



UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECT

The significance of learning a second language for children

at Salahaddin University College of Education-
English Department

Prepared by:

Muzhda Anwar Shekha

Darya Lawko Oday

Supervised by:

Lecturer: Haitham Hussein Bapeer

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Certification

I certify that this study was prepared by students (Muzhda Anwar Shekha & Darya Lawko Oday) under my supervision at the College of Education/ Salahaddin University- Erbil in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor in the English Language.

Signature

Lecturer: Haitham Hussein Bapeer

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Abstract

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Section One

1.1. Background information on bilingualism and second language acquisition

This study under the title (The significance of learning a second language for children) explores the importance of learning a second language in childhood. Children can grasp a second language more quickly and easily than adults in their native language. Language acquisition begins at birth when babies listen to their parents' voices and receive the language gradually. Children feel they are in progress. They require ongoing motivation in addition to praise for outstanding work since any accomplishment inspires them. Parents are in a prime position to motivate children to learn a second language. For children, the process of learning a second language differs from the process of learning their first or native language.

Purpose of the study

The objective of this research is to find out the obstacles that children encounter during learning a second language. Children need faces and voices to listen to and focus on. In order to encourage children to treat a second language as a communication tool not only a subject Children's self-esteem and confidence should rise, their enthusiasm and cognitive abilities grow, and they have a solid foundation for learning a second language.

Importance of learning a second language for children

The ability to speak two languages allows children to be bilingual. Learning a second language improves memory, creativity, and attention span. For kids, learning a second language opens up a whole new world of culture and diversity.

They gain an appreciation for other cultures and a better understanding of how others communicate and think.

Children will be more able to interact with people from all walks of life if they learn a second language. This will also make it simpler for them to acquire critical social skills like empathy, compassion, and understanding.

Section Two: Literature Review

Children can pick up any language just as easily as walking. While adults must learn certain grammar rules and memorize them using the established first language system, young children learn naturally. They absorb the sounds, structures, intonation patterns, and rules of a foreign language as intuitively as they absorb their native language. The young brain is inherently flexible and equipped with an exceptional ability to naturally acquire language (Ghasemi, 2011).

Most scholars today hold this view and believe that language can only be learned as a mother tongue if children are exposed to it in early childhood. These early stages are believed to succeed in language learning, language production, and language comprehension. Children never enter the classroom empty-handed. They bring with them established skills or characteristics, which will help them learn another language. They can easily understand language through gestures and facial expressions. All of these features help them understand unfamiliar words and phrases. This first acquaintance will be very useful in later life. It remains a fundamental part of communication.

2.1 Cognitive Benefits of Learning a Second Language

Bilingualism is the ability to use two languages simultaneously, including both understanding and speaking. This is not necessarily at the same fluency level but in either language. Young bilingual children, for example, may use only their first language at home and English in an early childhood setting or school. Some children may speak in their native language with certain adults in the family while conversing in English with other adults and siblings. Some children may feel at

ease speaking both languages in the same situation and can easily switch from one to the other (Stephen D.2002).

Children under six are still developing their first language. Yet, they have largely completed the development of spoken language by three years old. As many kids of this age are already proficient in their native tongue, studying a second language has a strong foundation. Children understand language and how it functions at this point. They have experience speaking to people and will apply these abilities to studying their second language.

The concept of "shared attention" is critical to communication. Adults and young children who interact socially in a two-way process exhibit joint attention. Talking, playing word games, making noises, and responding to children's attempts to interact with adults are all ways early childhood professionals can get kids to engage in two-way communication. Children are highly open to conversation, snuggling, playing, and singing. The exposure of children to as many positive language experiences as possible must be ensured by early childhood workers (Clarke 2000).

