

At the beginning of this course, I wondered whether learning a second language hindered mastery in the first language or delayed the proficiency in the second language, or both? As I went through my courses of study, I found that educators and teachers of a second language must be aware that people can in fact learn two languages, even though some delays in language may present themselves in the process. However, the ability to acquire a second language seemed to do more with outside factors than ability. Lightbown and Spada (2013) state “*achieving bilingual proficiency can have positive effects on abilities that are related to academic success, such as metalinguistic awareness. Limitations that may be observed in the language of bilingual individuals are more likely to be related to the circumstances in which each language is learned than to any limitation in the human capacity to learn more than one language*” (p. 31). Having observed my students as they exited first grade, and looked at class data, I concluded that the students were affected by factors outside of the classroom. Factors such as community enrichment, early childhood education, a previous Kinder Dual program that focused on bilingualism, and/or a home environment that supported their academic success through oral language opportunities and literacy involvement. Armed with these supports, students like the one in my case study are able to make huge academic strides when compared to English speaking peers who are at grade level.

I would like to share my experience assessing students using a Scaffolded Lesson. My expectations entering the course were for the students to complete tasks around the content objective and through tasks, direct instruction, and a few multimodal strategies. I quickly learned that having clear language and content objectives was essential to meeting purposeful expectations. Expectations shifted to having a greater focus on peer to peer interactions. According to Gibbons (2002), “When children work collaboratively on a group task they often

work at higher cognitive and language levels than they would working individually” (p. 76). Traditional Second Language teaching approaches and methods such as memorizing grammar rules (Grammar Translation Method) do not suffice and must be supplemented with natural approaches such as comprehensible input and communication around content areas (Content Based Instruction). By the end of the course, I was more clear on the difference between language acquisition and language proficiency, two similar but very distinct concepts. In essence, I am referring to students' level of *proficiency* versus their daily interactions and conversations as they *acquire* the language. Cognitive theorists such as Krashen have developed the Monitor Model as a means of explaining what may be happening in the brain when learning a second language (Wright, 2019). The Acquisition Learning Hypothesis explains that humans are able to acquire a second language through a subconscious process. Children who are exposed to another language can see, hear, and use it, making memory of the language without realizing it. The acquisition of the language is essentially the “easy part”. Students benefit from these interactions and opportunities nonetheless. However, the part where students can often struggle is in the conscious learning of the language itself- often targeted through academic content and purposeful discourse (p.53).

In summary, teaching a population with diverse linguistic abilities in truth translates to adapting to the environment that you and the students are in, finding what works best for your individual classroom, all while keeping up with research based strategies (Celce-Murcia & Snow, 2014).

References

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