

## Chapter V: Language Learning, and the Songs/Chants/Dances/Games

### A) Background.

#### 1) The Language Acquisition Process, and Play.

This chapter asks and begins to answer the question, “How might verbal play assist in the child’s language acquisition process?” Play in general has already been discussed (in Chapter IV, pp. 158-69). Here the language acquisition process will be discussed, including some issues relating to play and *phonetics* (sounds), *semantics* (words), and *syntax* (sentence formation) in the experience of the growing child. Then, methods of language teaching-and-learning will be discussed. Finally, in the Original Data section of the chapter, language teaching-and-learning exercises using aspects of play in found in the 14 collected songs/chants/dances/games will be presented and discussed.

The language acquisition process is often considered to involve three increasingly-complex levels of cognitive activity: those involving phonetics, semantics, and syntax (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Sherzer 1976). When sounds (phonetics) are given meaning, and are presented either individually or in combination, words (semantics) can be formed. The ways words are combined

to form sentences constitutes a language's syntax (sentence structure). Related to syntax is *accidence*, a language's rules for the forms words take when they are combined to make phrases and sentences. Together, phonetics, syntax, and accidence constitute a language's *grammar* (Oxford English Dictionary Online 2009).

The following schedule varies greatly from child to child (Garvey 1977; Farb 1973): Infants may begin to *coo* and *babble* shortly after birth. At six months, *reduplicative babbling* is common. At eight months, "children use intonation patterns similar to those changes in pitch heard in adult exclamations and questions" (Farb 1973, p. 10). At 12 months, single-syllable words are sometimes uttered. At 18 months, a child's vocabulary is often between three and 50 words, and the child may be able to utter simple stock phrases, such as "Thank you." It is approximately at this time that the "naming explosion" or "word spurt" may begin. The naming explosion tends to occur at the same time as the onset of productive syntax.

At 24 months, a child may be able to name most of the physical objects she comes into contact with on a daily basis, and two- and three-word utterances are common. For many children, 36 months marks the end of the naming explosion period: now the child's vocabulary may be 1,000 words. At 48 months, typically the child has mastered most of the syntactical structures of the language. By this

time, the development of the child's cognitive architecture -- involving such distinctions as those, for example, between the name of a dog, the abstract category, dog, and the abstract category, animal -- is also well underway.

In the following section, by progressively discussing issues related to phonetics, semantics, and syntax, and by associating this progression with the growth of the child, I do not mean to imply that the youngest children are learning only phonetics, and that the oldest are learning only syntax. On the contrary, children of all ages may learn, and play with, all three elements of language simultaneously. At the same time, as children grow, they do tend to experience a development towards increasing degrees of abstraction and complexity: and to some extent, one does become acquainted with the sounds of a language before learning how the sounds combine to make words and take on meaning; and one does acquire a vocabulary of some size before combining those words in a syntax. It should be kept in mind that "while language acquisition studies generally indicate that the child is syntactically competent by about the age of four years, phonological dominance is maintained long after the child is theoretically competent semantically and syntactically" (Sanches and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1976, p. 105).

a) Phonetics.

“The most primitive level at which verbal play is conducted is that of phonation, i.e., the actual process of emitting sounds... During the child’s pre-linguistic period, aesthetic features such as intonation and stress provide raw material for early language play” (Garvey 1977, p. 30). Infants tend to associate the sound of the human voice with pleasurable sensations, such as feeding and fondling:

Repetitive, rhythmic vocalizations especially are associated with pleasurable states in the prelinguistic child. Infant-caretaker games often include a vocal component. The caretaker’s swelling ooh-aaah sounds, and the tongue-popping and clicking noises that enhance finger-walking, tickling, and jiggling are among the first models of vocal play that the infant encounters. (Garvey 1977, p. 30)

“In the first year of the infant’s life, the communicative force of caregivers’ vocalizations derive not from their arbitrary meanings in a linguistic code, but rather from their immediate musical power to arouse, alert, calm, delight, etc.”

(Fernald 1984, p. 74). Melodies of caregivers’ speech are highly salient to infants:

Although the exaggerated pitch patterns of caregivers’ vocalizations may eventually help the child in the second year to identify linguistic units in speech, the human voice becomes meaningful to the infant through caregivers’ vocalizations much earlier in the development. Through this distinctive form of vocal communication, the infant begins to experience emotional communion with others, months before communication with symbols is possible. (Fernald 1984, p. 74)

Infants in all cultures are initially responsive to similar vocal cues: universal speech patterns, with local variations, are used to praise, encourage, soothe, scold, alert, warn, and convey other messages to the child (Bloom 1994, p. 9). Language addressed to children is often characterized by features that render it simpler, more regular, and easier to segment than language addressed to adults. “‘Motherese,’ or ‘caregiver talk,’ generally involves a slower rate of speech, higher pitch, exaggerated intonation, short, simple sentence patterns, frequent repetition, and paraphrasing” (Lightbrown and Spada 1993, p. 14).

When the caregiver praises the infant, she uses her voice to produce a pleasurable acoustic experience which rewards and encourages the infant.

To arouse and delight the infant, the caregiver tends to use smooth, wide-ranging pitch contours, often with rising intonation. When her goal is to soothe, she tends to speak with low, falling pitch. When producing a prohibition, caretakers tend to use narrow pitch contours that are short, harsh, staccato, and loud: this sort of sound seems designed to interrupt and inhibit the child’s behavior (Fernald 1984).

As infants and toddlers develop speech ability, they may at times be searching for means to communicate. Perhaps this could not be called pure play, as play, by definition, is done solely for fun. Nonetheless, some of the methods of verbal communication may be performed in a playful way, and the line between playful and serious activity is often not sharp in children’s experience.

