

Research Notes on Primary Foreign Language Teaching: Age, Time and Aims

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These notes are written for a literature review on some aspects of foreign language teaching at primary schools. The review first deals with two important factors of second and foreign language learning, namely, age and time, and then proceeds to the issues concerning the aims of primary foreign language education. Throughout this chapter, the major focus is on foreign language educational settings rather than a second language environment where the target language is widely used as an official or common language. Both 'learning' and 'acquisition' are used interchangeably to denote the learning process, without a connotation of the conceptual distinction between them made by Krashen (1981).

1. The age factor

1.1 Comparison among age groups

The age issue originates in the Critical Period Hypothesis concerning the first language development viewed neurologically on the basis of observations of children and adults having brain damage. The hypothesis assumes that an earlier span of time in life, for instance, the first ten years according to Penfield and Roberts (1959, cited in Ellis 1994: 484), is the optimal period for language acquisition after which acquisition may become harder. What might be drawn from this hypothesis, in a weak form as to second or foreign language acquisition, is that adolescents and adults may not be able to acquire a new language so naturally and easily as children. In the school context, this implication of the hypothesis, if it were of validity, might well support foreign language introduction into primary school education. Under an international variation of the age arrangement for primary education, it may be said that children go through puberty towards the end of primary education or around the beginning of secondary education.

Reviews of empirical studies on the age factor, however, have noted contradictory findings and views extractable from those studies (e.g., Krashen, Long and Scarcella 1979; Stern 1983: 361-367; Johnstone 1994: 48-57; Ellis 1994: 484-494; Singleton 1995: 1-29; Driscoll 1999: 10-11; Sallabank 1999: 33-41), and thus they suggest that it is premature to draw out conclusive views on the effects of age on second and foreign language learning. Furthermore, the relative advantage of an earlier, or later, start has been discussed in regard to different aspects of language and language proficiency rather than as a monolithic force of age.

Before looking at some more details of a group of studies on the age factor, it is necessary to note that there are two major points of comparison among different age groups as to their learning outcomes: children versus adults,

and younger versus older children. In naturalistic second language settings, empirical research on the function of age is concerned about the age on arrival. In foreign language educational settings, a comparison between children and adults roughly corresponds to the debate on primary versus secondary starters, and where primary foreign language provision is planned or accepted, the debate would entail the query of from which year it should begin and of whether starting even earlier than primary would be better.

Children versus adults/adolescents

There seems to be a favourable view on children's greater adaptability to sound and on their easier mastery of this aspect of the target language. Krashen, Long and Scarcella's (1979), a seminal review of age-related empirical studies, draws out three generalizations, and one of them is a claim for higher proficiency achievable by those who begin natural exposure to second language during childhood. Four empirical studies form the basis for this claim, and they are concerned about pronunciation. Singleton (1995:8-9) also suggests younger learners' long-term advantage in acquiring the sound system of the target language, on the basis of a review of studies dealing with people in naturalistic second language settings (e.g., immigrants). Singleton makes a claim for taking it as a tendency rather than as an absolute rule, in light of a portion of late beginners who show a similarity to proficient early starters.

Johnstone (1994), Driscoll (1999) and Sallabank (1999) cite Vilke's school-based study on early and later beginners in Zagreb (1988), which suggests pre-puberty beginners' superiority in acquiring the phonetic system, with a reservation of the presence of the teacher as a good model for children to imitate. Vilke is concerned about the attitudinal aspect of foreign language learning as well and claims for positive attitudes to English to be enhanced by an early start, and for the vital role of the teacher's relationship to children. Cosenza (1999) is a more recent study which argues for the sensitive periods before puberty for the development of the sound system of the target language. His study is based on an extensive review of the literature concerning evolutionary biology and neurobiology. Seemingly contradictory with these studies is Stern's (1963, cited Johnstone 1994: 48), which was conducted with pupils aged 7 to 11 learning English at Swedish primary schools. The study, according to Johnstone, shows older pupils' faster and more accurate learning in all the aspects of language performance examined in it, including pronunciation.

