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Preface
&
Acknowledgments

Preface

Spotlight on Primary English Education Resources (SPEER) is a resource for primary EFL teachers and their supervisors. The book represents the culmination of three years of collaboration among primary teacher educators and supervisors in Egypt.

History of SPEER

In 1998 and 1999, the IELP-II Project, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and senior faculty at many Faculties of Education, developed a series of training institutes to target primary EFL education in Egypt. Two key performance areas were identified as critical to improved teaching, and improved student learning at the primary level:

- knowledge and skills in communicative methodology for primary teacher educators and their supervisors, and
- supervision techniques for supervisors of primary English teachers in Egypt.

Over one hundred educators from Faculties of Education and the Ministry of Education were trained and carried out action plans to implement concepts and techniques they had learned. As a result of these programs, institute graduates and other key educational decision-makers felt that a set of resource materials, stemming from the institute topics and follow-on work, should be developed for the Egyptian context and made available to a wider audience. The idea for SPEER was born and it was decided that Egyptian educators should develop and write the chapters required.

IELP-II provided additional training programs to prepare writers, provide feedback on chapter drafts, field test strategies and techniques from the chapters, and discuss the usefulness of the SPEER contents in the Egyptian context. A total of 13 writers from the Ministry of Education, 16 writers from Faculties of Education, and four IELP-II consultants and staff members collaborated in the writing of the book. Forty pre-service and in-service teacher supervisors participated in the field testing of the chapters.

Representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Faculties of Education and IELP-II consultants made up the SPEER Editorial Board and implemented the whole process of the book's development under the management of IELP-II. The Editorial Board worked very closely with writers from conception, through many revisions, field-testing and editing to develop the final text you see here.

We are honored to have the approval of the Ministry of Education of the Arab Republic of Egypt for this project and delighted that it will be used by both the Ministry and Faculties of Education in future teacher education of primary English teachers.

SPEER's Intended Audience

SPEER is designed to be used by teacher educators working with primary English teachers in Egypt. This includes

- methodologists working in Faculties of Education training future generations of primary teachers and
- supervisors from the Ministry of Education and Faculties of Education who supervise teachers engaged in teaching practice in primary schools.
- Ministry of Education supervisors working with in-service teachers teaching primary English.
- primary and preparatory teachers and 3rd and 4th year university students (planning to

become EFL teachers) may also find this a resource for their own professional development.

The Organization of SPEER

Speer has three main parts:

- Part 1 (Chapters 1 – 3): Theories of and Approaches to Teaching English to Young Learners gives an overview of current theories of and approaches to child language learning and how these can be reflected in the teaching process of primary level students, with particular reference to the Egyptian context.
- Part 2 (Chapters 4 – 22): Methodology for Teaching English to Young Learners includes approaches, strategies and techniques which can be used in Egyptian primary classrooms to enhance pupil learning. Many examples from Egyptian textbooks and Egyptian teachers' actual experience are included.
- Part 3 (Chapters 23 – 28): Supervision for Educators of Primary English Teachers consists of background information and suggested procedures and techniques for the supervisor of primary English teachers. Although it is designed mainly for the supervisor at pre-service level, much of the content is also relevant to the in-service supervisor.

Each chapter contains the following sections:

- An outline and overview
- The chapter body including practical examples relating to the Egyptian context
- A summary at the end
- Questions for checking understanding
- A glossary of key terminology from the chapter
- One or more handouts for use in training
- A reference list containing suggestions for further reading

The greater part of the book is addressed directly to teachers and teacher educators so the second person “you” is used with the exception of those chapters which are mainly theoretical in nature. In chapters 23 – 28, you refers to the supervisor; in other chapters you refers to teachers and teacher educators who also work inside the classroom.

