Young Language Learners
Pre-K to 12th Grade

Startalk
Day 6
What do we know?

- Innate process
  - All children without cognitive impairment will learn a first language if they are exposed to it
  - They learn languages by exposure, interaction, and experimentation
  - Ability to learn languages is hard-wired in the human brain
  - If a child has consistent contact with more than one language from a very young age, that child will most likely develop some degree of competency in that second language
School-based Language Programs

- Bilingual schools and classes
- Foreign Language Classes
- Afterschool Programs
What does it mean to be bilingual?

- Bilingual can mean the ability to listen in two languages but speak in only one
- Bilingual can mean speaking two languages, but not being literate in them
- Bilingual can mean being fully capable in two languages
- Bilingual can mean using two different languages for very specific reasons
Definitions of Bilingualism

Simultaneous Bilingualism
When a child learns two different languages at the same time

• Sequential or Successive Bilingualism—when a child has one language established before learning a second language
Simultaneous Bilingualism

- Affected by Four Key factors
  - Caretakers’ ability in one or more languages
  - Caretakers’ actual use of language with the child
  - The language(s) that family members speak with a child
  - Language the child uses in the community
Simultaneous Bilingualism/ Receptive Bilingualism

- Children have had high exposure to L2 throughout their lives but have not had cause/ opportunity to produce it. Children understand the L2, but opt to speak in English.
- Often the case of heritage learners
Rapid Successive Bilingualism

- Second language is added after the first is well established
- Kids and adults can achieve high levels of proficiency, but pronunciation seems to suffer if the language is acquired after adolescence
- Critical Age for Language learning remains elusive
Slow Successive Bilingualism

- Children have little exposure to L2, and have few opportunities to use it.
Bilingualism and Language Delay

Learning two or more languages has NOT been found to be the cause of

- stuttering
- late speaking

- need of speech therapy in any of the languages

Ni hao.
What works to help language learners in school?

Creating an environment where:

~ things take place in a routine and predictable way
~ community members are happy and engaged
~ linguistic risk-taking is encouraged
~ communication is the focus
~ wait time is granted
Some age related issues to Language Learning

- Literacy Skills
- Pronunciation/Accent
- Risk-Taking and Self-Consciousness
- Motivation
Language Learning for Older Children

• Overcoming monolingual expectations
• Not just an academic exercise but a way to communicate with a different culture
• Ways to keep the language real:
  • Field trips
  • Real movies (not explicitly for language learning)
  • Youtube clips/songs
  • E-pals or penpals
Critical Points

- For language acquisition to take place, children must have prolonged, consistent exposure.
- Students’ tolerance for ambiguity is an important language learning behavior.
- Positive classroom environment can facilitate language acquisition.
Classroom Management

- Frustration and discouragement can lead to classroom disruption
- Clear classroom expectations should be made explicit
- Frequent class meetings to solidify/modify these expectations
- Positive Reinforcement for positive behavior
- Diffuse competition
- Use of the L1?
References


