
THE ROLE OF INTERACTION IN ACQUIRING ENGLISH BY VERY YOUNG LEARNERS

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New foreign language teaching programs in Hungary have been in use for decades but the result of them concerning primary and secondary EFL teaching cannot be identified as the most appropriate one. I would say, that concerning the whole population in Hungary, the number of those speaking any foreign languages is limited and much below the EU average. It was recognized by e.g., *Köpeczi-Bócz Tamás* (2007) saying that in Hungary the number of those speaking English is 1/3 of the EU average. He did not give more precise data, concerning this 1/3-rd proportion. We know, that the real knowledge of foreign languages of the population is somewhere at the bottom in this respect.

Consequently, there should be made efforts to improve the English speaking ability of the population. There is to be emphasized the effort made towards improving the foreign language abilities of the learners, beginning from very young age. It is what I would like to discuss further in my presentation. Particularly English (and not any other languages) is accepted at the possible highest level by the decision makers as the language the population is supposed to master. The population's language related 'isolation' from the rest of the world could be eliminated in this way, making the people able, beginning from childhood, to interact with others living anywhere in the world. The so called socio-cultural aspect of EFL learning is very important right at the beginning, when the learners of very young age, or novices acquire, beside the language itself, those socio-cultural elements which are significant parts of the language learning process. The literature does not give too much evidence in this respect, as the area is not observed and researched profoundly yet.

Of course the result of this effort is supposed to be the following: new perspectives can be opened to anybody speaking the language at the interaction level both personally and professionally. We, teachers of the language are to try to find ways how this situation can be changed in a radical way. In other case all these intentions remain idealistic, having no practical base for implementation. It is necessary to investigate the present situation and ask such questions: is there a problem with the programs, or carrying out of them has its own nuisances? Probably the present situation can be improved by throughout investigation of the earliest possible stages of second language acquisition, particularly by very young learners.

On the base of the assumption that the success of any project or program depends a good deal on the creation of the very basis of it I wanted to carry out a research concerning EFL teaching to young learners in some schools. I investigated interaction in the classrooms of pupils of very young age by means of classroom observation and even participating observation. My main concern was to see:

- how listening skills can be developed as part of real communication skills;
- how breakdown in communication can be eliminated;
- what logistic (or organizer) skills the educator is supposed to have to create relevant learning activities;
- how the young learners are challenged in initiation of interaction;
- how prompting is used for enabling learners to utter basic communicative elements when they fail to participate in the conversation because they do not understand (part of) the utterances of the partner (in this case mainly the educator).

In my presentation all these aspects are discussed on the base of empirical studies and qualitative research.