“The oldest form of teaching is by example, and the oldest form of learning, is by imitation” (Beresin 2002). However, “Children do not imitate everything they hear, but often selectively imitate certain words or structures which they are in the process of learning” (Lightbrown and Spada 1993, p. 111).

Children tend to enjoy *onomatopoeic* words -- words which are composed of sounds that echo and imitate the thing being represented. For examples: “ting-ling-ling,” “cock-a-doodle-do” “cuckoo,” “sneeze,” “splash,” and “mumble.”

Children also often enjoy babbling, and may find that *reduplicative babbling* can add intensity to their expressions. Many of the first words learned by children, such as “mama” and “papa” (in English), feature repetition. Words that are both repetitive and onomatopoeic -- such as “babble” -- are a special communicative treat for children.

The child’s verbal development is stimulated by having her communicative efforts responded to, elaborated upon, and corrected by caregivers. One-to-one interaction gives the child access to language which is adjusted to her level of comprehension. When the child does not understand, the adult may repeat or paraphrase. The response of the adult may allow children to find out whether their utterances are understood or not. Television (and any recorded video) and radio does not provide such interaction. Even in children’s TV programs, where simpler language is used and topics are relevant to younger viewers, there is no

immediate adjustment for the needs of the individual child at each unique moment (Lightbrown and Spada 1993, p. 14).

b) Semantics.

“In order to understand and produce language, the child must be able to segment the speech stream into units of sound, and also of meaning” (Bavin 1995, p. 376). Play can involve identifying, extracting, remembering, and manipulating such units. A common play activity for children learning words is naming elements of one’s immediate environment, and asking and answering questions about these things’ locations and availability. At a young age, such play may be done as a learning activity; whereas older children may do this as a song, dance, and/or game that reinforces the memory of the player. A scholar of baby talk among Tamil children living in Malaysia has written:

I often observed caretakers engaging in deictic verbal routines with their children. These routines centered around naming, labeling individuals in the household, but also involved lists of objects to buy at the store, naming individuals in a photo album, counting in several languages, etc. The routines are initiated by the caretaker, who sits with the child and offers *say-and-give (sollikuTu)* words. The child is asked to repeat each word after the caretaker. On one occasion, the child took over the role of the initiator, and the mother repeated after her. (Williamson 1979, p. 165)

An infant is more likely to learn to comprehend a new label if that label is presented at a time when the infant is already focused on its referent, as

opposed to when the label is presented in an attempt to redirect the infants' attentional focus. Thus, "word learning is most likely to take place when *cooperative labeling* on parents' parts reduces the effort that infants themselves must direct toward joint reference" (Bloom 1994, p. 130).

As soon as a child has learned how something is supposed to be done, then turning it upside down or distorting it in some way can become a source of fun. Assignment of outrageous names to self, partner, or to imaginary others can reflect awareness of the importance of the normal name and address system. Children often seem to enjoy contrasts in their play, especially the alternation between, and juxtaposition of, sense and nonsense.

In the course of play, children may make puns (jokes that exploit the different meanings of a word). Children may also play with words that are related to each other, such as: words that are *homophones* (having the same sound, but different meanings); words that are *synonyms* (different words having the same meaning); and *antonyms* (two words that have opposite meanings). In forming play phrases, children may use *alliteration* (successive repetition of the initial sound of words); *assonance* (resemblance of sounds, usually vowels, between two syllables in nearby words); and *anaphora* (repetition of an initial word or phrase in successive sentences). All of these phenomenae involve repetition with variation, a very pervasive feature of verbal play (Jakobson 1966).



### c) Syntax.

Among the child's many possible uses of repetition is that it may be used to question or agree with a caregiver's comment, to remind oneself of something, to request information or services, to reassert an earlier statement, or to reverse the direction of an order or greeting. Repetition, along with a negation word, may be used to make a counterclaim ("You silly." / "No, you silly.") (Keenan 1977, p. 131). "The child may make innumerable incomplete or inaccurate imitations -- that is, inarticulate mutterings, wild stabs, false starts, and the like -- which are not repetitions in any accepted sense of the word. However, it may be that the child is repeating not to imitate but to satisfy some other communicative obligation, and in such cases inexact repetition may be the intended desire of the child" (Keenan 1977, p. 127). In repeating a version of what was heard, young children often omit the function words, but retain most of the content words.

In the language learning process, repetition is among the techniques used by both child and caregiver for communication checks, to increase the chances of one's utterances being received and understood by one's conversation partner (Keenan 1977, p. 135). When, for example, the child repeats the caregiver's utterance back to the caregiver, the child may be presenting her interpretation of the caregiver's utterance to the caregiver for verification. In the absence of a challenge from the caregiver, the child can treat this utterance as shared

knowledge (Ervin-Trip and Mitchell-Kernan 1979, p. 9), and in subsequent discourse both parties can consider this utterance to be known and accepted information.

One role of repetition in discourse is to establish topic candidates (Keenan 136). In many cases, the *raising of a topic* is a request for the matter to be ratified as a *topic candidate*. A conversation participant who might repeat the utterance may be doing so to signal acceptance. The information may then become the topic of subsequent utterances in the form of a pronoun, as pronouns normally refer to an already known subject.

The study of *acquisition of communicative competence* must include the study of not only the acquisition of linguistic rules, but also the consideration of the settings for their use. In much play, children are learning, memorizing, commenting upon, and finally reinforcing social roles, as well as linguistic rules. The use of language in social settings is rule-governed, and the failure to follow the rules often has socially disruptive consequences. Sociolinguistic features of speech provide evidence of the child's knowledge of social roles and appropriate behavior, and reflect a conception of a social system.