Voices from the Field

In order to ensure that the techniques contained in this handbook were useful and usable in the Egyptian context, the ideas and strategies of the book were field tested by

- Pre-service English teachers
- Both novice and experienced in-service teachers
- Supervisors from the Ministry of Education
- Supervisors from Faculties of Education

In a number of the SPEER chapters, there are short, boxed texts called, “Voices from the Field”. These selections were written by some of the 40 individuals involved in the field testing who have shared their descriptions of what happened when SPEER was actually put to use in the Egyptian context. You will also find examples of teacher-made materials and student work from their field testing.

Ways to use SPEER

SPEER is a versatile resource that can be used in many ways.

Chapters 1 – 22 can be used by

- supervisors who wish to be brought up to date with more recent trends in methodology. They can then
 - share these ideas informally with their teachers as they see appropriate
 - present the materials formally through workshops or informally by suggesting teachers read certain chapters to help them improve classroom performance
 - assign the teachers they supervise techniques from the chapters to try out with their classes.
- methodologists in Faculties of Education can use the chapters or parts of the individual chapters in a number of ways. They can
 - present the information contained within as a lecture.
 - distribute handouts included in the chapter to their student teachers.
 - use the handouts as transparency masters for visual aids to use in class.
 - use the check at the end of the chapters as a quiz for the student teachers
 - assign chapters or parts of chapters for student teachers to read and then use class time for further discussion and exploration
 - assign the “Voices from the Field” to be read by student teachers to help move between practice to the theory
- classroom teachers or student teachers as independent reading for professional development or research purposes or to prepare discussion topics they can present to their colleagues.

Chapters 23 – 28, which focus on supervision, can be used by:

- new supervisors at primary level to give them practical advice as to how to observe and give feedback to their teachers
- more experienced supervisors who wish to be made aware of best practice in supervision in order to help their teachers develop and grow
- supervisor trainers as they plan workshops or lectures.

Chapter 27, Tips for Novice Supervisors, can be photocopied and given to new supervisors in its entirety.

SPEER is a rich resource that can be used by teachers and teacher educators in many contexts and for many purposes. We would like it to be photocopied and shared with as many educators and students as possible. Please provide acknowledgement to SPEER when you disseminate it, but above all use it! Enjoy!

Acknowledgements

Many, many individuals and organizations provided essential contributions to the SPEER project. We wish to take this opportunity to thank them here:

His Excellency Professor Dr. Hussein Kamel Baha El-Din, the Minister of Education, provided leadership, vision and encouragement as well as support for innovations in the teaching of English at primary level.

Eng. Ragab Sharabi, First Undersecretary of General Education, was a source of motivation and encouragement to us throughout this project.

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Dr. Soraya El-Atroush, General Director of (GDIST) General Department of In-service Training, Ministry of Education participated in this project from its very inception, providing thoughtful insights throughout.

This whole project would not have become a reality without the dedication, enthusiasm and the ceaseless efforts of writers from both the Faculties of Education and from the Ministry of Education who worked willingly and cooperatively together as volunteers for the success of this project.

We also cannot ignore the crucial role played by the Field testers and Piloters. They tried out the techniques contained in this book and their valuable feedback helped us greatly in ensuring that the techniques contained here are appropriate and applicable in the Egyptian context.

Dr. Kamal el Fouly was instrumental in developing the original Web site, trained writers in the necessary computer skills and who, together with Linda New Levine, acted as contributing editor to the project. Linda New Levine came into our project later on and with a fresh eye and sharp editorial skills made invaluable contributions.

The professors, lecturers, supervisors and senior teachers who attended the Institutes on Primary Education provided their ideas for the contents and approach this book has taken and paved the way for the writing project. These institutes were funded and organized by IELP-II and graciously hosted by the Universities of Assiut and Minya.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the Egyptian International Publishing Company, Longman, for permission to reprint copyrighted materials from the primary Hello series.

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In addition to the roles played by IELP-II staff mentioned above, other contributions deserve acknowledgement: Robert Burch was an early manager and evaluator of this project. His enthusiasm and his positive and caring approaches to everyone involved helped us to develop a collaborative atmosphere from the beginning to the end of this project. Shereen Salah provided efficient administrative support for the project, always with a smile and kind words. Nadia Toubia joined us as project manager and Dina El Araby as publication director for the final publication preparations: both were enthusiastic and helpful.

