

The important factors in raising a bilingual child

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Baker believes the most important factor in raising a bilingual child is to give them a positive, joyful experience of language development. In this way, they can realize the value of both languages and cherish their cultures.

In order to achieve this experience, encouragement is important, which determines the child's attitude and motivation towards bilingual learning. In the use of language, parents should continue to encourage and praise their children, which will provide them with a friendly and positive language environment. Minority languages need more encouragement. But encouragement alone is not enough. Parents are like gardeners. The language gardener also needs to plan, to prepare the soil, to water, fertilize and sometimes weed.

Children's language ability and talent are not important factors in second language learning, but subjective factors such as children's interest, attitude and motivation in language have a greater impact on learning. And these factors can be cultivated and influenced in the home environment. Parents' encouragement, family members' attitude towards language, the quality and quantity of language children can interact with from the people around them, family situation and education, and the types of language input, all of these are aspects that family influences children's second language learning. In general, the language environment provided by the family is the most important factor affecting children's second language learning.

According to my experience, current Chinese second language learning is in a Non-macro language environment. Most children learn English in formal class and it is hard for children to become a fluent bilingual in non-natural target language environment.

In China, most learners live in a sub-language environment; children learn a second language mainly in formal class. The second language, English, is learned in China more as a tool than as an everyday language of communication, so it is difficult for children to have an environment in which they use a second language extensively. The influence of family on second language learning lies more in material conditions and spiritual encouragement, while classroom has greater influence on second language learning.

Age also plays a role in second language learning, but it is more about the focus of learning and both children and adolescents can succeed in second language learning. Children have a high ability in imitation. When they heard a new word or sentence, there is a silent period for a few seconds. After that, they can almost pronounce the word or sentence clearly. It shows that they just remember the sentences technically. When in real language environment, they may not use it correctly.

Most middle school students have a better memory. They can read simple texts also and can understand the basic syntax fast. Most of them cannot use what they just learned in class

or just do not understand it. Besides, there is a general pronunciation problem like most of them cannot pronounce /ai/ & /au/ correctly.

in China, even if we could say that everyone eventually achieves certain level of language learning, every person has their own traits. Children can learn better in second language mainly in pronunciation while older learners are better in learning syntax and grammar. But they cannot speak to others or use it as they use their mother tongue. That is to say, learners in China can acquire the rules of second language.

It cannot be denied that the earlier children begin to learn a second language the better foundation they can gain in this language. But it cannot be said that they can use this language fluently and become bilinguals which mean the person who use or able to use two languages, especially with equal or nearly equal fluency.

The influencing factors of children's second language acquisition include internal and external aspects. Among them, the external influencing factors are mainly the age at the beginning of learning, language input and family socioeconomic status. External factors are also dominant factors, which play an important and direct role in children's second language acquisition. This report aims to provide enlightenment for Chinese children's English acquisition and teaching by analyzing the internal influence mechanism between external factors and children's language acquisition.

Internal Factor: Age

It is found that both the metalinguistic awareness and the learning strategies used by learners are influenced by age, because children of different ages have different levels of language learning recognition ability. Piaget divided a person's development from birth to early youth into four cognitive stages: 0 ~ 2 years old for sensorimotor stage, 2 ~ 7 years old for preoperational stage, 7 ~ 11 years old for concrete operational stage and 11 ~ 15 years old for formal operational stage. A large number of experimental studies have found that cognitive development and social interaction affect knowledge ability in turn. Only on the basis of the development of internal thinking and cognitive structure can children achieve the development of cognitive skills.

However, there are pros and cons in the critical period of children's language acquisition. Biologically, the critical period refers to the period during which an organism is most sensitive to a certain type of external stimulus. The effect is less significant if the stimulus is earlier or later than that time. On this basis, the forerunner of the critical period hypothesis of language acquisition proposed the hypothesis of brain plasticity from the perspective of neurolinguistics, which holds that human language ability is closely related to brain development. Before puberty, children's brain is not mature, sensitive to language input, language acquisition is relatively easy; With the growth of age, the brain gradually matures and becomes accustomed to adopting general cognitive modules and information processing systems. Language processing ability gradually loses and learning efficiency decreases. Proponents, based on empirical research, believe that the critical period hypothesis is hard to disprove.