Communicative competence thus also includes the knowledge that underlies socially appropriate speech (Hymes 1973). This involves projecting socially appropriate identities, and -- in the right time and place -- engaging in social acts

such as playing, teaching, persuading, directing others, asking questions, narrating stories, and being a conversational partner. Opportunities for children to develop awareness of the discourse structures employed in roles other than those they normally enact, typically appear in role-playing games. In order to be socialized into the role system, children must learn rules for address and for pronoun selection, and songs and games provide practice situations.

Children play with linguistic structures through the use of substitution, accumulation, and transformation practices in rhymes, songs, and games (Larsen-Freeman). *Accumulation games* test, challenge, stretch one's memory abilities (Beresin 2002). *Transformation games* consider the same content from various points of view (a positive command may become a negative command, or a question, etc.). Children may unravel a sentence into parts that can be analyzed, and then put the elements back together again. In some cases, "Children systematically substitute words of the same grammatical categories, and build up and break down sentences, thus isolating their components. For example: "Stop it. Stop the ball. Stop the ball now!" (Garvey 1977, p. 34).

Sometimes a child practices conversational exchanges with herself, asking and answering questions, congratulating and warning herself, and so on. These performances have been called practice play, and may involve making repetitions and variations of newly learned structures (Garvey 1977, p. 34).

The playing of word games and the making up of nonsense rhymes may provide evidence that a child has internalized at least some of a language's rules, is beginning to exploit the possibilities of the language, and may also be interested in creating alternatives to those possibilities. A child may at times prefer to work to get certain levels of the language correctly; and to assign purposely incorrect forms to other levels of the language. *Gibberish* can involve imitating the inflections, melodies, and rhythms of the sounds of the language without having to worry about the meaning of the sounds. In *jabberwocky*, both phonological and syntactic rules are maintained, but the words are largely nonsensical. In *tangle-talk*, the syntax is jumbled, but the words are used correctly in terms of their meaning.

## 2) Theories and Methods of Language Teaching-and-Learning.

### a) Theories of Language Learning.

Numerous theories have been created to account for how children learn language. Among these theories are B. F. Skinner's theory of *Behaviorism*; Noam Chomsky's theory of a *Universal Grammar*, and Jean Piaget's theory of *Genetic Epistemology*. To briefly summarize these theories:

Skinner's theory of Behaviorism posits that all learning results from environmental conditioning, from positive and negative feedback (rewards and punishments). These reinforcements inculcate habits in the learner. Behaviorism also emphasizes the importance of memorization of external material in the child's learning process.

Chomsky's theory of a Universal Grammar refutes Skinner's central claim, instead positing that humans are born with "innate behavior patterns, and tendencies to learn in specific ways" (Chomsky 1959, p. 57). People are born with a "grammatical sense," a "built-in structure of an information-processing, hypothesis-forming system [which] enables them to arrive at the grammar of a language from the available data at the time" (Chomsky 1959, p. 58). According to this theory, there are fundamental internal processes at work in each human, quite independent of feedback from the environment. "The fact that all normal children acquire essentially comparable grammars of great complexity with remarkable rapidity suggests that human beings are somehow specially designed to do this, with data-handling ability of an unknown character and complexity" (Chomsky 1959, p. 57).

Piaget's theory of Genetic Epistemology has in common with Chomsky's theory the belief that the child carries within her the stages of development, and requires only a supportive and stimulating environment in order to bloom. Piaget believed

that people pass through a series of four stages of cognitive development, each one involving being capable of successively more abstraction in thought.

According to Piaget's theory,

There are four primary cognitive structures (i.e., developmental stages): sensory-motor, pre-operations, concrete operations, and formal operations. In the sensory-motor stage (0-2 years), intelligence takes the form of motor actions. Intelligence in the pre-operations stage (3-7 years) is intuitive in nature. The cognitive structure during the concrete operational stage (8-11 years) is logical, but depends on concrete referents. In the final stage, formal operations (12-15 years), thinking involves abstractions. (Kearsley 2002, p. 1)

At each stage along the way, children should be communicated with in the mode of their present stage of development, but should also be challenged to adopt the approach of the upcoming stage. Piaget was primarily concerned with the child's cognitive development, which he ascertained through experiments, interviews, and other methods, in addition to observation of language behavior.

While considering theories of language learning and development, another theory that should be mentioned is Edward Sapir's and Benjamin Whorf's *Sapir-Whorf Theory of Language*. According to this theory, "Language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas, but rather is itself the shaper of ideas... We dissect nature along the lines laid down by our native language" (as cited in Farb 1973, p. 180). That is, a language guides its users into perceiving, thinking about, and expressing reality in well-worn channels; this

conditioning place blinders on the practitioners of a language. Languages create these constraints simply through the limited options they offer, in terms of such elements as words (or lack of them), gender and tense forms, and the ways that words combine and interact.

#### b) Methods of Language Teaching-and-Learning.

Scholars and teachers have developed many theories and methods for teaching and learning second languages (Larsen-Freeman 2000). No single approach, or combination of approaches, have emerged as a standard. In fact, teaching-and-learning second languages remains an inexact science and is unsuccessful in many situations and for many people. The instructor often has to experiment and improvise to discover methods that work for her, and her students.

In this chapter, I first summarize some of the most popular methods of teaching and learning second languages. Then, I present a series of exercises that I developed, primarily for my own learning of Tamil language and the Kani Pasai dialect, in the course of my doctoral fieldwork. These exercises are based on aspects of the oral verbal play activities presented in this dissertation. These exercises are offered as a contribution to the development of a play-based method of language teaching and learning that would utilize some of the types

of verbal play known to children and their care-givers, both in general and in the specific language being learned.

