

## CHAPTER 1

# LEARNING AND ACQUISITION

*In CTET exams 4 questions in 2011, 1 question in 2012, 2 questions in 2013, 6 questions in 2014, 6 questions in 2015 and 5 questions in 2016. This shows that this chapter is important from examination point of view.*

## 1.1 Concept of Learning

Learning is a process of acquiring new skills or knowledge and improving the existing skills also. An individual undergoes a change in his/her knowledge and behaviour on account of learning. Everyone is different from one another in acquiring skills, means everyone has different rate or speed of learning. Certain factors such as environment, learner's ability and motivation, teacher's capabilities and ways of imparting knowledge-all impact a person's learning experience.

The **Critical Period Hypothesis** states that the first few years of life constitute the time during which language develops readily and after which language acquisition is much more difficult and ultimately less successful. A commonly drawn, though not absolutely necessary, corollary of the CPH is that any language learning which occurs after the age of puberty will be slower and less successful than normal first language learning.

### 1.1.1 Types of Learning

There are three types of learning

1. **Motor Learning** Most of our activities in day to day life refer to motor activities e.g. walking, running, driving, climbing etc. All these activities involve muscular co-ordination.
2. **Verbal Learning** This type of learning involves the language we speak, the communication methods we adopt e.g. signs, pictures, symbols, words, sounds etc are the tools used in such activities.

3. **Conceptual Learning** In this form of learning, we require higher order mental processes like thinking, reasoning, intelligence. With the use of these, child learns different concepts.

### 1.1.2 Factors Affecting Learning

Certain factors affect learning of individuals. These factors can be divided into three categories, which are as follows

#### Factors Related to Learner

- Learner's motivation determines the intensity of learning.
- Learner's efficiency or mental capacity.
- Learner's interest and aptitude towards the subject.
- Learner's general health.
- Learner's attention, readiness and will power.

#### Factors Related to Teacher

- Teacher's command over the subject.
- Teacher's way of communicating.
- Teacher's personality and attitude towards learners.
- Teacher's behaviour with students.

#### Factors Related to the Environment, Teaching

##### Materials and Human Resource

- Conducive environment to learning.
- Structure and size of classrooms.
- Availability of appropriate subject material to facilitate the learning process.
- Home environment of the learner.

#### RTE Act

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 or Right to Education is an Act of Parliament of India enacted on 4th August, 2009 which describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India.

The RTE Act is the first legislation in the world that puts the responsibility of ensuring enrolment, attendance and completion on the government.

This RTE Act stipulates that no child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class or expelled from school till the completion of elementary education. It also stipulates that no child shall be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment. The act wants that learning should be in a manner which is child friendly.

## 1.2 Concept of Acquisition

When language is learnt naturally and without any systematic practice, it is called acquisition. The term 'learning and acquisition' are complementary. Learners acquire language when it is used in natural environment.

## 1.2.1 Language Acquisition

- Language acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive, produce and use words to understand and communicate.
- This capacity involves the picking up of diverse capacities including syntax, phonetics and an extensive vocabulary.
- This language might be vocal as with speech or manual as in sign.
- Language acquisition usually refers to first language acquisition, which studies infants' acquisition of their native language, rather than second language acquisition, which deals with acquisition (in both children and adults) of additional languages.
- The capacity to acquire and use language is a key aspect that distinguishes humans from other organisms. While many forms of animal communication exist, they have a limited range of non-syntactically structured vocabulary tokens that lack cross cultural variation between groups.

## 1.2.2 Concepts Associated with Acquisition and Learning

Concepts of various scholars associated with learning and acquisition are as follows

### Piaget's Concept

- This concept states that learning starts with adaptation, assimilation and accommodation. He also said that classification was also important to learning language.
- Certain words and sounds needed to be grouped together to better understand and use them in speech. Through assimilation, the learner takes the information and changes it to make it suitable for him.

### Concept of Chomsky

- Chomsky states that every person possesses a Language Learning Device or (LLD) which is a hypothetical tool hard wired into the brain.
- It helps children in rapidly learning and understanding a language.
- He also states that all children are born with an understanding of the rules of language, they simply need to acquire vocabulary.