The opposition is based on an abiotic basis, arguing that cognitive development, linguistic environment and learning opportunities are the decisive factors that ultimately lead to differences in proficiency. In view of this, the enlightenment of the critical period hypothesis on preschool English education in China is divided into two parts: one view holds that preschool English education is not the earlier the better, but should start after the completion of mother tongue acquisition, and this process needs the joint efforts of teachers, parents and children; The other view is that the earlier children start learning a foreign language, the more accurate their pronunciation is and the closer their spoken language is to their native language level.

The beginning age of foreign language learning has a significant influence on the internal factors such as metalinguistic awareness and cognitive ability. Ramirez (2010) found in a survey of 97 children in grade 4 and grade 7 who spoke Spanish as their mother tongue and English as their second language that grade 7 children had stronger metalinguistic awareness than grade 4 children. Moreover, language learners of different age groups have obvious differences in psychological, physiological and cognitive abilities, and people of different age groups have different advantages in learning a second language or a foreign language. It is generally believed that older children who have mastered their first language learning skills can apply learning strategies and methods to their second language learning more quickly, and their second language acquisition speed is also higher.

Cognitive ability generally develops to a higher level in adolescence, when individual imitation ability and memory are strong, and abstract thinking also begins to develop. Learners can view things objectively and purposefully conduct language input and output, instead of centering on themselves. Therefore, excluding other external factors, learners' ability and age are almost positively correlated. In the learning stage, it can be found from the knowledge acceptance degree of students of different grades that the complexity and effectiveness of students' learning strategies will improve with the increase of age.

Learners of specific age adapt to and benefit from specific teaching methods, and different teaching methods achieve different teaching objectives. At present, there is no foreign language teaching method suitable for all kinds of situations, so it is particularly important for teachers to understand students' personality characteristics, learning ability and interest.

Internal Factor: Motivation

Learning motivation is the most active individual factor in language learning. Studies on learning motivation are mainly carried out from two aspects: the role of motivation in the development of second language acquisition and the role of learning experience in promoting motivation. In the late 1950s, after Canadian linguist Gardner&Lambert (1959) published *Motivational Variables in Second Language Acquisition*, studies on foreign language learning motivation began to prevail, and then continued to explore foreign language learning motivation based on social psychology. In 1985, Gardner divided learning motivation into four aspects: effort behavior, learning goals, desire to achieve learning goals, and positive attitude toward language learning.

In the early studies, learning motivation affected children's ability development because they did not

have sufficient understanding of goals. Since the 21st century, great progress has been made in the study of foreign language learning motivation in China. The researchers argue that the motivation of children's language learners has more natural advantages than that of teenagers and adults. This is because children are not aware of the cultural identity of their mother tongue, so they have a high acceptance of the second language and the target culture. The empirical results show that there are two kinds of learning motivation: external motivation and internal motivation. Compared with the senior students, the external motivation of the junior students dominated. But with the increase of grade, there are different types of motivation, but the number of learning motivation is internal motivation gradually increased.

In the process of children's second language acquisition, learning motivation has a great influence on their learning results. Numerous educational practice and educational psychology experiments have proved that there is a positive correlation between learning motivation and learning efficiency. Strong learning motivation leads to better learning effect. Therefore, teachers should be good at discovering rules, stimulate students' interest in language learning, keep it at a certain level of motivation, and produce good learning effects. Without stimulating students' learning motivation and interest, it is difficult to achieve the desired effect of teaching.

External Factor: Language Input Environment

The language input of language learners mainly comes from the language teaching environment. Language teaching environment is usually divided into formal environment and informal (natural) environment. Formal environment refers to classroom input, which mainly includes the relevant knowledge that learners are exposed to, the language used by teachers and the target language in class to answer questions. The informal environment refers to the natural environment or the environment in which learners live. In the formal classroom environment, teachers input language to learners regularly, so that they can get opportunities to practice and feed back errors.

At the same time, using the target language to answer questions in class can not only exercise the language use ability of learners, but also maintain the created foreign language learning space. In the informal classroom environment, the above effects are difficult to achieve, but the learning content is closer to life, which tests the language application ability of learners and arouses their interest in learning more easily. The phenomenon of "Chinglish" among Chinese English learners is related to the language used by classroom teachers and whether teachers correct learners' mistakes in time.