The stages of a child's development in a second language are comparable to those in their first language for those under Adult. Kids begin by using nonverbal cues, making sounds, learning and using single words, and experimenting with language. As they elaborate and further the message, these simple words have meaning. Single words are merged to form brief phrases. Children learn a language at birth (babies pay attention to their parents' voices rather than random noise or even other languages) and don't grasp its subtleties until age 10. We never stop learning our language. (David Singleton, 2010)

The book " Teaching English in the Primary Classroom " (Harley, 1997) mentions that every child's willingness to learn a language is listed in these ways

They learn more indirectly.

§ They are very skilled at creative language use.

§ They enjoy and found the lesson humorous.

§ They have excellent imaginations.

§ They speak freely.

So that children learn a second language with enthusiasm and desire.

2.2. Learning Stages

First stage: Learning Sounds

Children can make and recognize every sound in every language when they are born. There are around 150 sounds in different languages. A language's phonemes are its sounds. For example, there are 44 in English. Some languages employ fewer speakers, and some employ more. Children discover which phonemes are part of the language they are learning and which are not at this stage. Children learning to read need "phonemic awareness," which is the capacity to detect and make certain sounds.

Second Stage: Learning Words

Children need to learn how sounds in a language fit together to create meaning. For instance, they discover that the sounds m, ah, m, and we stand for mommy, the

"being" who feeds and cuddles them. Every word human beings utter is just a stream of sounds, so that is a significant step. A child needs to be able to distinguish between the ends of one word and the beginnings of other words to understand those sounds. Word boundaries are what they are called. However, what kids learn isn't words. What kids learn are morphemes, which could or might not be words. That's not as confusing as it seems. A morpheme is merely a sound or sounds with semantic significance, such as the word mommy. However, the sound denotes "more than one," and children at this stage can recognize that when it is added to other words, it also denotes the same thing.

Stage Three – Learning Sentences

Children gain sentence-building skills during this period. This implies that they can correctly assemble words. Chomsky, for example, mentions how children find out that adults don't say "I want a cookie" or "I want a chocolate cookie" in English, but rather, "I want a cookie." Children also learn the distinction between meaning and grammatical correctness. Noam Chomsky used the phrase "Colorless green concepts slumber fiercely" to illustrate this distinction. Children will identify that the sentence is grammatically correct but illogical. They understand that green is a color, it cannot be colorless. (Harrison B, 2005).

2.3 Cognitive advantages

The most suitable period for language learning is early childhood. Exposure to multiple languages is a great way to exercise and strengthen the brain, according to studies on bilingualism's effects on children. Bilingual is a phrase that describes a situation where an individual speaks two languages. It can also involve a group of speakers who speak two languages or interactions between speakers of different languages. Halliwell, 1992, "Intonation, gestures, facial expressions, actions, and circumstances all help to tell what unknown words and probably phrases mean.

They comprehend the language by deciphering the message in this manner. It is hardwired to automatically pick up a language as the brain develops. Infants can learn to speak a foreign language fluently just like they can walk. However, adults learn through an established first language system, which involves studying clear grammar rules.

Children who master two or more languages during their primary school years have a deeper understanding of language. They are better at processing language after more practice, especially when they become literate in both. They can compare and contrast how their two languages categorize reality. A lot of recent studies have shown that children who process information in two different languages tend to think more creatively. Bilingualism reminds us of the value and benefits of early language acquisition.

According to Brown (1994: 56–58), the acquisition of native-like pronunciation may depend more on the growth of the learner's speech muscles. Children have an advantage over adult learners because of their muscles' adaptability. Speaking requires hundreds of muscles. This is like how most talented athletes begin training at a young age. Complicated English sounds like "r" and "l" are often learned around five, when plasticity is still present in the brain. Children are said to have a very high imagination capacity, which allows them to comprehend what is being said before comprehending the individual words (Hyams, 2003).

The fruitful points toward learning a second language can be summarized as follows:

- Improves and enriches mental growth.
- Gives students the ability to be creative.