## Vygotsky's Concept of Learning and Acquisition

- Vygotsky was of the opinion that social interaction played an important role in the development of cognition.
- According to him, 'community' also plays a central role in the process of making meaning and learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organised, specifically human psychological function.
- In other words, higher mental processes in the individual have their origin in social processes. He places more emphasis on the role of language in cognitive development.

## Pavlov's Concept of Learning

- Pavlov propounded a new theory of learning known as Classical Conditioning.
- According to him classical conditioning is a reflexive or automatic type of learning in which a stimulus acquires the capacity to evoke a response that was originally evoked by another stimulus.
- 'Classical conditioning' is based on the habit formation. Pavlov was of the view that humans learn due to some stimulus.

## 1.3 Language Development in Children

Communication between people who know each other and respect each other is one of the most important factors in language development of the child. Children need to learn a language in order to understand things around them. It is through language that they express their feelings and communicate with others. With the development of language only, the children are able to represent and express new ideas and complex matters also. When children are not able to put their feelings into words, they are very disturbed and this situation can reduce or damage their self-esteem.



### 1.3.1 Initial Stage of Language Development

- Desire to communicate starts at birth. Babies learn quickly how to get their needs met by crying, cooing and making eye-contact with their immediate family.
- A child's overall development and his mental health is affected greatly by his ability to communicate in a variety of ways.
- Words are the most important tool through which a child gets connected to his family as well as to the rest of the world.
- Through words only a child stores information and parts with his feelings and experiences.
- Children as young as 3 years of age already possess a remarkable knowledge of language structure and syntax which is so complex and precise that it must challenge any known learning theory to account for its acquisition.

Table showing vocabulary of children in different age group

Children's Age	Children's Vocabulary
From birth to 8 months	0
From 9th month to one year	Three to four words
upto one and a half years	10 to 12 words
upto 2 years	272 words
upto 2 years 6 months	450 words
upto 3 years	1000 words
upto 3 year and 6 months	1250 words
upto 4 years	1600 words
upto 5 years	2100 words
upto 11 years	50000 words
upto 14 years	80000 words
16 years and ahead	More than 1 lakh (million) words

### 1.3.2 Actual Stage of Language Development

- Initial years of childhood can be called preparation time of learning a language.
- The language development starts with the oral expressions which a child uses to express himself. He/She learns a language through words, sentences and then complex structures.
- After a child starts going to school, child develops ability to read as well as write. Slowly, the child becomes proficient in all types of learning skills from listening and speaking to reading and writing.
- Language development thus helps him not only in using language as an expression tool but through proficiency in language the child becomes knowledgeable and changes into an all developed personality.

### 1.3.3 Development of Vocabulary

- In the initial years of growing up child's vocabulary also grows manifold. Children typically understand or recognise more words than they usually speak.
- When the child is one or one and a half years old, he understands more words than he speaks.

### 1.3.4 Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary learning of a child in different age group is given below

- Child reaches school age and heads to kindergarten, he/she will have a vocabulary of around 2000 words. Talking and reading are a very good source of vocabulary development in a child.
- Parents or other family members must talk to the child about his/her day at school, about teachers, about books she/he checked out at the libraries or something funny that happened at school etc.
- It is important to encourage children's vocabulary development so that they develop the language and literary skills necessary to succeed in school.

### 1.3.5 Strategies to Increase Vocabulary

Some tips or strategies to increase child's vocabulary are as follows

- Follow your child's lead. If parents talk about what interests the child, he/she may pay attention and learn new words.
- Don't bombard the child with new words the child should be given time to make a response and use his/her vocabulary to express feelings.
- Children need to hear a word repeatedly.
- Help the child to understand what a new word means.
- Along with speaking new word, some actions or gestures should follow. It really helps in acquiring new word easily.

