

YOUNG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THEIR OPTIMAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTH KOREAN SETTING



Dr. George E. K. Whitehead



TODAY'S AIMS

- ❑ Examine your current thoughts on approaching YELLs (10 years old or younger)
- ❑ Discuss answers to key questions regarding YELLs
- ❑ Apply new understanding through advice-giving situational role-play



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Who learns English faster, children or adults?
2. Who generally becomes more fluent in English as their L2, those who start earlier (before age 10) or those who start later (after age 10)?
3. At what age should a child start learning English as their L2?
4. Is it beneficial for my child to learn English abroad at an early age and then come back to Korea after a few years?
5. Should we explicitly teach YELLS English grammar rules?
6. Does allowing children to speak Korean (L1) in class hinder their development?
7. Does sending YELLS to an English 학원 (private academy) benefit their language acquisition?
8. How often should YELLS be formally tested?
9. Is playing games with YELLS all the time detrimental to their language learning?
10. How can parents foster Yells' English language development at home?

THINK ABOUT IT...

What are the differences between the way that adults learn and the way that children learn English?



KEY DIFFERENCE

- Children are much better able to absorb what is around them without paying specific attention.
- Adults are able to focus their attention more.



“...if we compare our ability as adults to that of the child, it would require us sixty years of hard work to achieve what a child has achieved in these first three years.”

- *Maria Montessori, “The Absorbent Mind”*

“From birth to (approximately) age six, your child’s brain works in a *very different way* than an adult’s does. At this age, her mind is like a sponge, soaking up huge amounts of information from her environment. She is absorbing everything around her, effortlessly, continuously, and indiscriminately. This is what Maria Montessori referred to as “the absorbent mind.”



WHO IS BETTER AT LEARNING A LANGUAGE?

Adults	YELLs
Can learn things faster due to focused studying and cognitive abilities.	Can learn things through absorption (e.g., pronunciation) but sometimes take longer to develop
Have a well developed L1 therefore have stronger L1 influence on L2 learning	Can develop both languages at the same time and are still learning their L1
Have more obligations and less time to spend on language learning	Have more time to develop their language
Self-directed	Need someone to manage their learning environment
Have many inhibitions	Have some inhibitions



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

At what age do you think children should start learning English in Korea?

Is younger better? Why or Why not?



IS YOUNGER BETTER?

- Learners are never too young to be introduced to and surrounded by English
 - Books/ Audiobooks
 - T.V.
 - Music
 - Games
 - English Toys
- Learners can be too young to study it



LEARNING/ STUDYING



- It depends how children are being taught, and how often.
- Bilingual environment vs non- bilingual environment.

DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

x Bilingual environment

x Non-bilingual environment



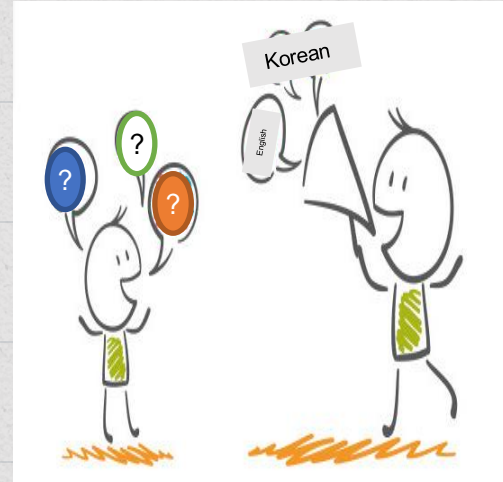
BILINGUAL ENVIRONMENT

- Parents speak different languages to the child
- Parents can both speak 2 languages but one language is used in the house and the other is used outside
- Parents do not speak an L2 but they live in a place which the child is exposed to the L2 and interacts in the L2

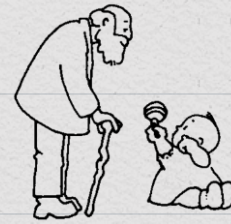


NON-BILINGUAL ENVIRONMENT

- Children do not get constant interactive exposure to the L2 (at least 5 hours a week)
- Parents code-switch without any rules or reason
- There is one dominant language that the child uses and is exposed to



