, all Indian languages have post positions, whereas English has prepositions and such typological features are very common, such things distinguish all Indian languages from English to a great deal.

So, how do children figure out the word order and the language appropriate structure of the prepositional and post positional phrases and many such rules and differences like these among different languages, this is the wonder.

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- No behaviorist principles of imitation, practice, reward, reinforcement and punishment are involved here; there is no explicit teaching or correction. Parents can't teach these abstract rules since they are not themselves 'aware' of them.
 - It is worth a while to examine how much time a child really invests in language learning. Most people often say: Well, she doesn't have much else to do during those years except learn the language. First of all this is not true at all. A child for example has to figure out how the space around her is structured; she also needs to separate faces and give them separate identities (notice that here the similarities far outnumber the differences).
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So, we have seen the structural differences between English and Hindi, we have seen that most of the languages spoken in India are like Hindi in terms of its structural complexity. That is to say, they are all verb final languages and English happens to be a verb medial language. That means that the verb is not the final constituent. Children learn to figure out this difference between Indian languages which our the child ends up learning and English both in no time. There are many more differences between English and Hindi in terms of its, their structural complexity. Now the question that becomes significant for us to understand in order to work on how teaching of language will work is the following.


Who taught the children the differences between these 2 types of languages and to begin with, we have to understand that behaviourist principles like imitation, practice, work, reinforcement, punishments, etc. are not involved in that process of learning at all, it is a very clear example. And we can say so because these rules are not explicit and there is no explicit teaching of these things and there is no explicit corrections on the level of these things. Therefore, the what is explicit to children is completely different and what they end up learning is completely implicit rules of language which they draw on their own. That is human mind draw such rules on its own. Therefore what is important for us to understand that how much time does a child really invest in learning language.

And it is not that the 1st few years of children are devoted only in learning languages, in fact a child has to do lot more things, that is a lot more different types of learnings are in progress at all the time. To count a few, the child has to make sense of space around her, that is to say

how the space is structured around the child. Also the child has to separate one face from another and give them identities. So, what we observe here is similarities are far outnumber, similarities are far outnumbered the differences.

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- For language acquisition, the following must be noted. Jackendoff's findings are relevant in understanding this:
 - Out of the first 4 years of childhood in which grammatical structure is acquired, a child is asleep for over 2 years.
 - A greater part of the input she receives during these two years i.e. what gets talked around her is cognitively so complex and so irrelevant to her that this can hardly be construed as legitimate input. Most of the time people talk about things that have nothing to do with children; such as talk about money or cricket, clothing or furniture, share market or prices of day today commodities etc.
 - When parents and care givers do talk to the child, a considerable part of that talk is purposely distorted to entertain the child.
 - Thus the child constructs the grammar from highly impoverished input a grammar of astonishing complexity and richness.




So, what is it that we that works. So, here we need to look at Jackendoff's understanding of language acquisition for more details. And some of it we have discussed in the 1st language acquisition, that is early learning of language. However we are going to list a few of them below. Out of the 1st 4 years of childhood in which grammatical structure is acquired, the child sleeps for over 2 years.

A greater part of the inputs he receives during these 2 years that is remaining 2 years is what gets talked about is, what people talk to her is what works as input for her to learn language. And that input is cognitively very complex and very irregular for her that she can hardly be that such input can hardly be construed as legitimate input for learning language. Most of the time people talk about things that have nothing to do with children. None of them make any sense to children, such as talks about money or cricket, clothing, furniture, sharemarket, or prices of the day-to-day commodities, etc. now, these things are too far removed from children and they can hardly work as inputs for children's learning. When parents and caregivers to talk to a child straight, a considerable part of that talk is purposely distorted which clearly has been established that children do not like.

Caregivers and parents do so to entertain the child but they do not like it and they hardly work for learning of language. Thus the child constructs the grammar from highly

impoverished input, a grammar of astonishing complexity and richness. So, this is what actually happens. The input is totally impoverished as we have discussed and what the child ends up constructing is grammar of high complexity and richness at the end of it which is displayed in their performance in language.

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- This is the crux of Palto's Problem. Contrast this with what Chomsky calls Orwell's Problem. He formulates Orwell's Problem as follows: How come given so much information about socio-political issues, we know so little? Can anyone predict what will be the price of gold or onions tomorrow? People can only bet and win or lose money. Nobody can say with any certitude as we can in the case of the linguistic competence of a four year old child.
 - In fact the machinery in the language acquisition device and computation involved does not care about what goes in machine in terms of the names of the language. The output is based on whatever goes in. Therefore the acquisition of any language or many languages is guaranteed for a normal child. The functioning of this machinery and computation put together makes sure that the structural complexities, socio-cultural nuances, and internal variations are taken care off.
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This happens to be the crux of learning, this gets contrasted with what Chomsky calls Orwell's problem and what this is contrasted is Palto's problem.

So, his point is how come given so much information about socio political issues we know so little. Can anyone predict what will be the price of gold tomorrow? People can only bet and win and lose money, nobody can say with any certitude as we can in the case of linguistic competence of a 4-year-old child. That is the kind of grammar and complexity full of richness is that place, it is hard to predict what has gone in. However, what has gone in and how the mental process has worked is the basis for understanding so many things. In fact, the machinery in their language acquisition device and computation involved does not care about what goes in machine in terms of the names of the language, that is the machinery in human mind does not care about the name of the language. The output is based on whatever goes in.