# CHAPTER EXERCISE

1. Which of the following is a pre-requisite to learning a language?
  - (1) Motivation
  - (2) Habit formation
  - (3) Imitation
  - (4) Oral approach
2. Learning a language is a
  - (1) gradual process
  - (2) last process
  - (3) instant process
  - (4) all inclusive process
3. Which one of the following is considered as a great deterrent to learning English?
  - (1) Lack of opportunity for the pupils to listen and use English outside the classroom
  - (2) English is a difficult language to learn
  - (3) English phonemes are unscrupulous
  - (4) English has a vast vocabulary
4. 'Language acquisition can be automatically attained'. This statement is favoured by
  - (1) cognitivists
  - (2) behaviourists
  - (3) All of the above
  - (4) None of the above
5. Language acquisition occurs only when
  - (1) the child is taught the rules of grammar
  - (2) the child is given an award
  - (3) the child has exposure to the language
  - (4) the child absorbs the language without conscious attention
6. Mother Tongue Influence (MTI) can be effectively minimised in the classroom by
  - (1) using the mother tongue more often
  - (2) giving examples from the mother tongue
  - (3) giving a lot of exposure in the target language.
  - (4) giving inputs from the target language in a simple, graded manner.
7. A child has to use higher order mental processes such as intelligence or reasoning in which types of learning?
  - (1) Motor skills learning
  - (2) Speaking
  - (3) Concept learning
  - (4) Verbal learning

8. Which of the following is not correctly matched?

Person	Work/Theory/ Publication
A. BF Skinner	Language Learning Device (LAD)
B. Pavlov	Theory of classical conditioning
C. Chomsky	Theory of operant conditioning

## Codes

- (1) Only A
  - (2) A and B
  - (3) A and C
  - (4) B and C
9. State which is not true in context of learning and acquisition.
    - (1) Acquisition is a natural process
    - (2) Learning is a continuous process
    - (3) Learning results in subject proficiency
    - (4) Acquisition helps in cognitive abilities
  10. From the given factors which one may not affect learning outcome.
    - (1) Learner's motivation and interest
    - (2) Structure and size of classroom
    - (3) Teacher's personality and altitude
    - (4) Parent's income and status
  11. Which one of the theories based on habit formation says that humans or any creatures give response due to stimulus or humans learn due to stimulus?
    - (1) Classical conditioning
    - (2) Operant conditioning
    - (3) Generalisation
    - (4) Adaptation
  12. A teacher is explaining a new concept in the class. Shreya knows the meaning of difficult words and concepts. She also understands the concept without any difficulty. She is good in .....
    - (1) motor skills
    - (2) cognitive abilities
    - (3) rote memory
    - (4) verbal ability
  13. According to Vygotsky, learning in a child or adult takes place due to
    - (1) inborn abilities
    - (2) scientific attitude
    - (3) social interaction
    - (4) introduction of a stimulus

14. According to Piaget, learning occurs due to
  - (1) inborn speaking abilities
  - (2) stimulus recognition
  - (3) assimilation and adaptation
  - (4) scientific investigation
15. The children suffer from lack of self-esteem when they are
  - (1) not allowed to eat what they want
  - (2) not able to express their feelings through words or language
  - (3) are not allowed to play with friends
  - (4) None of the above
16. Which is not a very good method of learning vocabulary?
  - (1) Writing
  - (2) Watching movies
  - (3) Talking and reading
  - (4) Both (1) and (2)
17. A teacher in class II shows real objects one by one and then calls out its name. Her purpose in doing this activity is
  - (1) motivate the children and make lesson interesting
  - (2) helping learners to acquire vocabulary by associating words with real life objects
  - (3) helps in improving correct pronunciation
  - (4) to teach the correct spelling of the word
18. The best way to develop a child's vocabulary at the initial stage is to
  - (1) leave the child alone with story books
  - (2) make him go to a school at a very young age
  - (3) engaging in talks with the child and reading out aloud
  - (4) show the child various programmes on TV
19. A child of class II falls sick very often. He has to be absent from class to seek medical advice again and again. This problem will effect his
  - (1) cognitive abilities
  - (2) motor skills
  - (3) learning 2nd language
  - (4) talking and speaking

20. Arti Saxena, an English teacher of class V always tries that her learners should pronounce the word correctly and spell it correctly. Which aspect of vocabulary development she tries to develop in her learners.

