



**THE USE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN TEACHING YOUNG STUDENTS  
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE**

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**Annotation:** This article explores effective strategies for teaching English as a second language (ESL) to young learners, emphasizing how educators can enhance learning by aligning instruction with children's interests, needs, and developmental stages. It discusses the role of reading, writing, and interactive techniques in the classroom, and introduces psycholinguistic principles to guide teaching practices.

**Keywords:** Cognitive development, linguistic transfer, language acquisition, psycholinguistics, motivation, feedback, language and thought, concept development, cultural differences.

Many educational institutions now introduce English in preschool and primary education, beginning with oral learning. Initially, children are taught basic English concepts like the alphabet, songs, and greetings, which aid in developing motor skills and foundational concepts. Psycholinguistics explains that language acquisition is deeply tied to cognitive development, and these early concepts are typically best learned in a child's native language. The transition from home to school is a significant milestone in language development, where children encounter more formal structures of language learning.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, children in early education typically learn through interactions with a few caregivers in an informal setting, with language learning occurring through daily communication. In contrast, schools broaden this experience, helping children develop cognitive and language skills through structured learning environments. Learning, although it is spontaneous and unstructured, is nevertheless steady and involving for the child. The function of schools is to broaden children's range of experience, introduce new possibilities, systemize the process of learning, help develop thinking skills and, ultimately, empower students to take responsibility, developed at home, to make sense of their world, to talk about their experiences and to wonder about what is new or imaginary continue to be effective.[1.1986]

Schools provide the setting for children to use language not just for communication but also for creativity, problem-solving, and collaborative learning. This aligns with psycholinguistic theories that assert language acquisition is not only a linguistic process but a cognitive one that helps in structuring thoughts and interactions. Although young ESL learners may not be fluent in English, they are already competent language users in their native language. According to psycholinguistics,



language is a universal human trait, yet each language system is unique, governed by specific rules for combining sounds, words, and sentences. As ESL children transfer their linguistic knowledge from their home language to English, psycholinguistic theory supports the idea that cognitive skills developed in one language can be applied to another, though this transfer requires careful guidance. For instance, psycholinguistic research indicates that the process of learning a second language is influenced by both cognitive development and the socio-cultural context in which a child is immersed. Therefore, children who are learning English as a second language may face unique challenges, such as differences in language structure or cultural concepts that are embedded in language. Consider color perception: “yellow” and “green” are separate terms in English, but in other languages, that spectrum may be described by a single word. Teachers must comprehend both the linguistic and cultural facets of language learning since these cultural peculiarities influence language acquisition.

When young children attempt to use language at home, their adult caregivers try very hard to understand the meaning of their utterances and pay little attention to its form. For ESL children, the opposite is too often true. When they attempt to use English at school, the teacher often pays more attention to the form than to the message. [2.1992] Children naturally exhibit strong motivation to learn their native language through social interaction, receiving encouragement and praise for their efforts. However, ESL learners may not feel the same urgency to communicate in English, since their home language already serves as an effective means of communication. Psycholinguistically, this underscores the importance of social interaction in language learning. In the classroom, teachers can foster language acquisition by creating an environment where children are encouraged to communicate in English in a context that feels safe and supported. A teacher’s understanding of the child’s linguistic background allows for a more empathetic approach to language development. Additionally, language use among ESL learners may initially be assessed more for correctness than for content. This contrasts with how caregivers in a child’s home language setting often focus more on understanding meaning than form. Psycholinguistically, this highlights the role of context and feedback in language learning. Teachers can use a strategy of providing corrective feedback in a way that focuses on meaning, which aligns with the communicative approach in language acquisition.

From a psycholinguistic standpoint, the development of concepts and language is interconnected. As children acquire language, they also form cognitive concepts that are essential for understanding and categorizing the world around them. For instance, concepts such as “big” and “small” can be grasped in both a first and second language, though the vocabulary may differ. Psycholinguistics suggests that teaching children to associate words with concrete experiences or objects enhances their cognitive and linguistic growth. In ESL settings, concepts learned in the first language often transfer to English, although some distinctions can cause confusion. For example, emotional concepts like “happiness” or “family” might vary culturally. Psycholinguistic



research emphasizes that the teaching of abstract concepts must be supported by tangible, real-world examples and repetition to aid in concept transfer. Psycholinguistics also supports the use of interactive, multisensory methods in language learning. Young learners, particularly ESL children, benefit from exposure to language through various sensory channels. Teachers can integrate visual aids, physical activities, songs, and role-playing into lessons to make learning engaging and accessible. For example, in teaching animal sounds, children learn both language and culture through songs like “Old Macdonald Had a Farm,” while also understanding that different languages interpret these sounds differently (e.g., “moo” in English vs. “woo” in Chinese). Moreover, children should be encouraged to play with language—testing out new words, structures, and concepts in a safe environment. Moreover, children need to have adult language adjusted to their level of understanding and, finally, all children learn faster when language and content are combined. Children need a variety of experiences with a concept in a variety of situations and with the variety of people [3.1992].

Psycholinguistically, this mirrors the natural process of hypothesis testing, where children experiment with language rules and adjust them based on feedback. This exploration, which involves using language creatively to express ideas, is fundamental in both first and second language acquisition.

In classrooms, particularly those with ESL learners, writing and reading activities should be integrated into daily routines. Psycholinguistics affirms that language skills develop most effectively when listening, speaking, reading, and writing are treated as interconnected processes. Writing simple sentences or drawing pictures that represent new vocabulary helps reinforce the language, while reading activities allow students to see language in context and expand their vocabulary.

To conclude we may say that teachers must use psycholinguistically based tactics to create an interactive, language-rich environment that respects the child's cognitive and cultural background in order to maximize English language learning for young ESL learners. Teachers may help ESL students improve their English language proficiency by acknowledging that language learning is a social and cognitive process. Fluent, self-assured speakers who can successfully traverse both their home and school languages will be developed via the use of multisensory approaches, cultural awareness, and a strong concentration on both language and content.

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