From: *One Child, Two Languages: A Guide for Preschool Educators of Children Learning English as a Second Language* by Patton O. Tabors
The EMAA Head Start Education/Diversity Specialist has a copy of this book to loan to EMAA staff who are working with ELL children and their parents.

Using Communication and Classroom Organization to Support Second-Language Learning

Preschool educators may encounter a variety of second-language learning situations in their classrooms, from one child who speaks a language other than English to an entire classroom of children who speak the same or a variety of different languages. And, of course, no matter what the second-language composition of a classroom may be at the beginning of the school year, there may be a very different configuration by the end of the school year. Furthermore, one year may not look anything like the next.

Even so, there are some basic ingredients common to all preschool classroom situations in which there are second-language learners. These commonalities make it possible for preschool educators to plan effective classrooms for second language–learning children. This chapter presents information concerning what the teacher's role is in communicating with second-language–learning children and their families and in organizing the classroom to support second-language learning.

GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT THE CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC BACKGROUNDS OF SECOND-LANGUAGE–LEARNING CHILDREN

One of the first questions on a preschool educator's mind at the beginning of the school year no doubt is, "Who are these children in my class?" Answering this question is complicated enough when there is a match between the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the teacher and the children; when this is not the case, the task of getting information about the children may be even more complicated.

Following are some rules for preschool educators to use as guidelines when embarking on the process of getting information about children in a preschool education classroom.

Rule #1: Do not make any assumptions about a child's cultural or linguistic background without getting further information.

This is clearly the starting point for any data-gathering activity and should apply equally to all of the children in a classroom. In the process of collecting information from the families, interesting and helpful characteristics may be discovered, like other languages spoken or countries visited, that would otherwise never be known. It is important to remember that if information is collected formally, in a questionnaire format, it must be collected for all of the children in the classroom.

Rule #2: Decide what information is important to know.

If the primary interest is in collecting cultural and linguistic information, then there are certain categories of information that will be important as children move into the preschool education situation. These categories include 1) basic demographic information, 2) linguistic practices in and outside of the home, and 3) relevant cultural practices.

Basic demographic information includes information about where the child was born; when the child arrived in the area; what the family configuration is (including extended family) what, if any, religious affiliation the child has; and what the other child are arrangements are for the child.

Basic linguistic information includes the language(s) spoken at home, the family members who speak those languages, and the language(s) to which the child has been exposed, including when and where.

Important cultural practices information includes child-rearing beliefs about discipline, toileting behavior, and separation problems; food preferences and feeding practices; and how children are expected to behave toward adults and in group situations. Further information might also be collected about culturally appropriate behaviors that diverge considerably from practices in preschool education classrooms.

Rule #3: Plan how to get this information.

This type of information can be collected from formal questionnaires, from trips to the library, and/or through informal chats with parents or other cultural representatives. In many situations, there is an intake interview when a family applies for admission to a preschool education program or a home visit is done in the first few weeks of school. In either of these situations, basic demographic and linguistic information could be developed from questions asked at that time. If sitting down with the family to answer questions is not an option, sending home a questionnaire with demographic and linguistic questions is a possibility, but one that does not always yield results. If a questionnaire is sent home without response, it may be necessary to have someone with the appropriate linguistic skills call the family to get the answers over the telephone.

Information on cultural practices may be more difficult to acquire. One good starting point for the preschool educator is the library, where books on individual countries, religions, or linguistic groups might provide some insights and some relevant background information. Books or magazine articles also provide historical information that might be important in understanding why a particular family has recently arrived in the community.

Again, however, it is certainly helpful for a preschool educator to have the option of asking parents about their cultural practices. As one Head Start teacher remarked,

> On the home visit paperwork, we have a form that the office wants anyway. What country are you from? What foods do you eat? Do you celebrate any holidays? But those, they don't get down to the behaviors and the traditions, the taking off the shoes things. For me, it depends on the parent a lot; if they seem like they're the willing kind, I'll come out and ask them.

The preschool educator may also consider asking the parents to include him or her in a community-wide celebration, which could provide important cultural information as well as let

the parents know that the educator values their cultural traditions and is interested in knowing more.

Rule #4: Think about using a variety of ways to get this information.

Getting information from second-language families can be a challenge. One of the most basic hurdles is, of course, finding an effective way to communicate. Here are some suggestions.

First, face-to-face communication in the second language may be the most difficult for the parents. Face-to-face communication requires quick processing and formulation of a response in real time. This takes a relatively high level of proficiency in a language. It is important to remember that if face-to-face communication is used in a language that is a second language for the parents, the questions may be difficult for them to understand and they may have difficulty putting together their answers. Therefore, if face-to-face communication is used, the same question should be asked more than once using slightly different wording to confirm that consistent answers are being given.