Following are summaries of some of the most popular methods of language teaching and learning, such as, i) The Grammar-Translation Method, ii) The Direct Method, iii) The Audio-Lingual Method, iv) Communicative Language Learning, iv) The Silent Way, v) Total Physical Response, and vii) Community Language Learning.

i) The Grammar-Translation Method.

The primary purpose of the Grammar-Translation Method is to enable students to read and write the target language (Chastain 1988). Little attention is paid to how the language is spoken, and conversation is not a part of the course of study. Instead, the main activity in this method involves students translating written sentences from their known language to the target language, and vice-versa.

The grammatical rules of the target language are explained to students, examples are given, and students are expected to memorize these rules.

Learning is facilitated by the teacher pointing out similarities between the known



and target languages in regard to forms of nouns (declensions) and verbs (conjugations), sentence structure, and so on.

Lists of vocabulary words are given to the students and they are expected to memorize these new words. It is presumed that there is an exact correlation between the meanings of words in the known and target languages. Whenever the known language and target language words are similar in terms of spelling or sound, the teacher brings this to the students' attention.

Most of the classes are conducted in the students' known language by the teacher, who speaks a good deal in class. Some pressure is on the students to translate accurately, and to answer questions correctly.

Exercises used in this method include:

“Fill in the blanks”: Students are given a sentence with a blank section, and are expected to write in a word with the correct ending.

“Create a sentence around a word”: Students are given a word, and are asked to write a sentence that features that word.

## ii) The Direct Method.

The Direct Method focuses on spoken language. As much as possible, only the target language is spoken in the classroom. The teacher demonstrates an aspect of the target language, but she does not explain it. Pictures and objects in the classroom supply the primary subjects of conversation. Most new vocabulary words that appear in sentences spoken in the classroom refer to things that are represented in the classroom. Students are not given lists of unrepresented words to memorize.

The teacher, in the target language, may point to a thing, or to a picture of a thing, and ask, "What is this?" Then she may say what the thing is (again, in the target language). The teacher and the students may follow-up by asking questions and making statements about aspects of the object or picture. In this way, students learn question-and-answer routines in the target language.

One object of the Direct Method is to encourage students to think in the target language from the very beginning of the course of study. Students are expected to absorb the target language holistically on its own terms, not in piece-by-piece correlation with their known language. When the teacher introduces a new word, she illustrates its meaning through the use of objects, pictures, or pantomime: she generally does not translate it into the students' known language.

The Direct Method presumes that the purpose of language is communication between people, and in the Direct Method classroom, conversation is the primary activity (Gatenby 1958). The syllabus is based on social situations, and on social studies topics, not on aspects of grammar. Students do a good deal of role-playing. Thus, teaching-and-learning activities in the Direct Method are generally relationship-based, situation-based, task-based, and participatory. New vocabulary may be introduced by the teacher when the new words are called for.

Students are expected to be relatively active in this method: teachers and students are together meant to be partners in facilitating the students' learning processes.

### iii) The Audio-Lingual Method.

The Audio-Lingual Method involves drilling students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns. This method is related to behavioral psychology in that the method holds that to acquire sentence patterns of the target language, conditioning is necessary and learners need to form the habits required to be speakers of the target language. The target language is used most of the time in the classroom (Paulston 1971).

In this method, grammar rules are not explained to students. Rather, students are expected to figure out the rules from the examples given. Students simply learn patterns that occur in the target language, and practice those patterns. New vocabulary and structural patterns are presented through dialogs. The dialogs are learned through imitation and repetition.

A teacher using the Audio-Lingual Method may at first recite both sides of a question-and-answer routine. The students might be asked to repeat after her both sides of the routine. Later, the teacher might ask the questions, and the students might give the answers, and finally some students might ask the questions and some students might give the answers.

Among the many drills used in this method are: 1) backward build-up drills; 2) chain drills; 3) single-slot substitution drills; 4) multiple-slot substitution drills; and 5) transformation drills.

A backward build-up drill works in the following way: A sentence such as, "I am going to the house," is presented to the students. The students might find this sentence too complex to absorb and repeat at once. Thus, the teacher might state the word with which the sentence ends (in this case, "house"). The students might repeat that word. Then, the teacher might add to the noun, the article ("the house"), and then the preposition ("to the house"). The students

might repeat. The teacher might then add the verb, and finally the personal pronoun with which the sentence begins -- with the students repeating each time. In this way, step by step, the teacher builds up the complete sentence (from the end of the sentence to its beginning), and the students follow in direct imitation

In a chain drill, the teacher might address the student nearest to her, "Good morning, Jose." The student's reply might be, "Good morning, teacher." The teacher might then initiate a second exchange: "How are you?" To which the student might reply: "I am fine, thanks." The student might then turn to a student next to her, and initiate the same combination of routines. The chain might continue until all of the students have had a chance to ask and answer the questions. The last student might initiate the dialogue with the teacher.

In a single-slot substitution drill, a sentence from a dialog might be repeated, with one word or phrase in the sentence being replaced, according to the teacher's cue. For example: A student might say, "I am going to the park." The teacher might call out, "bank" -- whereupon the student would say, "I am going to the bank." Or, the teacher might show a picture, and the student might substitute the name of the object pictured into the sentence.

In a multiple-slot substitution drill, the subject of the sentence might be replaced, and this might also involve changing various word-endings in the sentence.

A transformation drill involves changing one type of sentence into another, such as: a question, to yes/no statement (“Are you going to the park?” “Yes, I am going to the park”); or, a command, to a negative statement (Go to the park!” “I will not go to the park”). Each of these drills employ sentences that are used in lines of dialog that are presented to the students.