(1) Semantic  
(2) Phonetic  
(3) Phonetic cum graphic  
(4) Graphic

21. Which of the following statements is correct?

(1) Learning is an unconscious process  
(2) Acquisition is a conscious process  
(3) Group activity helps in transfer of information  
(4) Inputs from the target language in a complex graded manner can help in minimising the influence of mother tongue

### Previous Years' Questions

22. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 has included 'all round development of the child' as one of the aims of education because

[CTET June 2011]

(1) it nurtures the physical, mental and emotional aspects of the child  
(2) it ensures that every child is a part of a workforce  
(3) every child grows rapidly between six to fourteen years  
(4) proper health care is essential

23. Teachers do not give the meaning of new words to learners directly because

[CTET June 2011]

(1) learners do not like to be given the meaning of words  
(2) it prevents learners from discovering the meaning through puzzling out using clues  
(3) learners already know the meaning of the words  
(4) vocabulary will not be enriched

24. Teachers help learners 'construct' their knowledge in English by

[CTET June 2011]

(1) giving the learners a lot of assignments and projects that will lead to much practice

(2) correcting every mistake a learner makes and giving the relevant rule of grammar as immediate feedback

(3) giving extensive language drills in which learners practice language items mechanically

(4) enabling them to see the relationship between the prior knowledge and the new knowledge

25. Which of the following is an instance of non-formal learning?

[CTET June 2011]

(1) Children learning to cook from their parents  
(2) Children learning a new game from friends  
(3) Children learning through correspondence lessons  
(4) Children learning to draw from their art teacher

26. The main responsibility of a language teacher as a facilitator is

[CTET Jan 2012]

(1) to create a number of opportunities for the learners to use the language meaningfully  
(2) to provide a lot of information and make the learners listen to it  
(3) to strictly control the class and cover the syllabus in quick time  
(4) to read the lessons aloud and provide explanation for each line

27. Language acquisition

[CTET July 2013]

(1) requires the memorisation and use of necessary vocabulary  
(2) involves a systematic approach to the analysis and comprehension of grammar as well as to the memorisation of vocabulary  
(3) refers to the process of learning a native or a second language because of the innate capacity of the human brain  
(4) is a technique intended to simulate the environment in which children learn their native language

28. Noam Chomsky's reference to deep structures means a

[CTET July 2013]

(1) universal grammar underlying all languages and corresponding to an innate capacity of the human brain  
(2) hidden set of grammatical rules learnt through intensive study

(3) transformational grammar that has led in turn to increased interest in comparative linguistics  
(4) a trend that English is the most common auxiliary language in the world

29. Learning a new language after puberty leads to ... of a foreign language.

[CTET Feb 2014]

(1) difficulty in acquisition  
(2) normal acquisition  
(3) greater mastery  
(4) loss of mastery

30. Language learners learn to do by doing. Which activity supports this observation?

[CTET Feb 2014]

(1) Opportunities to practice as it helps with habit formation  
(2) Encourage the use of their mother tongue to promote better understanding of the meaning of a prescribed text  
(3) Go from concrete to abstract texts  
(4) The teacher models the writing and speaking styles which learners copy

31. According to language acquisition theory, when there is a lack of sufficient information in the language input, there is a universal grammar that applies to all

[CTET Sept 2014]

(1) colloquial language  
(2) modern language  
(3) classical languages  
(4) human languages

32. For English as a second language, 'acquisition poor environment' is one where

[CTET Sept 2014]

(1) Hindi/Mother tongue is the lingua franca  
(2) English language is used only in the classroom  
(3) English is not spoken at home at all  
(4) access to any learning material is unavailable to students

33. Motivation is an important factor in language learning. For example, in Class VI, ... may be done

[CTET Sept 2014]

(1) memorisation and use of necessary vocabulary  
(2) systematic analysis and use of structures  
(3) use of visual devices and game-like exercises  
(4) use of the mother tongue as the 'medium'