Second, written communications in the parents' second language may give them a chance to read and respond in a way that is less pressured than face-to-face communication. Reading ability in a 'second language may be stronger than speaking ability. Furthermore, written communications can be shared with other members of the same first-language community who can read and write the second language. Parents with low levels of proficiency may seek out a translator to help complete a questionnaire. For this reason, it is important to remember that a completed questionnaire may not represent the actual language abilities of the parents, but may represent their ability to recruit translation help when needed.

Third, communications that can be arranged in the parents' home language (either oral or written) will likely be the most comfortable for the parents. Many programs have parent liaisons who are bilingual in English and in on of the languages spoken by parents in the program. In this case, both written and oral communications can be translated into the home language, and responses can then be translated for the benefit of staff members who do not speak that home language. If a program does not have access to parent liaisons, it will be necessary to develop relationships with community members who can act as translators. Public schools, churches, community agencies, community newspapers, and even local grocery stores are good places to ask about translation services.

These same community resources may also be a good place to seek out cultural information as well. (See also Williams & De Gaetano, 1985.) Frequently, individuals identify themselves as cultural representatives and make themselves available to discuss the cultural differences that they have noticed between their home culture and the culture in their new community. If one of the parents in a classroom assumes such a role, it can make the teacher's job much easier. As the same Head Start teacher quoted previously told me,

> Like Peilan ... she's great at answering questions. She has been the lifesaver in this room because ... in the beginning of the year she didn't understand as much, but now she can translate back and forth between Mandarin and English—and that's just been wonderful.

Figure 1 is a sample questionnaire that can be adapted to use in a variety of situations. Questions can be added or dropped depending on the particular information that is needed. In deciding what information to ask for, the teacher should think about its usefulness in the preschool education context.

COMMUNICATING WITH SECOND LANGUAGE–LEARNING CHILDREN

By collecting the kind of information that is requested in the sample questionnaire, a teacher would have a better idea of the backgrounds of the children who were coming into or who were already in his or her classroom. But this information would only give the educator a starting point when it came to actually communicating with a child who came to the classroom knowing little or no English. This section discusses ideas about how to communicate with second-language–learning children in ways that will help them understand and begin to use English.

Starting with What the Children Know

A common practice for the teachers I interviewed was for them to ask parents of children whose home language was not English to provide a few important words in their home language, so that the teachers could do some low-level communicating with the children in the first few weeks in the classroom. Words for *listen, bathroom,* and *eat* were very useful in this early period in the classrooms and helped the teachers and the children feel connected. At the same time, by asking the parents to provide these phrases, teachers also deliver the message that they value the home language and are open to finding out more about how the home language sounds and is used.

Starting Slowly

One of the features of the English-language nursery school classroom that I observed was that the teachers did not make immediate efforts to communicate with the second-language learners beyond a welcoming smile and greeting. In fact, they gave the second-language learners a lot of time to become familiar with the classroom situation before approaching them with questions or directives in English. Several times in the first few weeks of school Marion even referred to Byong-sun in the third person (e.g., "Let's give Byong-sun a chance," "Let's show Byong-sun how to pick this up"), including him by using his name without actually directing her speech to him. This approach established the fact that Byong-sun was being considered part of the group, but that specific responses would not be required of him. By setting up such a *low-demand situation,* the teachers gave the second-language learners time to start the adjustment process in this new cultural and linguistic setting.

In fact, the language that the teachers used around the second-language learners in the first month of school was probably too complicated for them to understand anyway, as only 30% of the teachers' communications involved simplified language. This language use was probably similar to, if not the same as, the way they were addressing all of the children, including the English speakers, in the classroom. After all, in the first few weeks of school, the teachers did not know very much about many of the children in the classroom. So their choice was to use standard "nursery school talk" when addressing any of the children. For the second-language learners, this early exposure probably made it possible for them to begin to at least tune in to the sounds of the new language, even though they probably did not understand what was actually being said.

After the first month, however, the teachers switched to less-complicated language in an attempt to help the children begin to understand English. This reminded me of how adults in American culture speak to infants as though they can comprehend sophisticated speech until the infants are old enough to actually start acquiring receptive abilities, at which time adults begin to simplify their speech by using various forms of "motherese" to get their messages across.

This is not to say, however, that teachers should not be responsive to communicative efforts made by the second-language learners. In fact, the rule in the nursery school seemed to be to always respond even if the message from the child was not understand=able. Just like the teacher mentioned previously who engaged in dilingual discourse with the Chinese brothers in Saville-Troike's (1987) study (see Chapter 3), the adults in the nursery school tried to guess what the topic of the message might be and responded accordingly. For example, one day at the drawing table Poram showed her completed project to Marion and said something to her that was unintelligible (i.e., her utterance sounded like a sentence, but it was not possible to understand what she had said). Marion replied anyway, "Oh, are you making that?"