As mother tongue acquisition is completed in a natural environment, learners are often exposed to the target language in a second language environment and will naturally acquire the target language to varying degrees. Therefore, learners who have more opportunities to use the target language outside the classroom will have better oral skills than students who use the target language only in the classroom. For example, foreign language input from mass media has a significant impact on children's listening ability and reading level.

Studies have found that preschool children can master simple English expressions by watching some English movies with native subtitles without formal classroom or any family teaching (Lefever, 2010).

On the contrary, the classroom teaching in formal environment is monotonous in content and traditional in teaching method. Students who have studied English for many years may be mute in foreign languages. Therefore, multi-channel and high-quality language input directly affects the efficiency of target language learning. Therefore, it is necessary to create a real English learning environment for students in and out of class.

At present, there are still some shortcomings in English classroom in China, such as the difference of students' English foundation, the neglect of students' emotional factors, the insufficient amount of extra-curricular language input and the single form of assessment. Due to the different starting points of students' learning, it is difficult for teachers to classify students' language levels scientifically. Moreover, due to the large number of students in Class in China, teachers cannot take individual differences into account, which makes it difficult for students to obtain comprehensible input. In addition, the limited classroom time, insufficient language input outside the classroom and the single evaluation form based on scores have ignored students' communicative competence.

External Factor: The Conditions of the Family and Society

Family economic status and parents' education level determine the material base of the children's family. The stable material foundation can provide more opportunities for children's language acquisition, so it is another important factor affecting children's language acquisition. On the one hand, families with a good material foundation can create a good language learning environment for their children, and on the other hand, they can send their children to counseling institutions with strong teachers or target language countries, so that children can continue to receive pure language input in life. Although language concept plays an important role in foreign language learning, it is easy to be ignored. The concept of language refers to a series of evaluations and attitudes of individuals or groups who use language towards a certain language, such as their cognition, emotion and appreciation of beauty. The formation of language concept is influenced by social culture, social psychology and context. The social and economic status of family affects the concept of language to a certain extent and is the embodiment of society in language. Chinese people's concept of language emphasizes written language rather than spoken language and emphasizes intense memory. In the early stage of Chinese children's mother tongue acquisition, recitation is still the main means widely adopted, although children cannot understand its characters and meanings. However, western countries attach more importance to "speaking art" and try their best to guide the development of children's communicative ability. Therefore, the concept of language is an important factor affecting the effect of children's foreign language teaching, and the difference of family economic status also brings about different concept of language.

The social and economic status of the family affects the learning attitude of learners, and then affects their academic performance. Bernstein (1971) argues that children from economically better families are more likely to achieve better academic results than those from economically poorer families. Individual performance differences are often not directly affected by social differences themselves, but by people of different social classes' own life experience and different attitudes towards language learning. Any learner lives in a specific social class, and there are differences in language competence

among learners of different classes. The social class can be divided into three categories: low, middle and high class. Children from middle and high class will use explanatory language and limited language, while children from low class will only use limited language.

Brustall (1975) studied the French learning of British primary and secondary school students. He found that family socioeconomic status was a predictor of children's French achievement. In general, the better the socioeconomic status of the family, the better the children's French scores tend to be. At the same time, the difference of family language and cultural environment has a significant impact on foreign language learning performance of students who receive the same school education; Moreover, there is a positive correlation between family foreign language learning environment and family members' foreign language listening and speaking ability, which is because family cultural background has a latent positive influence on ideal second language self. In other words, the higher the family cultural education background of English learners, the stronger the ideal second language self will be.

Summary

Children's second language acquisition is not the result of one or other factors, but a process of interaction between internal and external factors, that is, the factors affecting second language acquisition are complicated, and the success or failure of second language acquisition is not determined by one factor, but by the joint action of all factors. Only by understanding these factors in detail and combining the problems encountered in children's language acquisition with the internal and external influencing factors, can children's second language acquisition ability be better improved. How to organically combine external and internal factors to improve the effect of children's second language acquisition requires our language learners to continue to explore.

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