Therefore the acquisition of any language or for that matter many languages is guaranteed for a normal child. The functioning of this machinery and the computation put together makes sure that the structural complexity, socio cultural nuances and internal variations are taken care of.

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Implications of Mentalist Approach

- If all human beings are born with an innate capacity called UG, then
- Children should be able to acquire any language i.e. the language of the community in which they are placed. Thus if you place a two month old Panjabi child in Paris, she would acquire flawless French.
- Children will be able to learn any number of languages without any explicit teaching.
- All children will learn languages in a certain general order.
- All children will make comparable 'errors' across language learning contexts.
 - All these things happen to be true.




So, the implications of the mentalist approach for language teachings are that if all human beings are born with an innate capacity, that is called the universal grammar, then children will be able to acquire any language that is the language the community in which they are placed. So, the hypothesis that children are born with an innate capacity which is universal grammar guarantees that children can potentially learn all possible languages of the world.

However what happens eventually is children end up planning only the language of the immediate surroundings. And this is thus, if you place a 2-month-old Punjabi child in Paris, she would acquire flawless French and not Punjabi of that kind. This is what an outcome of the hypothesis underlying universal grammar. Children will be able to learn any number of languages without any explicit teaching in those years. All children will learn languages in a certain general order, all children will make comparable errors across language learning contexts. All these things happen to be true on the basis of this hypothesis.

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- Consider the following two well-known sentences:
 - Flying planes can be dangerous.
 - Visiting relatives can be a nuisance.
- Each one of these sentences can have two readings as a moment's reflection would show. But which grammatical feature constitutes that ambiguity and how does a speaker resolve it depending on the context may be difficult to articulate in linguistic terms for a speaker. For example, the first sentence could be disambiguated as follows:
 - Flying planes are dangerous.
 - Flying planes is dangerous.
- We can disambiguate 2 also in the same way.
 - Visiting relatives are a nuisance.
 - Visiting relatives is a nuisance.




So, consider the following in the sense that what else happens in the process of learning. When we look at sentences like flying planes can be dangerous or visiting relatives could be nuisance. Each one of these sentences have 2 readings. As a moment's reflection would show, take a moment and you will come up with the 2 readings of these 2 sentences. But which grammatical feature constitutes the ambiguity and how does the speaker resolve it depending upon the context may be difficult to articulating linguistic terms for a speaker.

Now, we do not know how these complexities are figured out by children which rules help them figure out such complexities but what we know for sure is there is no confusion for the children or for the speaker in understanding the intended meaning in the given context. So, when we look at the other sets of sentences like flying planes are dangerous or flying planes is dangerous, we can disambiguate the 2 also in the same way. That is visiting relatives are a nuisance and visiting relatives is a nuisance, this helps us disambiguate them. But even without disambiguating these in terms of these 2, the interpretation of a given sentence is pretty much clear for a child.

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- Also consider the set of two other famous sentences from Chomsky:
 - John is easy to please.
 - John is eager to please.
- Identical structures but do they have comparable meanings. This complexity does not drive a child crazy. She acquires all this as naturally as she begins to breathe or see or hear. Language then is a part of our biological endowment. We are all born with an innate Language Faculty which in different context and cultures gets manifested differently.




When we look at more complex sentences and very famous example is coming from Chomsky like Johnny is easy to please and Johnny is eager to please, we get to see more complexities that children can handle in the process of language learning. She happens to acquire all these as naturally as she begins to breath or see or hear, language therefore is a part of our biological endowment. We are all born with an innate language faculty which is different context and culture gets manifested differently.

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Limitations of Behaviorist Approach

- Given what children manage to acquire, the Stimulus-Response claims of the behaviorists does not seem working.
- There is no way one can explain the output of children in terms of the input they receive. The same stimulus can never produce the same verbal response from all observers, adults or children.
- Consider the case of a painting says Chomsky. Some people may say 'how pretty', some 'how ugly', some 'it is tilted', some may say 'the colors are not right' etc. What children acquire is not a finite number of words or sentences that they may reproduce. They really acquire a finite set of rules to produce an infinite number of sentences that they have never heard before; in the case of words and phrases, they acquire the strategies that help them to produce acceptable and grammatical constituents; and in the case of sounds, they not only isolate the sound units that would constitute their languages but they also abstract on their own the rules that would help them produce only those syllabic sequences that are allowed by their language systems also known as generative machinery that equips them for this kind of complex computation.



There are certain limitations of behaviourism which are not applicable for mentalist approach. Given what children manage to acquire, the stimulus response claim of the

behaviourism does not seem working at all. There is no way one can explain the output of children in terms of the input they receive. The same stimulus can never produce the same verbal response from all observers. In short what it means is there is no correspondence between stimulus and response. Stimulus is impoverished, to use behaviourist terminology, stimulus is impoverished, response is infinite. So, and then you can look at the rest of the examples on your own to figure out how innateness works. And given these 2 sets of principles, what we actually see is the formation of teaching methodology. So, from from the next time when we are going to be looking at different teaching methods, we are going to see how different methods of teaching at different points in time have been influenced by different theoretical approaches. Thank you.