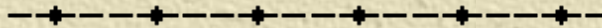


*Second Language
Acquisition: What every
teacher needs to know*

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Some facts...

- ✦ Over the past 15 years, the whole Latino population in NC has grown about 600%. Other populations have grown about 11%

Some facts...

- ✦ Nationally, ELL growth has been around 57% since 1995-1996. In NC, that growth rate has been 372%
- ✦ In the Charlotte metro area, ELL growth has been around 1100% over that time period

Some facts...


- ✦ 13% of children in NC live in immigrant households
- ✦ 64% of NC children living in immigrant households have resident parents who have difficulty understanding English

Some facts...


- ✦ 19% of all children in NC live below the poverty level; 26% of the children of immigrants in NC live below the poverty level (national=22%)
- ✦ The median income for an NC family is \$49,600. For an immigrant family, the median income is \$37,500

Some estimates..


- ✦ It is estimated that there are 1.8 million undocumented children in the US
- ✦ 3.1 million children who are US citizens by birth have at least one parent who is undocumented.




Maria, a fourth grader in your class, speaks English well but still struggles in class. She reads out loud in class but then can't tell you what the story is about.



Kyet, a seventh grader who has been here for 5 years, continues to withdraw from class. When you call home or send notes in Vietnamese, you rarely get a response. When you do get a response, it's usually to say that the parents don't know how to help you.



Alejandro is not doing well in class, but you don't know what to do. After all, what can you expect from a child who's had such disadvantages in his life?



Lupe has been in the United States all her life. She was born in Texas, and then her family moved here when she was five, where she started school. She gets pulled out for ESL services for a few hours a week, but you really can't understand why. How can a child who was born here and speaks English well still be doing so poorly in school?

What exactly is Second Language Acquisition?

- ✦ People who study SLA are fascinated by three about language
 - Often, people who are multilingual, especially from childhood, have cognitive skills that surpass monolingual children
 - Second language learners almost always have an understanding of language that goes beyond what they were taught
 - There's a great variety in the levels of proficiency that language learners will achieve, but we don't know why this variability exists

*People who teach English
language learners are
fascinated and baffled by
the variety in which
students learn English*



Questions we all ask...

- ✦ Why do some students pick up English so quickly while others struggle for years?
- ✦ Is there a connection between IQ and the ability to learn another language?
- ✦ Do younger children have a ‘gift’ for learning another language?
- ✦ Is it easier for children from certain language groups to learn English?
- ✦ Is there a connection between culture and language?

Basic Theories of SLA

✦ Behaviorism

- Learn by doing; practice, practice, practice

✦ Innatism

- Learn because your brain tells you to

✦ Socioculturalism

- Learn through interaction with others

What do we believe now?

- ✦ Most language researchers/theorists believe that second languages are learned through meaningful interaction with others who speak/read that language and can be sympathetic partners in language learning.
- ✦ Although there is an element of memorization in the early stages, high levels of proficiency cannot be attained through memorization-type activities

What learner characteristics make it easier?

✦ Age?

✦ Intelligence?

✦ Affective factors (personality, motivation, anxiety)?

✦ Native language?

✦ Native culture?

✦ Level of education?

What do we mean by 'proficiency'?

Communicative Competence

- ✦ Grammatical competence
- ✦ Sociolinguistic competence
- ✦ Discourse competence
- ✦ Strategic competence

Social & Academic English

✦ Social English

- Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) can be acquired in 1-2 years
- Concrete English required to participate in most social situations

✦ Academic English

- Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) takes from 5-9 years to acquire
- Abstract language required to participate in academic coursework

Threshold hypothesis

- ✦ According to this theory, ELLs can transfer skills from one language to another (i.e. reading skills)
- ✦ However, before an ELL can transfer those skills, s/he must have acquired it to a certain level (threshold) of proficiency

Interlanguage

✦ Interlanguage is a student's current understanding of English



No fluency

Full fluency

Order of acquisition

✦ There does seem to be a specific order in which English is learned by non-native English speakers

✦ Examples

1. -ing (He is talking.)
2. plural -s (cat, cats)
3. irregular past (went)
4. Regular past (talked)
5. third person singular -s (He talks to me.)
6. possessive -s (John's car is in the garage.)

How important is interaction?

- ✦ Critical. Some say that you cannot learn a second language without significant interaction with others using that language
- ✦ Omega Child: in order to learn English, children must interact with other English-speaking children, but the English native speakers often don't want to interact with ELLs because of the language barrier