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Factors that Affect Second Language Acquisition in Early Childhood

Webinar 2 of the 4-part series.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?
Culturally Responsive Teaching & Learning in Early Childhood Education

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Supporting Dual Language Learners Certificate



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Objectives

- Explore** Explore the various factors that influence second language acquisition in early childhood.
- Examine** Examine the various factors that influence second language acquisition to assist young children in language acquisition better.
- Develop** Develop an understanding of the importance of utilizing parentese to help infants learn a language.

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Language Learning	Language Acquisition
Learning	Acquisition
Learning involves acquiring a language through formal instruction and conscious comprehension	Acquisition is the non-conscious assimilation of a language mainly through first-hand experience
Learning a language involves more explanation of grammar rules and less natural communication	Acquisition of a language demands natural and meaningful communication in the language
A relatively deliberately done conscious process	A subconscious or non-conscious process

Adapted from: What is the Difference Between Learning and Acquisition? accessed online: <https://jpolla.com/what-is-the-difference-between-learning-and-acquisition/>

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Benefits to Children

Monolinguals	Dual Language Learners
	
Are learning aspects of a new language and developing an awareness about other cultures.	Are acquiring the English language through meaningful instruction and interaction.

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Factors That Affect Second Language Acquisition




- Personality
- Aptitude
- Intelligence
- Age
- Motivation
- Cognitive & Learning Styles
- Environment
- Native Language Characteristics

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1 Personality

The combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character.

Research suggests that children who are social and outgoing are more successful second language learners.



Tend to be risk takers

Naturally more talkative

Use language in a variety of situations and/or people


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1 Personality + Anxiety

Anxiety may impede language-learning.

Shy personality

Language learners may feel anxious about losing their sense of self due to differences between their culture and the culture of the target language, and fear of losing self-identity.



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2 Aptitude

The potential a person has for learning languages.

The natural ability to acquire knowledge or skills.

An intrinsic trait

Is different for every child!

A person's ability to manage sounds, grammatical structures, to infer rules of language, and a person's memory.



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3 Intelligence

The ability to understand principles, facts, or meanings, and to apply their knowledge.

It is the ability to learn and comprehend.

It determines how well and quickly an individual understands a learning task or other aspects of language.

The more intelligent a person, the more observant and the more able he/she is to assign and understand meaning.



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4 Age

There is an ideal window for learning a second language between the ages of 2-4.

If a child is exposed to a second language between these ages, or even before the age of 8, they are more likely to develop language similar to the language of native speakers.

Simultaneous language learners build skills in two languages.

Sequential language learners are building skills in a second language while developing their skills in their first language.



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Motivation 5

The desire to or willingness to do something.

Examples of motivation for dual language learners:

To get needs met.

To assimilate.

Familial pressure for future job success.



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Cognitive & Learning Styles 6

A child's learning style indicates the preferred way he/she approaches new information.

Everyone learns and processes information differently and in their own way.

Young children do this subconsciously.

They want to communicate, they are willing to make mistakes, they analyze and look for patterns, they monitor their speech as well as the speech of others and they pay attention to meaning.

Visual Auditory Read/Write Kinesthetic



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Cognitive & Learning Styles 6

Predominant Learning Styles ■ VARK Model of Learning

Visual

- Picture books
- Flash Cards
- Puzzles
- Craft materials
- Written Instructions



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Cognitive & Learning Styles 6

Predominant Learning Styles ■ VARK Model of Learning

Auditory

- Read aloud
- Sing vocabulary words, memorize songs or make rhymes to remember grammar rules
- Pre-recorded stories
- Music
- Verbal Instructions




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Cognitive & Learning Styles 6

Predominant Learning Styles ■ VARK Model of Learning

Read/Write

- Read/Write
- Read-alouds that include explanations of targeted vocabulary can support word learning
- Make lists (a, b, c, d, and 1, 2, 3, 4) and to order things into categories
- Categorize and put things in order.
- Re-write words



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Cognitive & Learning Styles 6

Predominant Learning Styles ■ VARK Model of Learning

Kinesthetic

- Letter tiles
- Trace letters or words in the sand
- Use playdough or pipe cleaners to make letters
- Add movement to songs
- Hands-on activities



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Community 7

Environment

Children need to feel safe, accepted, and valued.

Community partnerships are beneficial: translators, donors for events, volunteers.

The attitudes of **Community**, **Family**, and **Classroom**, have a profound effect on dual language learners.



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Environment 7

Family

- Consistent language spoken in the home
- Attitudes of family or caregivers about 1st or 2nd language
- Involvement in school activities
- Education level
- Amount of parental involvement in the home

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Environment 7

Classroom

- Children need to feel safe, accepted and valued.
- Teacher training to work with dual language learners.
- Diverse materials in the classroom.
- Support of all learning styles.

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Native Language Characteristics 8

Second-language learners rely on knowledge of their first language to make hypotheses about how the second language works.

For older learners, it is useful for them to develop an awareness of their own language ("metalinguistic awareness") and its relationship to English.

This is why supporting a child's first language is so important. Fluency and literacy in the native language can lead to a transfer of skills to the second language.

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Native Language Characteristics 8

It is relative to your native language. The difficulty of learning a language is directly correlated to its similarity to your first language, and the logical, semantic, and syntactic pathways you have already established.

Learning languages from within the same language family is often considered easier.

- cognates (words with a shared origin that often sound or look the same)
- grammar and conjugation rules
- tonality vs NON-tonality
- gendering
- formality levels

Are Some Languages Harder to Learn than Other Languages?

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Native Language Characteristics 8

Parental Involvement

- Important for both mothers and fathers!
- Parentese is critical for language development.
- A type of speech where an adult talks to a child in an engaged and repetitive way.
- Babies who hear parentese in their homes have bigger vocabularies at the age of two.
- Vocabulary in each language is correlated to the amount of parentese they hear in each language spoken to them.
- There is a correlation between children with strong vocabularies and learning to read.


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What Can Educators Do?

- Encourage risk-taking in language.
- Support every culture and language represented in the classroom.
- Set examples and model language.
- Introduce language early.
- Make learning fun in a stress-free environment! Games, stories, songs.
- Try to understand each child's cognitive style. Provide adequate time, rich materials and resources, and rigorous and appropriate expectations to support children's learning.
- Be supportive of every family in your classroom!

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Conclusion



Educators must understand that there are many factors that affect a child's second language acquisition.

Each child comes with his/her own intrinsic traits, family, and experience that influence the process of language learning.

It is up to the educator to work to get to know the child and determine the best strategies to assist the child to be successful in dual language learning.

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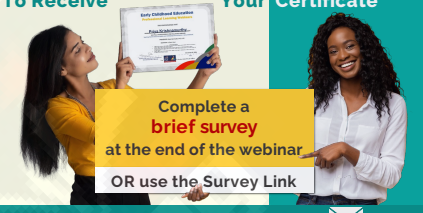
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