- 34.** Second language acquisition is more effective when it [CTET Sept 2014]

  - (1) is used as the basis for discussing grammatical concepts
  - (2) involves periodic revision work by the teacher and students
  - (3) involves mostly self-study by students, using certain guidelines
  - (4) is practised in situations familiar to students
- 35.** A Hindi-speaking teacher gets posted in a primary school which is situated in a remote area of Rajasthan. Since she doesn't know the local language, she faces lots of problems. She should [CTET Feb 2015]

  - (1) try to get a posting to a Hindi-speaking area
  - (2) focus on the textbook as a source of standard Hindi
  - (3) use the child's language as a resource while teaching
  - (4) encourage the community to learn standard Hindi
- 36.** A teacher of class III realises that vocabulary development is an important factor in enabling students to become better readers. Of the following, which might be a good strategy for vocabulary development? [CTET Feb 2015]

  - (1) Students underline difficult words from a text and make sentences with them
  - (2) Students learn to use the context to guess the meaning of new words
  - (3) Students memorise extensive word-lists of synonyms and antonyms
  - (4) Students consult a dictionary whenever they come across a new word
- 37.** A good teacher is one who [CTET Sept 2015]

  - (1) gives them ample opportunities to learn
  - (2) gives them useful information
  - (3) explains concepts and principles
  - (4) gives printed notes to students
- 38.** According to socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky [CTET Sept 2015]

  - (1) self-directed speech is the lowest stage of the scaffolding
  - (2) children can think in abstract terms if abstract material is provided at a lower age
  - (3) children learn in different domains and do they take a complete perspective
  - (4) culture helps in language development
- 39.** Who strongly maintains that language is learnt by imitation of stimuli and reinforcement of correct responses? [CTET Sept 2015]

  - (1) Albert Bandura
  - (2) Kurt Lewin
  - (3) Tolman
  - (4) BF-Skinner
- 40.** The linguist, Noam Chomsky maintains that every child has an innate Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that he/she uses for [CTET Sept 2015]

  - (1) Phonemes
  - (2) Universal Grammar
  - (3) Complex words
  - (4) Semantics
- 41.** Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition does not consist of [CTET Feb 2016]

  - (1) the Natural Order Hypothesis
  - (2) the Input Hypothesis
  - (3) the Acquisition Learning Hypothesis
  - (4) the Learnability Hypothesis
- 42.** When a child learns a language naturally, without much practice, it is called [CTET Feb 2016]

  - (1) language generalisation
  - (2) language adaptation
  - (3) language learning
  - (4) language acquisition
- 43.** The most important aspect of an effective language classroom is to provide learners with an opportunity to [CTET Sept 2016]

  - (1) interact
  - (2) interfere
  - (3) assess
  - (4) imitate
- 44.** Reading English as a second language means [CTET Sept 2016]

  - (1) reading aloud
  - (2) reading for grammar
  - (3) meaning making
  - (4) decoding of letters and words
- 45.** When language development is a deliberate and conscious effort, language is [CTET Sept 2016]

  - (1) honed
  - (2) brushed up
  - (3) learned
  - (4) acquired

Answers

- |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. (1)  | 2. (1)  | 3. (1)  | 4. (1)  | 5. (3)  |
| 6. (4)  | 7. (3)  | 8. (3)  | 9. (4)  | 10. (4) |
| 11. (1) | 12. (2) | 13. (3) | 14. (3) | 15. (2) |
| 16. (4) | 17. (2) | 18. (3) | 19. (3) | 20. (1) |
| 21. (3) | 22. (1) | 23. (2) | 24. (4) | 25. (3) |
| 26. (1) | 27. (4) | 28. (1) | 29. (1) | 30. (1) |
| 31. (4) | 32. (4) | 33. (3) | 34. (4) | 35. (3) |
| 36. (4) | 37. (1) | 38. (4) | 39. (4) | 40. (2) |
| 41. (3) | 42. (4) | 43. (1) | 44. (4) | 45. (3) |