As for morpho-syntactic development, Krashen, Long and Scarcella (1979) synthesise contradictory findings into this generalisation: initial faster learning by older learners (adults as compared with children and older children as opposed to younger children) and eventual higher attainment by younger starters. Cosenza (1999) also argues for the advantage of early start regarding morpho-syntactic development, though less convincingly than phonological and phonetic development. Vilke (1988, mentioned above), on the other hand, suggests post-puberty beginners' faster learning in syntactic and lexical aspects. Also, Cameron (2001: 17) regards grammatical development as a slow comer, in the light of its linkage to cognitive development.

Primary versus secondary beginners

England and Wales have experienced the NFER evaluation of French teaching from the age of eight by Burstall et al (1974, cited by Johnstone 1994 and Driscoll 1999). Under its negative results on eventual primary

beginners' superiority, Johnstone (1994: 41) points out that primary beginners' progression at secondary level had possibly been impeded by teachers' ignorance of what had been taught and gained in primary French: an implication of this interpretation may be the need for primary-secondary continuity. In the NFER evaluation, the aspects of language use showing primary beginners' superiority over secondary starters were the oral skills tested after their five years of involvement in French teaching (described by Johnstone 1994) and more positive attitudes towards speaking French (referred to by Driscoll 1999).

Johnstone (1994) cites the pilot projects in Scotland reported by Low, Duffield, Brown and Johnstone (1993), which seem to show more favourable results for primary beginners. Johnstone's direct citation from the report includes: in comparison with secondary beginners, "a greater readiness to answer orally" and a greater use of "phrase-sentence" as shown in classroom observation, and advantages revealed in interviews such as "structural complexity," "pronunciation," "resistance to relapsing into the mother tongue," and "initiation and response" (Johnstone 1994: 43). Johnstone adds both beneficial elements such as greater confidence, more positive attitudinal characteristics, and creative language use taking the form of a-couple-of-word utterances, on one hand, and weakness in grammatical competence, on the other. Sallabank (1999: 45) points out three possible factors which have affected favourable results in the Scottish projects: primary-secondary continuity, foreign language as embedded into the whole curriculum, and the starting age (i.e., age 9-10) suggesting some features attributable not to children but to older learners.

The school-based studies reviewed in this section (Burstall et al 1974, Vilke 1988, and Low, Duffield, Brown and Johnstone 1993) seem to suggest benefits of oral proficiency gained by primary starters. Cameron (2001: 17) points out a possible missing point of this focus on oral skills, that is, that French immersion programmes in Canada suggest the greatest benefit of receptive skills for listening comprehension, which is followed by productive skills. Immersion programmes, which teach school subjects in the target language and thus are partially or totally applied to the whole primary curriculum, may well be viewed as a radically different learning situation, which might be to refuse its own association with the usual foreign language learning at school. However, Cameron positively argues that the quantitative difference in terms of linguistic environment at school between immersion and traditional teaching of the target language as a school subject may not affect the overall pattern of foreign language development.

Younger versus older children

Lapkin, Hart and Swain's study on immersion programmes in Canada (1991), in an evaluation of Grade 8 classes' performance in various kinds of tests, shows that those students who had started receiving total immersion instruction at kindergarten performed better in nearly all respects involving all skill areas than those who had begun partial immersion at Grade 5 (at the age of 10-11). Here it is also necessary to take the degree of the intensity of immersion into consideration.