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The SPEER Editorial Board

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Cairo, Egypt, March 2002

Chapter 1

Language Theory and Children's Language Development

by
Zeinab El Naggar

Outline

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Introduction

No one knows exactly how people learn languages although a great deal of research has been done into the subject. Certain theories have, however, had a profound effect upon the practice of language teaching (and continue to do so) despite the fact that they have often originated in studies of how people teach their first language.

(Harmer, 1991, p. 31)

Have you ever thought as a parent how your child acquires his or her mother tongue? Or as a facilitator, have you wondered how students learn a foreign language? Do you agree with Harmer's quotation above that learning a language - be it first or second - is a complex phenomenon to the extent, he asserts, that "no one knows exactly" how it is learned?

No one expects you to give an answer now. However, by the end of this chapter, you will be able to form your own opinion on such complex issues. The purpose of this chapter is to lay the theoretical foundations for the chapters following in this resource book. Specifically, it is going to deal with what linguists say about the child's:

- First language development
- Second language development

It is my hope that knowledge of and familiarity with these issues will help us become better informed and more effective teachers and supervisors.

Children's Language Development

To understand how children master their first language (L1) or mother tongue we have to examine the various theories or approaches that explain this complex human phenomenon. Brown (1987) views these approaches along a continuum that begins with behaviorism, moves to the "extreme position" of nativism, with cognitive and interactionist approaches in between. We will look briefly at these in turn.

The Behaviorist Approach

Perhaps the best-known proponent of behaviorism is B. F. Skinner, the American psychologist. His book, *Verbal Behavior* (1957), is his attempt to construct a behaviorist model of language behavior. Children come into this world with their minds as "tabula rasa," i.e. clean slates. Through stimulus-response, repetition and positive reinforcement, learning takes place. For example, if, as children are learning, they get something correct, this is reinforced by parental approval.

Child: Dada, dada

Parent: Yes, yes, daddy's here, love!! My smart little one!!

According to this theory, the environment thus shapes children's learning, including language, until it becomes a set of habits, i.e. reaches automaticity. This theory may appeal to our wish for clarity and simplicity but it doesn't explain how children can come up with unique utterances that they were never taught.

The Nativist (Innatist) Approach

To advocates of this approach, acquisition is innately determined. This means that human beings are born with a special device that helps them acquire not just their L1 but also any other human language. Chomsky (1965) explains children's mastery of their L1 through what he calls the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). This LAD, operating in the brain of the learner, accounts for various aspects of language acquisition such as generating meaning, forming hypotheses about the language, and creating new utterances. Children's errors, in this approach, are seen as evidence of their creative ability in using language and experimenting with it while they acquire features of their language. For example, children have a tendency to overgeneralize in their development of language rules. Overgeneralizations appear in children's language such as adding the -ed morpheme to all verbs, both regular and irregular, before they finally can differentiate between these two classes of verbs. A child who was overgeneralizing might say, "We goed to the park," or "They fought," in an earlier stage of language development, and "We went to the park," or "They fought," later on .

This reminds me of my grandson Omar (aged 4) when he would say in his mother tongue: "Ana roht bokra el-madrassa"

Wā dI».bI°X•U

(I went to school tomorrow), before he was able to use the appropriate time marker.

Cognitive Approaches

Piaget (1967) outlines the course of intellectual development in a child. He sees the child as progressing through various stages. In each stage, what children learn about the language is determined by what they already know about the world. Of importance for primary educators are the stages that cover early and later primary years, the "pre-operational stage" (ages 2-7) and the "concrete operational stage" (ages 7-11). In the pre-operational stage, children acquire mental imagery and learn to understand symbols, especially language, though only from their own perspective. In the concrete operational stage, children learn to take others' perspectives and to see more than one perspective at a time. They learn mastery of classes, relations, and numbers and how to reason, but primarily in concrete, not abstract ways. Piaget (1955) views play as an important activity. Children develop through hands-on experiences and manipulation of objects in the environment. In other words, they learn by doing, and by constructing their own theories about the results.