#### iv) The Silent Way.

In this method, the teacher says as little as possible. Instead she uses a pointer to direct the students’ attention: 1) to pictures that represent sounds and words in the target language; and 2) to printed letters and words of the target language (and if necessary, also to printed letters and words of the known language) (Caleb 1972). Students speak aloud the element of the target language which has been pointed to. First students say isolated words, then they begin stringing the words together to form sentences. In these ways, students build upon that which they already know

The teacher may speak to demonstrate correct pronunciation or grammar, but following that, students are expected to speak on their own, and to correct each other. The lack of speech by the teacher is meant to encourage psychological independence in language composition by the students.

v) Total Physical Response.

The term, Total Physical Response (TPR), was coined by James Asher, who for many years was a professor of Psychology at San José State University (Asher 1982, 1988). TPR is based on the theory of “muscle learning,” which posits that a learner’s brain naturally seeks to relate body movements to the words she or he hears. TPR is designed to utilize this tendency. Standard works in this field include *Live Action English* (Romijn and Seely 1981); *Instructor’s Notebook: How to Apply TPR for Best Results* (Garcia 1996); and *Fluency through TPR Storytelling: Achieving Real Language Acquisition in School* (Ray and Seely 1998) , which presents the TPR storytelling method. The Command Performance Language Institute is one of TPR’s central organizations.<sup>1</sup>

In the Total Physical Response Method, the teacher begins by giving a command in the target language. The teacher enacts the commanded action (also known as an “operation”), along with the students. For example, the teacher may say, “Stand up,” whereupon the teacher stands up, as do the students. At a certain point, the teacher stops moving -- at this point, the students must move on their

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cpli.ne> . <http://www.tpr-world.com> is another center for information about TPR.

own. The teacher may also give compound commands. For example, “Point to the door, and touch the door.”

At first, the teacher is verbal and the students are non-verbal. Eventually, the students are called upon to also give the commands. Sequences of commands are developed in the classroom.

#### vi) Community Language Learning.

Students sit in a circle, with an audio-recording device on a table between them. The students have a conversation in their known language. The teacher stands behind a speaker, and tells, in the target language, the speaker the sentence she (the speaker) has just spoken. The student then repeats the sentence in the target language. The recorder is turned on only when the student speaks in the target language.

After the conversation, the recording can be played back, and a transcription can be read (the transcription features each sentence in two versions: in the known language, and in the target language, one above the other). As the teacher and students listen to or read what was spoken, they may discuss aspects of the target language’s grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary (Curran 1976, 1977).



The transcription becomes a text with which the students work. The transcription is a basis for future activities. Such activities may include creating new sentences with words used in the transcribed conversation. The transcription can be written on poster size paper, and placed on a classroom wall.

Since the students chose what they wanted to say in the recorded conversation, it is relatively easy for them to also associate meaning with the particular target language utterances. This method works best with 12 or fewer students. If more students are present, the additional students can observe the small group making the recording.

## B) Original Data.

### 1) Aspects of the 14 Songs/Chants/Dances/Games that May Assist Language Acquisition.

As I observed and documented the Kani children's songs/chants/dances/games, I was struck by three characteristics of these activities that seemed to me to facilitate language-learning: *repetition with variation*, *the simultaneous saying and physical enacting of words*, and *question-and-answer routines*. It is difficult to prove that play practices such as these are useful for language learning, but there is much anecdotal evidence that they, like rhythm and rhyme, do facilitate the language learning process. Dorothy Howard, for one, noticed long ago the teaching-and-learning value of children's songs/chants/dances/games: "As a teacher in the 1930s [in New York and New Jersey], she discovered that the immigrant children in her classes were learning the American language faster in the unsupervised playground than in the classroom" (Sutton-Smith 2005, p. 187).

It so happens that: 1) *repetition with variation*, is used in the Audio-Lingual Method of language teaching-and-learning; 2) *the simultaneous saying and physical enacting of words*, is used in the Total Physical Response Method; and 3) *question-and-answer routines*, are used in the Direct Method, and in the Audio-Lingual Method.

Elements of the 14 songs/chants/dances/games that feature the above-mentioned three practices are discussed below.

a) Repetition with Variation.

Each of the 14 songs/chants/dances/games feature repetition with variation, in some cases on various levels. Some of outstanding instances are:

Activity 1: "One Stone."

The opening words are, "One stone pick up, One stone throw." Here a simple phrase is repeated, with a verb substitution.

In subsequent verses, the number in each phrase is replaced by two, then three, and so on.

"One stone pick up..." is followed shortly by, "One hundred birds are flying." One repetition with variation in this case involves the two numbers: the first number is in the one-to-ten range; the second number is the same except that it is

multiplied by one-hundred. There is also a repetition with variation regarding objects going through the air: first stones, then birds.

Activity 2: "One Garden."

As in the previous activity: there is a one-to-ten number, and that number multiplied by one-hundred (in this case, referring to a garden and sprouts, respectively); and this pair increases successively (two and two-hundred, three and three-hundred, etc). Thus, both in terms of the number and the number times one-hundred -- and in terms of the number increasing in successive verses -- there is repetition with variation.

"A seed, a bean, and young women came" -- in this list, the second and third items can be thought of as variations on the previous items.

"Having sung, having danced, hit the parrot." Again, in this list of three, the second and third items can be thought of variations on the previous items. The first and second phrases -- which refer to singing and dancing -- are twin activities, which often occur together. The physical actions performed as these words are sung -- right arm going up, out, and down; and then left arm doing the same -- are opposite variants.

Activity 3: “One Pot.”

In this activity, one bucket of water is matched with one flower -- and the number increases successively in subsequent verses.

Activity 4: “Sandalwood Ash.”

This activity is composed of a repeated question-and-answer routine:

“Does (actor A) perform (action 2)?”