Cummins et al (1984), in an empirical study from a second language context, make a claim for older children's advantage. It involved a group of so-called Japanese overseas children who were temporarily residing in Canada for their fathers' job-related reasons. They went to Canadian English-speaking schools during the week and to a Japanese supplementary school on Saturdays. The study is aimed at testing the Developmental

Interdependence Hypothesis between children's first and second languages, which assumes manifestations of a hypothetical construct termed "Common Underlying Proficiency" (Cummins 1980). This hypothesis has an implication for the function of age on arrival, that is that: late-comer children will develop their second language proficiency more rapidly than earlier comers, owing to their better developed proficiency in first language. The results of their comprehensive statistical analyses suggest that the development of children's school-work-related cognitive skills in second language is partially a function of the level of the same aspect of first language which children possess when they start living in their host country. We will look at some more details of Cummins' new conceptualisation of language proficiency in a later section (see 3.2).

1.2 Going beyond a comparison of learning outcomes

The contradictory situation of research findings on the age issue has led educators to the issues to be considered for further research, such as: 1) a recognition of methodological problems of empirical studies (Johnstone 1994: 55; Ellis 1994: 484); 2) the need to go beyond mere outcome-oriented research towards approaches to age-specific characteristics of language learning (Stern 1983: 366-367) and towards learning process and classroom process (Johnstone 1994: 55; Ellis 1994: 490-491); 3) social expectations of a given society on the outcomes to be pursued (Johnstone 1994: 56-57); 4) necessary time for a desired attainment level, educational values to be attributed to language learning, and human and material resources for successful learning and teaching (Stern 1983: 365). Stern's assumption is that a foreign language can be introduced at any age onwards and a psychological consideration is not the only ground on which educational decisions can rest.

2. The time factor

Second language learning contexts, at least theoretically, can give children ample linguistic input and a real need for the target language, owing to the wide societal use of the target language. It seems likely that the second language of the children who arrive at a new country will become stronger than their first language, in line with an increase of length of residence in the country. The need for first language maintenance, as well as efforts made for this purpose at home and at school, would arise in this hypothetical developmental situation. However, such a notable function of time of residence would not apply to children and adolescents in foreign language contexts where learning rely exclusively or mainly on classroom instruction at school. As suggested by Moon (2000: 3), without ample linguistic input in the society, it is vital to explore best possible ways of creating a positive and favourable learning environment at school.

Laymen's experiences may suggest that, in secondary school foreign language learning situations, a couple of class periods of teaching and learning the target language a week would not produce fully bilingual persons. One may also assume that instructional time is important but the quality of time spent teaching and learning might affect outcome. Foreign language teachers are aware of the importance of time, and they may encourage students to have extra time for study or for exposure to the target language. They might set up extra time for exposure within the school also, for instance, in morning sessions or afternoon recesses. In a centralised educational context, like in Japan, secondary foreign language teachers may wonder about policy or even dispute against it when time allocation for foreign language is reduced.

A well-known claim is made about the function of instructional time conceived of as the most decisive factor in school-based foreign language learning (Carroll 1975, cited in Stern 1983: 365; Burstall 1978). In conjunction with the importance and the most decisive role of instructional time, a view needs to be noted as to the fact that primary beginners can be given longer time than secondary starters. This has been a rationale for primary foreign language provision and called “the ‘higher standards’ argument” (Sharpe 2001:32). It is questionable, however, whether such an attainment-level oriented scheme as suggested in the term “higher standards” might be workable within the sensitisation model in Driscoll’s terms (1999), as the model assumes, in its own right, a weak connection between primary and secondary foreign language teaching in terms of the programme motivation to enhance language acquisition.

As for a new programme development, the problem seems to me to be that one may hardly go beyond the importance of time, or the assumption of ‘the more time, the better,’ and scarcely obtain answers to these contrastable queries: What is attainable under a given time allocation?; and How much time is necessary for a given projected aim?