Providing a useful complement to Piaget's views, which focused on child development through interaction with the environment, Vygotsky (1962) stresses the importance of social interaction in learning. He saw children as learning through dialogues with peers and adults. For example, in an English language classroom, we all know that not all students are at the same level. Some students know more than others. Through the interaction that takes place during the lesson, those who know, together with the facilitator, help a great deal in facilitating the learning of others.

Vygotsky refers to this process of peers or teachers providing support and guidance to a child during learning as "scaffolding." More expert conversation partners instinctively determine the language level of the child and speak to the child at a level just above this. This brings us to Vygotsky's notion of "the zone of proximal development" (ZPD), which Scarcella and Oxford (1992, pp. 2, 24) describe as, "the distance between the learner's individual competence and the capacity to perform with assistance." To put it differently, the ZPD is a body of knowledge, tasks and skills that a child is just ready to reach at his own pace through interaction with and guidance from more mature peers and adults.

The L1 Interactionist Approach

According to the interactionist perspective, children learn their language as a result of constant interaction with their immediate environment. Lightbown & Spada (1997, p. 14) summarize the findings of research showing that parents, especially mothers, modify their speech and make it simpler when they talk to their children. They always talk about the "here" and "now", i.e. things close to children that they can see and experience. They use shorter sentences, repetition, paraphrasing and varied intonation. They rarely correct

children, preferring to respond to the content of what children are trying to say. They sometimes correct their children's speech indirectly by repeating what their children say in grammatically correct sentences.

Child: I goed there yesterday

Mother: Oh, yes, I know you went there yesterday!

This simplified language used in the interaction between a child and an adult is called "motherese" or "caretaker" talk. It is to be noted that this simplified language is modified according to the child's level of language. In other words, as the language of the child becomes complex, so the language of the caretaker stays just ahead of them.

Second Language Development

How much does all this have to do with second language learning? Do the children in our schools learn English in the same way as they have learned their first language, Arabic? Peregoy and Boyle (1997) confirm that second language acquisition theories "are directly related" to L1 acquisition theories. In fact, certain methods of teaching a second/foreign language are based upon them. Let us look at some theories of second language learning and see how they are related to first language acquisition already discussed above and their implications for English instruction at the primary level.

The Behaviorist View of Second Language Acquisition

The behaviorist view of language learning gave rise to the Audio-Lingual method that dominated ESL/EFL teaching in the mid-twentieth century until the early 1970's. This view of language learning as habit formation and positive feedback was reflected in the following audio-lingual learning and teaching practices (El-Naggar, 1998):

- Linear presentation of the four language skills. Skills were presented in this order: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Emphasis on speech. Dialogues were the means of contextualizing language
- Use of the mim-mem (mimicry-memorization) technique. Students imitate the model (teacher or tape), repeat chorally, in groups or individually and then memorize the text.
- Emphasis on pattern drills. After presenting a dialogue and practicing it, a grammatical pattern from the dialogue becomes the focus of practice

and substitution drills.

- Avoidance of mother tongue. Learners are expected to use only L2 in the language classroom.
- Immediate correction of errors. Errors are corrected as quickly as possible to establish good habits of pronunciation and intonation

Perhaps some of us are familiar with the English language textbooks that were taught in Egyptian schools from the early 1960's until late 1970's - the Living English series - which was based on the Audio-Lingual method.

The Innatist View of Second Language Acquisition

Stephen Krashen (1982) who belongs to the innatist tradition of L2 acquisition, proposes his Input Hypothesis known as the $i + 1$ hypothesis. The 'i' represents students' current level of language proficiency, while the '+ 1' represents the forms or functions that are a little bit above this level. Krashen states that language acquisition comes from learners' understanding of language input at the $i + 1$ level. Krashen maintains that teachers must make input comprehensible to their students by adjusting the complexity of their language. This is clearly very similar to Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development that we have discussed above.