BILINGUAL ENVIRONMENT

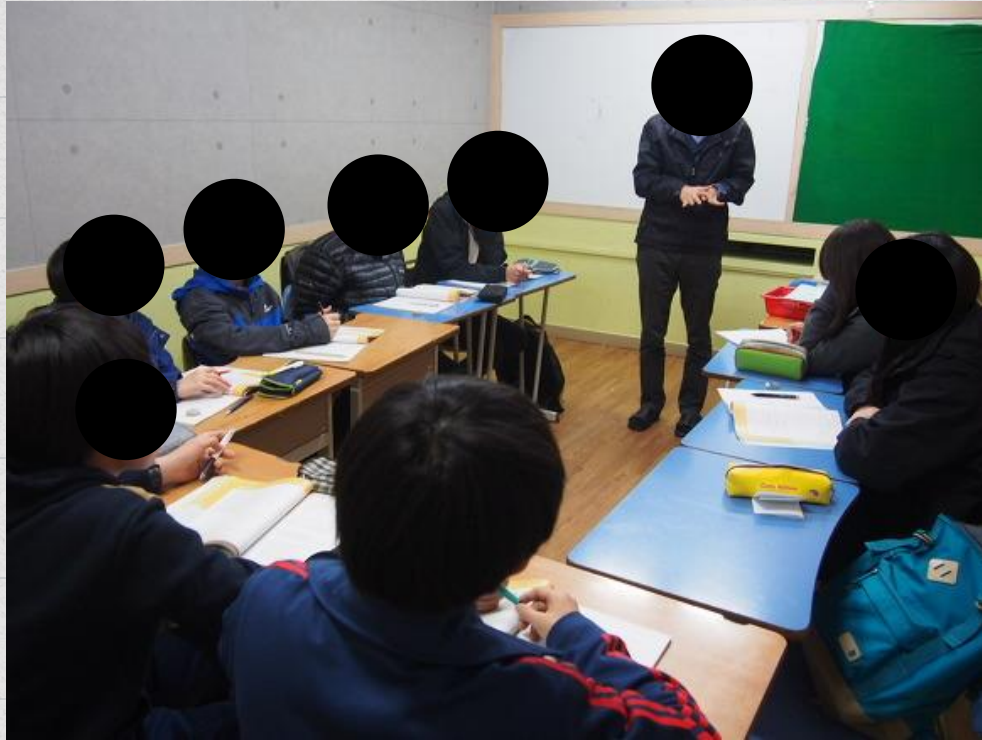


- Specific rules/ guidelines must be followed to create a true bilingual setting
 - *Who* speaks which languages (one parent – one language)
 - *When* specific languages are spoken (minority language at home)
 - *Which languages* the child is expected to use
- <http://bilingualkidsrock.com/how-to-raise-a-bilingual/>
- If a true bilingual setting is not provided, both languages can suffer.

NON-BILINGUAL ENVIRONMENT

- Children should not be forced to study English at a young age but rather be surrounded by it and enjoy it. (Pull Don't Push!)
- Children should first be able to produce the language in Korean before focused studying of English.
- They should start when they show interest in starting.
- If children are not getting enough input then their may be little benefit of starting early. Starting in middle school, with the right environment can produce the same results! (Ellis, 2011; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Nunan, 2013)
- Minimum of 3 hours a week, spaced out evenly (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

ARE 학원'S BENEFICIAL TO YELLS?



WHAT IF I TOLD YOU



IT DEPENDS

학원CHECKLIST



학원 CHECKLIST

- How often?
- Teachers' qualifications
 - English education specific
 - Experience teaching
 - Experience with young learners
- Director's background
 - Business vs Education
- Environment
 - Age appropriate
 - Welcoming and supportive
 - Student centered
 - U-shape vs Grouping vs Rows

- Education style
 - Interactive
 - Enjoyable
 - Activity focused
 - Student-centered
- Materials
 - Interesting
 - Age appropriate
 - Interactive

SITUATIONAL APPLICATION

- X Your friend is having a baby (YAY!~) They want to know your advice on the best way for them to foster a bilingual child. What would you tell them?
- X Your friend is considering moving to a native speaking country for a year or two with their 6-year-old child to foster their English development. What advice would you give them?

SITUATIONAL APPLICATION

- X Your friend is considering sending their child to an English 학원. What advice would you give them?
- X Your friend is bragging to you about their 9-year-old child's English abilities telling you that their child knows so many vocabulary words. That's because they are sending their child to an intensive English school where they memorize 50 words a day. The child always complains that they hate English, but the parents don't care. They are satisfied with his test scores.

WHAT DO YOU THINK NOW?

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KEY POINTS

- ❖ What should the goals of a YELL teacher be?

Things to keep in mind when planning children's English classes!

1. Surround children with English input that **THEY** are interested in. They will absorb it!
2. What is taught is not always learned and what is learned is not always taught.
3. It is crucial that YELLs have positive feelings towards learning English. They should enjoy what they are doing in class.
4. Children need to feel successful to gain confidence.
5. Too much focus on accuracy de-motivates learners. Try not to over correct. Only correct mistakes they leads to communicative breakdown or misunderstanding.
6. Classroom should facilitate and support pair and group work. (collaboration)
7. Peer scaffolding through L1 use can be a great tool in multi-level classrooms.