Driscoll (1999: 21) suggests the time-related borderline for primary foreign language teaching between programmes highlighting language acquisition and those focusing on motivational and attitudinal aspects of learning: one or more hours a week for the former, and one hour or less a week for the latter. With the source and motivator for this projection unknown to us, an extractable message might be that teachers should not expect any substantial acquisition of the target language to occur if they offer one hour or less instruction per week. Johnstone (1994: 5-11), in his presentation of five models of teaching approach, estimates two or three hours a week for “subject teaching” (i.e., teaching a foreign language as a school subject). His models focusing either on linguistic and cultural “awareness” or elementary “encounter” with the target language/s, to which less intensified use of the target language is attributed, are likely to occur under an allocation of less time than in subject teaching. Then, again, an extractable message may be that teachers cannot schematise the main focus on language acquisition under an allocation of a shorter length of time than a couple of hours a week.

Suggestions on a more overall time-related development of foreign language have been made by some studies. Driscoll (1999: 11) cites Vilke (1988) who estimates more than 1000 hours of contact time for mastery of the target language. As suggested by Driscoll, if one bases him- or herself on Vilke’s estimation, the total time usually given to a foreign language at secondary school without any previous primary school foreign language learning cannot be perceived to guarantee a substantial mastery of the language.

Curtain and Pesola (1994) cites, from Byrnes and Canale (1987), examples from the proficiency-level-oriented guidelines made by American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, in which expected features of students’ language performance are described, according to the level and time (Novice-High: minimal 150 hours of instruction; Intermediate-Low: 300 hours or more; Intermediate-Mid; 450 hours or more), regarding language behavioural modes (listening, speaking, reading and writing). If one class hour is dedicated to the target language a week, for 35 weeks a year and for six years in total like in Japan, this makes the minimal amount of time for Novice-High in terms of class hours, not in the sense of real hours. Curtain and Pesola point out that, in light of the typical amount of time given to primary foreign language, the goals of the first two levels are attainable at primary. We will look at the performance features described for the Novice-High level in the

following section (see 3.1).

3. Aims

A review of the literature suggests that contexts of primary foreign language provision would not necessarily shed light on pupils' linguistic development. Cultural and linguistic awareness, sensitivity and understanding might be regarded as the primary aim of instruction. Cultural aims may also be captured as acquiring the attitudes, knowledge and skills needed for intercultural communication, as termed "intercultural competence" by Byram and Doyé (1999). Where language acquisition is given priority, the level of projected attainment could vary. Also, enhancing attitudes and motivation could also be a focal point.

Further, a scheme for primary foreign language teaching might hold a more general framework of primary school education, referring to pupils' personal, social, cognitive and educational growth. Among those elements entailed in these general aspects of educational goal are developing "confidence" (Halliwell 1992: 10; Driscoll 1999: 12; Sharpe 2001: 155), cultivating "self-concept" (Curtain and Pesola 1994: 9), acquiring "communication skills" and "language learning skills" (Driscoll 1999: 12 and 14), and resultant effects on the development of "basic skills" in the mother tongue and mathematics as tested through standardised tests (Curtain and Pesola 1994: 7-8).

3.1 Variation and priority

Aims which have actually been set up for primary foreign language are varied, as suggested by Curtain and Pesola (1994) through sample lists of aims and benefits collected in the U.S. (1994: 5-10). They point out that emphasis has recently been placed on "the holistic, global, and communicative elements of language learning" (1994: 4).

Sharpe (2001:179) presents a list of seven categories for different existing intentions in European context, which concentrates on the two main areas of foreign language teaching, namely, language and culture:

- language acquisition
- language sensitisation
- language awareness
- attitudes to language learning
- attitudes to European awareness
- attitudes to multiculturalism
- intercultural understanding
- intercultural competence

Driscoll's dichotomy between the "language acquisition model" and "sensitisation model" (1999: 20-23) is more restricted within the aim of linguistic development. The former model assumes a programme where linguistic content is more intensely learned and continuous language development is prioritised, whereas the latter highlights motivation and attitudes, with possible focus on listening and speaking, and it can deal with two or

more languages. Driscoll argues that in the “language acquisition model”, if introduced into primary education, its continuity to secondary foreign language learning is to be a key factor for success, but not very much so in the latter. Sharpe (2001: 178) holds a similar distinction to Driscoll’s dichotomy, between “a single-minded focus on language acquisition” and “a more diffuse notion of learning something of a foreign language but mainly learning to enjoy the process of language learning for its own sake.”