“No, for (action 2), one needs (actor B).”

“Does (actor B) perform (action 3)?”

“No, for (action 3), one needs (actor C).”

“Does (actor C) perform (action 4)?”

“No, for (action 4), one needs (actor D).”

And so on.

Activity 5: “What Kind Of?”

This activity also is composed of a repeated question-and-answer routine:

What kind of (A)?  
[descriptive word (B)] (A).

What kind of (B)?  
[descriptive word (C)] (B).

What kind of (C)?  
[descriptive word (D)] (C).

And so on.

In this activity, whatever answer is given, one asks for a description of that answer.

#### Activity 6: "What Use?"

This activity also is composed of a repeated question-and-answer routine:

What is the use of (A)?  
To do (B).

What is the use of (B)?  
To do (C).

And so on.

In this activity, whatever answer is given, one asks "What is the use of that thing or action?"

### Activity 7: "Please Give!"

Three ways that repetition occurs in this activity are: 1) In the dialogue between players, an object is asked for twice, and two different negative replies are given ("If I gave it to you, my mother would hit me"; and, "I don't see it"). 2) This dialog is repeated (between participants A and B, then B and C, then C and D, etc.). 3) Once the object is placed between the players' toes, the ring rotates due to a repeated set of physical movements by each player, with each player repeating again and again, "The lice-pick is in a box, and I don't see the box."

### Activity 8: "Monkey Jumping."

At the beginning of this activity, the phrase, "The monkey is jumping," is repeated five times. With each statement of the phrase, the speaker bends back a successive finger on the other players' hand.

### Activity 9: "Rolling."

As the speaker recites the words, he repeatedly taps a stone on a bent-over player's back.

Then all of the standing players repeatedly roll (or pretend to roll) the stone between their hands as they repeatedly exclaim, “uraNDoo” (“rolling”).

If the bent-over player (who straightens up at this point) guesses incorrectly three times who has the stone, the standing players playfully beat his back with repeated gentle slaps.

#### Activity 10: “A Fruit.”

In this counting-out game, the speaker touches one finger after another of the other players, and bends back the finger on which he (the speaker) lands at the end of the chant. This process is repeated again and again, until only one finger of one player remains unbent.

#### Activity 11: “A Bunch.”

Two ways in which repetition occurs in this activity are: 1) The words, “kolaiya” (a “bunch”) and “neRaya” (“more”) are each spoken twice (“kolaiya, kolaiya”; and “neRaya, neRaya”). 2) The entire sequence -- the chant, and then the chase around the ring -- is repeated again and again.



Activity 12: “Goat and Tiger.”

One way that this activity features repetition with variation is in its physical formation: players stand in a ring, facing center and holding hands. Each hand-clasp is referred to as a lock. The player who enacts the tiger tries to break through a number of these “locks,” repeatedly calling out, “Is it locked?”; to which the players forming the ring answer each time, “It is locked!”

Activity 13: “Frog, Frog.”

The word for “frog” is spoken twice (“frog, frog”).

Activity 14: “Tick, Tick.”

The word for “tick” is spoken twice (“tick, tick”).

The players place their hands in a pile, with each hand pinching the back of the hand below. The pile of hands repeatedly bounces up and down as the players say, “Tick, tick.”

b) *The Simultaneous Saying and Physical Enacting of Words.*

Activity 1: "One Stone."

Players say and do: "pick up a stone," "throw a stone," and "fly like a bird."

Activity 2: "One Garden."

Players say and do: "Hit the parrot" (as they clap their hands above their heads).

Activity 7: "Please Give."

The players give, or do not give, the lice-pick as they say the word for ice-pick.

Activity 8: "Monkey Jumping."

The speaker pulls the other player's fingers, one by one, as he says the "Monkey is jumping." The speaker finger-walks up the other player's arm as the speaker describes a person going into a cave. Finally, the speaker says, "The fox and the crab are running," as the speaker reaches toward the other player's armpit.

Activity 9: "Rolling."

The players roll a stone back-and-forth between their hands (or pretend to) as they say, "Rolling, rolling."

Activity 11: "A Bunch."

Two episodes in this activity in which players say and do are:

At one point, as a player runs around the outside of the ring, he chants, "The forest is burning!", and the players sitting in the ring reply, "Children, come running!" (In some versions, the running player also says, "Children, come running!")

At another point, as the encircling player moves, he chants, "Where is the thief?", and the players sitting in the ring reply, "Let us sit in a group, Sit and find out."

Activity 13: "Frog, Frog."

As the players reach the end of the chant, "Frog, frog; Cry, cry; Eyes open wide!", they use their fingers to open their eyes widely.

Activity 14: “Tick, Tick.”

As the players reach the end of the chant, “Tick, tick; Cry, cry; Eyes open wide!”, they use their fingers to open their eyes widely.

c) Question-and-Answer Routines.

Activity 3: “One Pot.”

After a player in the line is caught by the two arch-players, the lead negotiator from the line of players repeatedly asks the arch-players if they will free their prisoner if they (the arch-players) might receive a certain gift. The answer, repeatedly, is “No!”

At the end of the activity, the negotiator asks the arch-players to say what they want. The arch-players then humbly request, and receive, some betel nuts for chewing.

Activity 4: "Sandalwood Ash."

A speaker mentions an action, and asks if a certain person or thing could do it.

A responder says, "No, that action is done by another person or thing."

This question-and-answer routine is repeated numerous times.

Activity 5: "What Kind Of?"

A speaker mentions [A].

A responder asks, "What kind of [A]?"

The speaker states, "[B] kind of [A]."

The responder asks, "What kind of [B]?"

The speaker states, "[C] kind of [B]."

The responder asks, "What kind of [C]?"