- Helps children comprehend their native tongue.
 - Allows a child to interact with people they might not otherwise meet.
 - Helps a child understand and respect people from other cultures by opening the door to other cultures.
 - Increases job opportunities in many careers where knowing another language
- “Any normal child, born anywhere in the world, of any racial, geographical, social, or economic heritage, is capable of learning any language to which he or she is exposed” (Hyams, 2003, p. 27).

Liddicoat continues by listing the crucial educational benefits of learning languages, all of which are essential for students whose participation in an increasingly interconnected world will be required: knowledge of the language and the capacity to use it in communication with others understanding of the culture of another group understanding of one's language and culture through comparison with another language and culture knowing how to communicate.

Language is at the heart of human relationships. In relationships with others, humans use language to identify themselves. By their manners, they form society's system and structure. Language is therefore the construction of identity. By learning a language, the child begins to understand the social environment and cultural values, thus making him aware of his company's identity. Quintana and Wright state, “Concerning the development of cultural identity, children at this stage typically move from a conceptual understanding of race and gender from a physical to a social perspective. This is done with first notions of the socio-political context from which they are originating. “culture is derived” (Tomas, 2006, p.2)

2.4 Strategies of learning Children second language

The first few years of life are crucial for children to develop new attachments and basic trust. challenging in an unfamiliar setting. trust in the fundamental sense. comes from delivering responsive care in safe, dependable environments. infants and young children have to have chances to form wholesome bonds. alongside their caregiver. child, the more important it is to keep things similar between child care and the home. They who possess. have significant life changes and need to keep their home and child care as harmonious as possible practices. Early baby experiences during the first years and young children must strengthen their sense of self. esteem.

Children need to trust their caregivers. they cherish and revere their family, especially their language and culture. how children are comforted, fed, carried, and spoken to nurtured. These early encounters have an impact on. diverse family values and cultural customs, professionals in early childhood working with infants. children should respect their families and incorporate customary routines and cultural practices. in order to eat and sleep (Blatchford, 2000).

Parents from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds face many challenges, including no Access someone who speaks their native language and can explain the center's program. Some people find it difficult to understand the limitations of services for children, including relationships with children, rules, school hours. Program operation and type. some parents Fear of maintaining child support what they are used to. Early childhood education professionals who work with young children must be responsible and responsive to children and parents relationship of trust can be developed.

Children need the freedom to explore challenges, to hear their own language, and to begin listening to and using English. Early childhood also need to create a positive environment Learn about family experiences, values and They must be given access Interaction between preschool professionals with children and a personal and quiet space small group. Activities should reflect children's cultural and linguistic experiences Activities to help children learn second language is no different which are provided by children like their first language. It is important to indicate a range some interactions, especially those that occur in a small group. These regularly interactions produce the best learning outcomes and language practice.

Strategies include:

- read and tell stories everyday
- introduce new words
- play word games
- tie words to actions and objects
- engage in conversations
- share simple rhymes and games
- learn rhymes and songs in languages
- expand and model conversations.

Section Three: Conclusions and Recommendations

Learning a foreign language has many benefits. Communicating and connecting with people from different cultures and countries enriches individual lives and opens up new opportunities. Without a doubt, the human race is experiencing rapid change. One of the key factors today is learning a foreign language. People who speak multiple languages well are in high demand in businesses and professions. Employers value intercultural competence in their workforce.

Consequently, it is possible to claim that a language is a tool for changing a culture. Language can be used to learn one's own culture and explore another one. Language is used to engage with various cultural norms and ways of life. This allows people to communicate with those far away and in various parts of the world, making life colorful and richer.

Exposure to a different culture through that culture will open up new spheres of concepts, traditions, and practices. Children may benefit from following global events with understanding. This will provide new perspectives that can help us become more aware and civically engaged citizens of both our nation and the world.

Understanding other cultures will open up many opportunities for collaboration, exchange, and mutual gain. Although it is difficult for us to comprehend how many languages can preserve a people's history and traditions, it can also reveal how different ethnic and cultural values can be. As a result, such insider information can promote cultural understanding.

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