Johnstone (1994: 5-11) posits his five models along the continuum of the intensity of foreign or second language use: “awareness” and “encounter” at the lower end, “subject-teaching” and “embedding” in the middle, and partial and total “immersion” at the higher end. The awareness model is intended to sensitise children more to language and culture through offering opportunities for them to think about one or more languages and cultures which are different from their own. For this purpose much time is given to discussions in the first language. The encounter model is a little more oriented towards language learning. It aims to cultivate children’s confidence, curiosity and their elementary competence in the foreign or second language/s, and these are similar to Driscoll’s “sensitisation model” (Driscoll 1999). Johnstone argues that this encounter approach could be an experiential basis for children’s foreign language choice at the time of enrolment into secondary level. Teaching a second or foreign language as a school subject has been a traditional common practice at secondary school. Johnstone makes it clear that, being separated from other subject matters, subject teaching has distinctive aims, content and methods.

The embedding model has a cross-curricular perspective and is a step towards immersion. It attempts to enable children to approach language learning in a holistic manner through engaging them in activities in the foreign language in various aspects of their primary curriculum. Johnstone places a high value on this model. What Johnstone points out is that it is hard but necessary to integrate various things which children learn in a rather sporadic manner in this type of programme into a coherent linguistic outcome. The immersion model teaches the whole curriculum or part of it in the second or foreign language, from the very beginning of primary schooling or at a later stage. Great intensity of language use and that of integration into curriculum and school life in this model may lead to the assumption that it is much more oriented towards the development of bilingual proficiency than other models.

An important query arising in this situation of variability in the projected aims is what should be intended to be accomplished. First of all, factors entailed in reality and actuality, such as available time and teachers’ proficiency in the target language, may transform the query into the question of what can be aimed and what kind of programme can be offered. What seems to me to be more important, however, is how teachers and schools might incorporate values placed on different aspects of foreign language learning, and how perspectives towards children’s language learning might gain their places in their query, if it is not too biased an orientation of foreign language teaching practitioners, like myself.

It is natural that primary school teachers are concerned about elements of children’s growth in general terms, such as confidence and communication skills, and it is necessary to investigate how such concerns would make actual instructional forms for foreign language teaching. One observation I made during my fieldwork (recorded in Fukushima 2001) is that the primary school teachers’ concern about the development of children’s communication skills might possibly co-occur with a blurred distinction between children’s communication in

their first language and that in their English; blurred, in this case, from an English teacher's point of view. It seems also natural that current primary school teachers are concerned with global aspects of their children's lives in the international society, or more specifically, for instance, in the new European dimension and in a widened scope of communication between Asians. This might lead to their interest in what is called by Byram and Doyé (1999) "intercultural competence" for communication. Again, how such global orientations are actualised in instructional forms is another matter to examine.

One core issue more oriented towards language teaching should be about the actual situations where motivation and fun oriented instruction is offered through employing games and songs and/or small prescribed set dialogues. Regarding "motivation" as a key factor in language learning, Driscoll (1999: 12) recommends incorporating topics from other primary content areas and providing opportunities to learn set phrases through enjoyable activities, such as "story-telling, songs and play activities." On the other hand, some researchers devalue such motivation-and-fun-oriented teaching of small bits of the target language. Sallabank (1999) cites Tost Planet (1997) and Pataleoni's (1991) claim for a need for the perspective of continuity in terms of the development of children's foreign language or of their communicative competence in that language. There is a more intensified linguistic perspective than in motivational programmes shedding light on their intrinsic value.