And so on.

Activity 6: "What Use?"

A speaker asks, "What is the use of [A]?"

A responder answers, "To do [B] with it."

The speaker asks, "What is the use of [B]?"

The responder answers, "To do [C] with it."

And so on.

Activity 7: "Please Give!"

A speaker asks, "Please give me your iiraaLi (lice-pick)."

A responder answers, "No, if I give it, my mother would hit me."

The speaker again asks, "Please give me your iiraaLi."

The responder answers, "I can't find it."

Finally, the responder hands over his iiraaLi to the speaker --

and a new speaker asks the person holding the iiraaLi to give it.

This question-and-answer routine is repeated by numerous different players.

Activity 11: "A Bunch."

The encircling player asks, "Where is the thief?"

The players sitting in the ring reply, "Let us sit in a group, / Sit and find out."

Activity 12: "Goat and Tiger."

The tiger character asks, "Have you seen the goat?"

The players who form the ring answer, "Yes."

"Where?," asks the tiger.

"Inside the house," reply the ring players.

"Can I come in?," asks the tiger.

"You can not come," reply the ring players.

"Is the metal lock closed?," asks the tiger, as he tries to pry apart two  
players' hands.

"It is closed," reply the ring players.

2) An Original Set of 11 *Question-and-Answer Routines* for Language Learning and Practice, that Utilizes Aspects of the 14 Songs/Chants/Dances/Games.

a) Introduction to an Original Set of 11 *Question-and-Answer Routines*.

The above examples demonstrate that the 14 collected songs/chants/dances/games have many instances of *repetition with variation, the simultaneous saying and physical enacting of words, and question-and-answer routines*.

These instances inspired me to compose the following set of 11 *question-and-answer routines* for language practice. These routines could be used for learning and practicing any language, spoken and written.

The first question -- "What is this?" -- is a very popular one around the world for language teaching-and-learning. Typically, speakers begin by pointing to parts of their own faces, as they ask this question (Bloom 1994; Oller 1983). An advantage of beginning language instruction with these objects is that a toddler's attention is often already directed towards a caregiver's face, especially the caregiver's eyes and mouth, especially when the caregiver is speaking to the toddler. The speaker may then proceed to pointing at, and asking the words for, other body parts off the speaker (if the toddler does not answer, or does not answer correctly, the caregiver may say the correct answer and encourage the



toddler to repeat this sound). Finally, the speaker may move on to objects beyond her body.

This question-and-answer routine perhaps does not involve *physical enacting of words*, but it does involve *physical illustration of words*.

To achieve *repetition with variation* in the following 11 *question-and-answer routines*, one can substitute subjects (names or pronouns), nouns, verb tenses, etc. In this way, these routines can be useful as substitution drills, such as those used in the Audio Lingual Method.

Follow-up questions are then applied to the first *question-and-answer routine*.

The follow-up questions are, “What kind of (x)?”, and “What is the use of (x)?”

These are the questions that Activities 5 and 6 are built with, respectively. (The order of the follow-up questions, and the answers, are supplied only as examples: to make this activity useful, one would need to play with it and add one’s own content.) The resulting activity can be thought of as a game. The rule of the game is: whatever answer is given, a new question can be asked about that answer. These follow-up questions could also be applied to some of the other 10 *question-and-answer routines*.

First the material (the 11 routines, and the first routine with follow-up questions) is given in English only. Then it is given using the four-line Tamil-to-English translation method that is utilized elsewhere in this dissertation.

b) The Original Set of 11 Question-and-Answer Routines (in English).

1

What is this?

This is an eye.

2

What is your name?

My name is Ravi.

3

What is your native place?

My native place is Madurai.

4

How are you?

I am fine.

5

Where are you going?

I am going to the house.

6

What are you doing? (At the present moment.)

I am speaking.

7

What are you doing? (As an occupation.)

I am studying.

8  
What are you studying?  
I am studying math.

9  
What are you eating?  
I am eating a banana.

10  
What are you thinking?  
I am thinking about schoolwork.

11  
What do you want?  
I want some flowers.

c) The First Question-and-Answer Routine, with Follow-up Questions (in English).

What is this?  
This is an eye.

What use is an eye?  
To see.

To see what?  
To see a nose.

What is this?  
This is a nose.

What use is a nose?  
To breathe.

To breathe what?  
To breathe air.

or,

What use is a nose?  
To smell.

To smell what?  
To smell a flower.

What is this?  
This is a tongue.

What use is a tongue?  
To speak.

To speak what?  
To tell a story.

What is this?  
This is a tooth.

What use is a tooth?  
To eat.

To eat what?  
To eat a fruit.

What fruit?  
A banana.

What is this?  
This is a hand.

What use is a hand?  
To throw.

To throw what?  
To throw a ball.

What kind of ball?  
A blue ball.

What is this?  
This is a head.

What is inside a head?  
A brain.

What use is a brain?  
To think.

d) The Original Set of 11 Question-and-Answer Routines (in Tamil and English).

1

இது என்ன?

i thu en na  
this what

What is this?

இது கண்ணு.

i thu kaN Nu  
this eye

This is an eye.

2

உங்க பெயர் என்ன?

wung ga pe yar en na  
your name what

What is your name?

என் பெயர் ரவி.

en pe yar ra vi  
my name Ravi

My name is Ravi.

3

உங்க ஊர் எது?

wung ga uur e thu  
your place which  
What is your native place?

என் ஊர் மதுரை.

en uur ma thur rai  
my place Madurai  
My native place is Madurai.

4

எப்படி இருக்கிறீங்க?

ep pa Di i Ruk hi Riing ga ?  
in what way are you  
How are you?