Thank you

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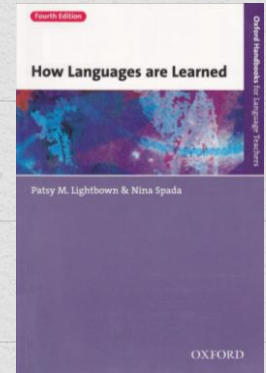


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SUGGESTED READING

x Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2013). *How Languages are Learned 4th edition-Oxford Handbooks for Language Teachers*. Oxford University Press.

x Chapter 7 – pg. 204-205 – Section 5



5 The earlier a second language is introduced in school programmes, the greater the likelihood of success in learning

The decision about when to introduce second or foreign language instruction must depend on the objectives of the language programme in the particular social context of the school. When the objective is native-like performance in the second language, then it may be desirable to begin exposure to the language as early as possible, as long as learners have extensive exposure to and opportunities to use the second language in a variety of contexts. The research evidence is fairly strong that those who begin second language learning at an early age are most likely to eventually be indistinguishable from native speakers.

However, even in cases where native-like proficiency is targeted, it is important to recognize certain disadvantages of an early start for second language learning. When an early start means that children have little opportunity to continue to develop their first language, the resulting subtractive bilingualism may have lasting negative consequences.

For children from minority-language backgrounds, programmes promoting the development of the first language both at home and at school may be more important for long-term success in the second language than an early start in the second language itself. Research shows that a good foundation in the child's first language, including the development of literacy, is a sound base to build on. Children who can begin their schooling in a language they already know will have more self-confidence, will be able to learn more effectively in the early school years, and will not lose valuable time in a period of limbo during which they struggle just to understand what is happening in the classroom.

For many children, there is no opportunity to have their early schooling in their first language. They are members of small minority groups where it is not practical for schools to offer them an educational programme in their

first language, or they live in jurisdictions where legislation has mandated a single language of education for all children, regardless of their background. For these children, it is crucial to have sensitive educators who respect the children's difficulty, who encourage parents to maintain the home language, and who understand that second language learning takes time and effort.

For foreign language instruction or for second language instruction where the level of proficiency that is targeted is not native-like performance by all students, the situation is quite different. When the goal of the educational programme is basic communicative skill for all students, and where there is a strong commitment to maintaining and developing the child's first language, it can be more efficient to begin second language teaching later. Older children (for example, 10-year-olds) are able to catch up quickly with those who began earlier (for example, at 6–7 years old) in programmes offering only a few hours a week of instruction. This is especially true if the foreign language course includes a period of more intensive exposure to the new language.

All school programmes should be based on realistic estimates of how long it takes to learn a second language. One or two hours a week—even for seven or eight years—will not produce advanced second language speakers. This 'drip-feed' approach often leads to frustration, as learners feel that they have been studying 'for years' without making much progress. Sadly, they are often right about this.

OTHER IMPORTANT QUOTES



NATIVE LANGUAGE AND L1 CULTURAL IDENTITY (LINGUISTICO-CULTURAL) IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE DISCUSSION OF CPH, SINCE IT WAS FOUND IN THE STUDY THAT PEOPLE WHO IMMIGRATE AFTER 10 YEARS OF AGE OFTEN TEND TO BE DOMINATED BY THEIR OWN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE; HOWEVER, THE OPPOSITE RESULT WAS FOUND IN THE CASE OF IMMIGRANTS WHO ARE UNDER-10 YEARS OLD, THEY OFTEN SWITCH THEIR LINGUISTICO-CULTURAL IDENTITY AND TRANSFORM THEIR DOMINANT LANGUAGE TO THE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE OF THE HOST COUNTRY

(Jia & Aaronson, 2003).

COOK (2002) ARGUES THAT L2 USERS SHOULD BE EVALUATED IN THEIR OWN RIGHTS AND STANDARDS, RATHER THAN AN UNEQUAL COMPARISON WITH NATIVE SPEAKERS. ACCORDING TO HIM, "ULTIMATE ATTAINMENT" IS A MONOLINGUAL STANDARD RATHER THAN AN L2 STANDARD

THE LITERATURE IS MOSTLY INCLINED TO THE NOTION THAT LATE LEARNERS ALSO CAN BE SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS.

HOWEVER, IN A HYPOTHETICAL STATE, WE MAY ARGUE THAT IN TERMS OF ACQUIRING NATIVE-LIKE PRONUNCIATION, AN EARLY START MAY GIVE SOME ADVANTAGES, NEVERTHELESS, IN TERMS OF OTHER ASPECTS OF ACQUISITION, ANY POSITIVE CORRELATION OF AGE WAS NOT FOUND. IF THE BELIEF HOLDS TRUE, THE HEGEMONY IN THE PLANNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICY IN A SECOND OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONTEXT SUGGESTS THAT EARLY INTRODUCTION OF A SECOND LANGUAGE ACCESS NEEDS TO BE RE-EVALUATED ENTIRELY. THUS IN CONSEQUENCE, ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGY, CURRICULUM, MATERIAL, TEACHERS' BELIEFS, AND PRACTICE WILL FACE RADICAL CHANGES.