In this context it is useful to consider the stage-by-stage proficiency descriptions cited by Curtain and Pesola (1994: 25-27), which, as briefly mentioned earlier (see 2), show a great focus on continuity from the very beginning of foreign language learning onward in terms of children's linguistic development. What may be captured as less intensified language programmes as in the "sensitisation" model (Driscoll 1999) and the "encounter" model (Johnstone 1994) could be laid here as the very first stage of language learning.

The descriptions for the Novice-High level contain such elements as listening comprehension of "short, learned utterances and some sentence-length utterances" and "words and phrases from simple questions, statements, high-frequency commands and courtesy formulae," and heavy reliance on "learned utterances" in speech production and "signs of spontaneity" without "real autonomy of expression" (Curtain and Pesola 1994: 25). One question which can be raised as to these guidelines is how one relates such descriptions of attainable goals to the matter of teaching methods. For instance, do the above sample descriptions suggest that it is not appropriate to devise activities to enhance children's own exploitation and free use of the target language at the first level, say, where one-hour instructional time is being offered a week?

Continuity can also be discussed in terms of the motivational and attitudinal aspects of foreign language learning. Unlike Tost Planet (1997) and Pantaleoni (1991), Halliwell (1992:11-12) argues that primacy should be given to attitudinal goals rather than content-oriented aims, in her terms, "confidence, willingness to 'have a go', risk taking," as these are very basic to children's later progress. Continuity between primary and secondary foreign language as captured along with this important function of attitudes towards foreign language learning and use seems to me to be incompatible with a weak connection between primary and secondary levels which is implied in the sensitisation model in Driscoll's terms (1999).

In my view, the importance of attitudinal goals in Halliwell's framework assumes continuous foreign language development to be enhanced by positive attitudes and motivation being cultivated from primary onwards,

whether or not the programme is small-scaled and whether or not teachers focus on “intrinsic value” of primary foreign language itself in Sharpe’s terms (2001:193). This, in turn, might evoke the idea of linguistic planning for continuous learning from primary through secondary. And in fact, for example, in Japan, some researchers make a claim for an early establishment of linguistic syllabi which would be usable primary through secondary. However, it is necessary to note that, in the educational context of the U.K., Sharpe (2001: 193) pinpoints that it is hard to prescribe the way of assuring such linguistic planning, as the subject matter of primary foreign language teaching itself has not been defined well as yet.

3.2 Models of language construct

Focus on the learner’s language development in second or foreign language teaching has motivated researchers to produce a theoretical framework for language proficiency to be utilised for teaching and assessment. Such theoretical models of language construct can be viewed, in a collective sense, as another angle to explore the aim of foreign language teaching.

A well-cited framework for communicative competence is Canale and Swain’s model (1980), which derives from core French programmes offered at primary and secondary schools in Ontario, Canada. The model includes three components: “grammatical knowledge”, which is concerned mainly about lexical, morpho-syntactic and phonological levels of language; “sociolinguistic competence”, which deals with the appropriateness of utterances in a given socio-cultural context and also rules of discourse (i.e., in their terms, appropriateness of grammatical links and that of combination of communicative functions); and “strategic competence”, which would lead to actions to use to avoid a breakdown in communication (e.g., paraphrasing and various role-playing) (1980: 28-31). As for this model’s implications for teaching methodology, Canale and Swain propose that communicative activities must be engaging and “as meaningful as possible and be characterised (at increasing levels of difficulty) by aspects of genuine communication such as its basis in social interaction, the relative creativity and unpredictability of utterances, its purposefulness and goal orientation, and its authenticity” (1980: 33).

Cummins’ two-fold conceptualisation of language proficiency (1980) is another entry from Canada, and it is rooted in immigrant second language learning situations. His model holds the distinction between “BICS” (basic interpersonal communicative skills, which is manifested in everyday interpersonal communicative situations and contexts) and “CALP” (cognitive academic language proficiency, which is not contextualised in here and now and is cognitively demanding). BICS is exemplified as oral fluency and sensitivity to paralinguistic cues (1980, presented in Baker and Hornberger 2001: 114). CALP is related to literacy skills which children need to acquire for their school work and the construct suggests that immigrant children may not reach the grade norm of their native speaking counterparts easily and rapidly. Cummins’ model assumes the developmental interdependence between children’s first language and second language CALP, and, as we have already seen in a previous section, this hypothesis makes a claim for older arrivers’ faster acquisition of second language CALP (see 1.1).