நல்லா இருக்கிறேன்

nal laa i Ruk hi Reen  
good I am  
I am well.

5

எங்கே போறீங்க?

eng gee<sup>1</sup> poo Riing ga  
where going  
Where are you going?

நான் வீட்டுக்கு போறேன்.

naan viiT Tuk ku poo Reen<sup>2</sup>  
I to the house am going  
I am going to the house.

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced, "eng-gay."

<sup>2</sup> "Reen" rhymes with "rain."

6

என்ன பண்ணீங்க?

en na paN DRing ga?  
 what are you doing

What are you doing? (At the present moment.)

நான் பேசுறேன்.

naan pee sa Reen<sup>1</sup>  
 I speak

I am speaking.

7

என்ன செய்றீங்க?

en na sey Riing ga?  
 what are you doing

What are you doing? (As an occupation.)

நான் படிக்கிறேன்.

naan pa Dik ki Reen  
 I study

I am studying.

8

என்ன படிக்கிறீங்க?

en na pa Dik ki Riing ga?  
 what studying

What are you studying?

நான் கணக்கு படிக்கிறேன்.

naan ka Nak ku pa Dik ki Reen  
 I math am studying

I am studying math.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced, "pay-sa."

9

என்ன சாப்ஊறீங்க?

en na saap Du Riing ga?  
 what eating

What are you eating?

நான் வாழைப்பழம் சாப்ஊறேன்.

naan vaa LRZHaip pa LRZHam saap Du Reen  
 I a banana am eating

I am eating a banana.

10

என்ன யோசிக்கிறீங்க?

en na yoo sik ki Riing ga  
 what thinking

What are you thinking?

நான் பாடம் யோசிக்கிறேன்.

naan paa Dam yoo sik ki Reen  
 I schoolwork am thinking

I am thinking about schoolwork.

11

என்ன வேணும்?

en na vee Num  
 what want

What do you want?

எனக்கு பூக்கள் வேணும்.

e nak ku puuk kaL vee Num  
 to me flowers want

I want flowers.



e) The First Question-and-Answer Routine, with Follow-up Questions (in Tamil and English).

இது என்ன?

i thu en na  
this what

What is this?

இது கண்ணு.

i thu kaN Nu  
this eye

This is an eye.

கண்ணு எதற்க்கு?

kaN Nu e thaRk ku  
eye what for

What use is an eye?

பார்க்க

paark ka  
to see

To see.

என்ன பார்க்க?

en na paark ka  
what to see

To see what?

மூக்கு பார்க்க.

muuk ku paark ka  
nose to see

To see a nose.

இது என்ன?

i thu en na  
this what  
What is this?

இது மூக்கு.

i thu muuk ku  
this nose  
This is a nose.

மூக்கு எதற்கு?

muuk ku e thaRk ku  
nose what use  
What use is a nose?

சுவாசிக்க.

su vaa sik ka  
to breathe  
To breathe.

என்ன சுவாசிக்க?

en na su vaa sik ka  
what to breathe  
To breathe what?

காற்று சுவாசிக்க

kaaT TRu su vaa sik ka  
air to breathe  
To breathe air.

Or

முக்கு எதற்கு?

muuk ku e thaRk ku  
nose what use

What use is a nose?

முகர

mu ha ra  
to smell  
To smell.

என்ன முகர?

en na mu ha ra  
what to smell

To smell what?

பூ முகர

puu mu ha ra  
flower to smell  
To smell a flower.

இது என்ன?

i thu en na  
this what

What is this?

இது நாக்கு

i thu naak ku  
this tongue

This is a tongue.

நாக்கு எதற்கு ?

naak ku e thaRk ku  
tongue what use  
What use is a tongue?

பேசு

pee sa  
to speak  
To speak.

என்ன பேசு ?

en na pee sa  
what to speak  
To speak what?

கதை பேசு.

ka thai pee sa  
story to speak  
To tell a story.

இது என்ன?

i thu en na  
this what  
What is this?

இது பல்லு.

i thu pal lu  
this tooth  
This is a tooth.

பல்லு எதற்கு ?

pal lu e thaRk ku  
tooth what use  
What use is a tooth?

சாப்பிட .

saap pi Da  
to eat  
To eat.

என்ன சாப்பிட ?

en na saap pi Da  
what to eat?  
To eat what?

பழம் சாப்பிட .

pa LRZHam saap pi Da  
fruit to eat  
To eat a fruit.

என்ன பழம் ?

en na pa LRZHam  
what fruit  
What fruit?

வாழைப்பழம் .

vaa LRZHaip pa LRZHam  
banana  
A banana.

இது என்ன?

i thu en na  
this what  
What is this?

இது கை

i thu kai  
this hand  
This is a hand.

கை எதற்கு?

kai e thaRk ku  
hand what use  
What use is a hand?

எறிய

e Ri ya  
to throw  
To throw.

என்ன எறிய?

en na e Ri ya  
what to throw  
To throw what?

பந்து எறிய.

pan thu e Ri ya  
a ball to throw  
To throw a ball.

என்ன பந்து?

en na pan̩ tu  
what ball  
What ball?

நீலம் பந்து.

n̩ii lam pan̩ tu  
blue ball  
A blue ball.

இது என்ன?

i tu en na  
this what  
What is this?

இது தலை

i tu tha lai  
this head  
This is a head.

தலை உள்ளே என்ன?

tha lai uL Lee<sup>1</sup> en na  
head inside what  
What is inside a head?

மூளை

muu Lai  
a brain  
A brain.

<sup>1</sup> Rhymes with "pool-lay."

முளை எதற்க்கு?

muu Lai e thaRk ku  
brain what use

What use is a brain?

யோசிக்க

yoo sik ka  
to think

To think.