For input to be comprehensible, it must be interesting, relevant to students' lives and sufficient in quantity (Johnson, 1995). Krashen proposes that language teachers of students at early levels should focus on the content of the dialogue, not the errors of learners - stressing meaning over form. Krashen also proposes that language acquisition is aided by a non-threatening environment in which learners feel safe in taking risks in using new language.

Reading for pleasure is an important element in providing $i + 1$ input, says Krashen. It can provide much help to learners in their acquisition of vocabulary as well as other aspects of the language. According to Krashen, it is important for teachers to create a friendly atmosphere and to provide their students with interesting content.

L2 Interactionist View

As we have seen in the section on L1 acquisition, modified input - motherese or caretaker talk - plays an important role in the process of acquiring the mother tongue. In the field of L2, a similar view is advocated by Long (1985) in his Interaction Hypothesis. Long focuses on the modified input used in the interaction between native speakers (or teachers) and non-native speakers (or students) while communicating. This modified interaction is termed "foreigner talk" or "teacher talk." He sees this interaction as having features similar to those used by caretakers in L1 situations. Hence, teacher talk is

characterized by:

1. Comprehension checks: Teachers always make sure that their students have understood them by asking questions such as:
 - Do you understand?
 - Is this clear?
 - Do you see that ...?
2. Clarification requests: Teachers use clarification requests during interaction with their students to negotiate meaning:
 - Could you say that again?
 - Could you elaborate?
 - What do you mean by this...?
3. Repetition and paraphrasing: In trying to understand their students, teachers repeat or paraphrase what they say:
 - You said
 - To put it differently or in another way, ...
 - In other words,

The interactionist believes that the more adjustments teachers make in their interaction with their students during communication, the more input becomes comprehensible and facilitates language acquisition. Recently, according to Robinson (2000), interest in the role of interaction has focused on the effect of different forms of feedback on the language production of learners. Researchers have found implicit/indirect feedback to be more effective than explicit/direct feedback. Following are examples of explicit/direct and implicit/indirect feedback.

Direct Feedback

Student: This red pencil

Teacher: This is a red pencil. Repeat after me.

Indirect Feedback

Student: This red pencil.

Teacher: Yes, this is a red pencil. It's not green, is it? What color is it?

Student: This is a red pencil.

Implications

From the above theories and principles of both L1 and L2 acquisition and learning, we can see the following implications for EFL classrooms:

- Active engagement. Children need to be actively engaged in meaningful

tasks in which they are provided with opportunities to try out their English, make mistakes, and learn from these mistakes. Teachers should not punish students for these mistakes, but should help them to raise their language level. Teachers should also use errors as information to inform their teaching.

Interaction. Content should be communicatively based with opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning. Cooperative pairwork and groupwork are indispensable techniques for learning language in context. Children should use the language for the purpose of communication, rather than as a subject to be learned. For example, if you as the teacher ask a question such as, "What do you have in your pocket or book bag?" everybody in the class can take something out of their pockets or bags and see the answers. What's more, they will have reasons to talk to one another about the objects they find. On the other hand, if you introduce a drill like the one below, children, who don't yet think abstractly about language, may not find any reason to be interested in the exercise and may not learn from it.

Teacher: The ball is blue.

Children: The ball is blue.

Teacher: Red.

Children: The ball is red.

- Reading for pleasure. Literature, storytelling, story reading and poetry should be used to help children in the acquisition of vocabulary as well as on the other aspects of the language. This is possible even at primary level, as you will see in the chapters that follow.
- Rich print environment. Since there are few opportunities for contact in English outside the language classrooms, teachers should provide a rich print environment, and comprehensible input for children that would be conducive to language learning.
- Motivating, engaging activities. The teacher's techniques and materials must be the source of motivation for language learning. Hence, teachers should use role-play, songs, games, rhymes and movement activities in teaching English to children.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce readers to ideas about how languages are acquired by young learners. Various theories of L1 acquisition were reviewed together with their impact on L2 acquisition theories. Implications for teaching were highlighted. In Chapter 2 we will focus on learners' individual differences and how you as a teacher might cope with this reality.