This Cummins’ model might make one realise the importance of literacy-related skills for children’s school lives in a new country and that laymen’s observations on children’s fast learning of a new language in second

language contexts are often concerned about something depictable by the construct of BICS rather than CALP. On the other hand, one who is concerned about foreign language situations may discuss the difficulty in developing oral skills which he or she has experienced where English started at secondary school. One might conceive of such difficulties as a greater problem than in acquiring literacy, although literacy also may not be developed so well as in second language learning contexts.

Cameron (2003) presents a rare model of language construct specifically addressed to children's language acquisition in foreign language situations. Focusing on two important features of child learning, namely, their tendency to search meaning in language use and demands included in their initial literacy learning, she proposes a model focusing on oral skills of young learners which entails two major components: vocabulary and discourse. Cameron's concept of vocabulary is inclusive of not only words but also the units larger than words which children may acquire through 'chunking.' Discourse skills are further categorised into "extended talk" (e.g., "the ability to understand, recall, and produce songs, rhymes, chants, and stories") and "conversational skills" (which involves "understanding and using phrases and sentences in interaction with other children and with adults" (2003: 109). Cameron places grammar within her model, defining it as "the informal building up of language knowledge in children's minds" which relates to all the components of language skills (2003: 109-110). Cameron advises teachers to use CD-Rom portfolios rather than written ones to gain evidence for each child's oral skills (e.g., samples of the child's conversational interaction and of his or her extended talk).

Worthy of note here is that, as pointed out by Sallabank (1999: 14), it is common for primary foreign language teaching to focus on oral and aural skills. However, Johnstone (1994) suggests that this is not the only existing form of instruction, by reference to Cohen's research (1987, 1992, cited Johnstone 1994: 51). According to Johnstone, Cohen's teaching principles show an advocacy for the simultaneous development of spoken and written language skills.

4. Summary accounts

Primary school foreign language provision has not been supported empirically and rationalised in a decisive manner in terms of the greater advantage of an early start at primary over a late beginning at secondary. A productive venture which might be undertaken in regard to this situation is an investigation of age characteristics in relation to the foreign language learning process in order to search for positive and favourable ways of teaching a new language to primary school children.

It is suggested in the present study that there lie interrelations between age, time and aim setting, as realised in such issues as: 1) characteristics of the framework of aim setting in primary foreign language teaching (e.g., a greater involvement of the viewpoints of children's growth in general terms); 2) more instructional time obtainable through a newly introduced foreign language teaching to primary school children; and 3) relationship between available instructional time and attainable goals.

The aims of primary foreign language teaching have been examined from the viewpoints of variation and priority, and of the models of language construct. One major issue which has been raised through this

examination is the relationship between language acquisition and motivation/attitudes towards foreign language learning and use. This issue has been a matter of priority, and each of these aspects of children's foreign language learning can be discussed in terms of its own developmental continuity. What seems to me to be more important is how the developmental relationship between them might be schematised. In conjunction with this, it is necessary to explore the issue of what primary-secondary continuity of foreign language education should be like. The models of language construct reviewed in the present study raise another important issue of primary foreign language teaching, namely, the relationship between oral/aural and written aspects of language learning. Again, this might be explored not only as a matter of priority, as can be seen in the common focus on oral/aural skills in the current primary foreign language teaching practice, but also as something involving a developmental interrelationship between the two.

There are many aspects of primary foreign language teaching. Among those aspects which have not been discussed in the present study are teaching approaches, including ways of course planning, teaching methods and techniques, teacher expertise, and children's classroom learning process. These are now left open for further investigation.

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