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“The Acquisition of English by Spanish-speaking Preschoolers”

There is little evidence on the acquisition of a second language by preschool children. One reason for this lack of research is that these children are thought to be within the “sensitive period” for language development when acquisition is thought to be fast and easy. The goal of this study is to examine English language development in native Spanish-speaking children longitudinally. The talk will summarize how young native Spanish speakers learn vocabulary, relational terms, and syntax during the first year they are exposed to English. We compare their language development in these areas to two monolingual groups: one matches the Spanish speakers in chronological age; the second matches the Spanish speakers in English vocabulary level. Thus, we will be able to ascertain whether Spanish speakers learning English as a second language do so similarly to their monolingual English-speaking counterparts but at a slower pace, or whether they have language different kinds of difficulties than a monolingual, native learners. Preliminary results suggest that the Spanish speakers’ knowledge of English is lagging significantly in every area after one year of being exposed to English. Moreover, even though they are learning English, they do not seem to be learning it at the same rate or in the same way as their monolingual English-speaking counterparts. Apparently, preschool children do not learn a second language as quickly and as easily as has been commonly assumed.

目前對於學齡前孩童第二外語習得的研究尚未有明確的說明，其原因為，當將語言習得的過程視為迅速又簡單時，孩童的語言發展將被視為在“敏感階段”。本研究目的為長期觀察西班牙為母語的孩童在學習英語上的發展。本演講將會概述學齡前西班牙語兒童在第一年學習英語中，如何去學習英語字彙及句型的過程。我們在這些領域中，一組是英語為母語的孩童，一組是西班牙為母語的孩童，來比較他們的語言發展：一組按照西班牙語孩童年齡而定；另一組則是符合英語字彙程度。因此，將能觀察西班牙語孩童學習英語的過程與英語為母語的孩童語言發

展是否極為相似，或他們是否在英語習得上有不同的困難。初步結果顯示，西班牙語孩童在接觸一年的英語之後，英語在各方面的發展有明顯的落後。此外，即使他們學習英語，但英語發展的速度及方法與英語為母語的孩童也不徑相同。顯然地，學齡前孩童在第二外語的習得上並非如同普遍所認為的迅速及簡單。