Key Terminology

Key Terminology on Language Theory and Language Development	
Behaviorism	This theory of learning, based on the ideas of B. F. Skinner, stresses the role played by the environment in learning. Learning takes place when children imitate language in their surroundings (at home, school) and their responses are encouraged through positive feedback (verbal or nonverbal) until learning takes place. This is true of all aspects of learning from learning to walk to learning to speak. Children go through a series of trial and error experiences, and positive reinforcement until they form a habit - then learning is said to take place.
Nativism	This theory of learning highlights the innateness of learning. Children come to this world with an innate (inborn) ability to learn languages. It is as if they are born with a special tool or what Noam Chomsky calls a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that helps them to experiment with the language and create new utterances.
Piaget's Cognitive Theory	Jean Piaget's theory focuses on the cognitive development of children. According to his theory, children pass through various stages of development. Each stage is subdivided into further stages highlighting what children can or cannot do at the motor, cognitive and affective levels.
Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)	This term, proposed by the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, refers to what knowledge and/or skills a learner is just ready to do or reach with the help and guidance of peers and adults. It is the distance between the learner's actual competence and what he or she can do with the help of others.
Scaffolding	Scaffolding is the help given by a mother, a caretaker, a teacher or any adult to guide and support learners to be able to do things they could not do independently.
Caretaker talk	Caretaker talk (sometimes called motherese) refers to the features of the language that mothers or adults (including teachers) use with children. This language starts by being simple and becomes more complex as the child's or learner's language becomes complex.

The Input Hypothesis	Steven Krashen puts forward the input hypothesis, which claims that language acquisition happens when learners receive "comprehensible input" - language containing structures just a little bit higher than their current level of competence.
The Interaction Hypothesis	The Interaction Hypothesis Advocated by Michael Long, the interactionist hypothesis refers to how teachers can modify their talk while interacting with learners through asking questions, repetition or paraphrasing and checking for clarification. This modified interaction is called "foreigner talk" when native speakers are talking with non-native speakers whereas it is called "teacher talk" in a language classroom setting.

Understanding Check

1. Based on your reading of this chapter, what advice would you give to a novice teacher about how children learn a second language?
 2. Explain some of the techniques and principles of the Audio-Lingual method.
 3. Would you recommend using this method to beginning or advanced learners? Why?
 4. What techniques can you use to enhance interaction in an English classroom?
 5. In his book *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, J.D. Brown makes it clear that "there is no consistent combination of theories that works for every context of second language learning" (p. 74). To what extent do you agree or disagree with him? Justify your answer.
-

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Summary Handout for Chapter 1: Language Theory and Language Development

Theories of First and Second Language Acquisition		
Theoretical Perspective	Ideas from L1 Theory	Implications for L2 Instruction
Behaviorism	Children are blank slates. They learn from imitation and positive feedback.	Audiolingual approach, focusing on imitation, memorization and feedback.
Innatism	Children are born with a Language Acquisition Device, and are natural, inborn language learners.	Teachers should encourage the natural development of language through comprehensible input and opportunities to use language in real situations.
Cognitivism	Children's minds develop through a progression of stages. Children construct their own concepts of language structure. Children learn differently in different stages. There may be a critical period for language development.	Children should be taught language in developmentally appropriate ways - younger learners should have opportunities to construct language through much interaction, language play, and rich input. Older learners should be made conscious of their own learning processes and strategies.
Interactionism	The social environment can enhance children's natural language development.	Teachers should adjust language input and feedback for the learner. Teachers should provide purposeful tasks for student language learning.