Buttressing Communication

When the teachers in the nursery school started the process of communicating with the second-language learners in their classroom, they frequently "doubled the message" by using words along with some type of gesture, action, or directed gaze. For example, one morning two Japanese sisters, Kumiko and Kaori, arrived with a paper bag full of vegetables. They approached Rosa, who pointed to the bag and asked, "What's in there?" Kumiko opened the bag and showed Rosa what was inside. Rosa said, "How about feeding Ponytails [the guinea pig]?" and she walked to the guinea pig cage, gesturing for the sisters to follow. At the guinea pig cage, Kumiko began taking the vegetables out of the bag and handing them to Kaori to put in the cage. Rosa named each vegetable as it was put in the cage, "Another carrot, and lettuce."
On another occasion, after watching Leandro wander around the room for a while with a painting he had made, I said to him, "Do you want to put it in your cubby?" He started to go to the cubby area, then he stopped and touched the paint on the picture. It was still wet. He showed me this, so I said, "Shall I hang it up?" indicating the line strung up to dry paintings. He brought the picture to me, I hung it up, and he went to the block area. In this example, Leandro uses nonverbal communication to indicate what the problem is with my first suggestion. My response about hanging the picture on the line is reinforced by indicating the location that I am talking about, because this was a special arrangement for hanging up pictures, and I was not sure that Leandro would understand what I was saying.

One of the teachers I interviewed referred to this as using “body languge” to help a second-language-learning child understand. I call this technique buttressing communication, because the additional information delivered by a gesture, an action, or a directed gaze adds another dimension that helps the child tune in to exactly what is being talked about, making it easier to get the message.

Repetition

Another technique that is used successfully when communicating with second-language–learning children involves using repetition. Saying the same thing more than once gives a child more than one opportunity to catch on to what is being said. If the repetition involves a single item, it may also provide an opportunity for the child to actually learn the word. For example, one morning at the drawing table the following sequence occurred in rapid succession:

Marion to Jennifer: See how Sook-whan did her hand?
Rosa to Poram: Are you going to cut out your hand?

Marion to Jennifer: Look at that hand, Myong's right hand.
Marion to Miguel: Do you want to trace your hand, too?

Frequently the teachers also emphasized the words as they said them and put them at or near the end of the sentence for better comprehension.

Talking About the Here and Now

One major feature of successful communication with second-language learners is that it is grounded in the here and now. Talking about what is right there gives the second-language learner a chance to narrow down the field of what the conversation is about and focus in on a more restricted number of options for response as well. As second-language learners begin to use their productive abilities, the context in which the conversation is held also helps the teacher understand what the child is talking about.

For example, one day outside on the playground, I was sitting on a large rubber tire when Poram came to sit down next to me. Quickly Poram discovered that the tire had writing all around it (Firestone, and so forth). She and I started to name the letters and numbers. Poram had little difficulty with any of the letters except the ones that were upside down because of where we were sitting on the tire. Noticing that there was a problem, Poram gestured to me that the letters were in a strange position. I told her "upside down," and she repeated it. The next time she had the same problem she said, "Upside down." She also stumbled over the number 8. After I told her what it was, Poram was able to identify it correctly later on.

In this example, the fact that we were sharing the same physical space and had reference to the same information on the tire helped to make this a successful communicative experience for both of us, including my being able to provide some missing vocabulary items for Poram.

Expanding and Extending

Once children begin to demonstrate their developing capabilities with their new language, teachers can use communicative opportunities as ways of helping children expand and extend their language skills. In this technique, it is necessary to start with what a child already knows and work from there. For example, one morning when I sat down at a table where children were working with playdough, Sook-whan held up a round piece of playdough to me and said, "Cookie." I replied, "Is this a chocolate-chip cookie? May I eat it?" Sook-whan nodded and I pretended to eat the cookie. I then told Sook-whan, "That's a good cookie." Later, Sook-whan held up a cube-shape piece of playdough and said, "Chocolate." We followed the same procedure as before as I pretended to eat the piece of chocolate and commented on how good it was. This play routine used Sook-whan's original utterance as a starting point and then developed parallel verbal constructions to extend and expand her language knowledge. This turned out to be successful both as communication and as play.

Upping the Ante

One of the difficult judgment calls that teachers have to make when communicating with second-language learners is when to be more insistent that the children get beyond the nonverbal techniques that they have developed and actually use language to get their point across. In order

to push the process along, it is often necessary for a teacher to up the ante, insisting on verbal communication, for example, before complying with a request.
This was demonstrated one day when Miguel approached Marion with a suspender that had come loose. The following interaction occurred:

Marion: You're trying to tell me something.
Miguel: (no reply)
Marion: Do you want me to do something?
Miguel: (no reply)
Marion: Do you want me to do something with your suspender? Put it on my nose? (starts to do so)
Miguel: Red. (showing her his pants)
Marion: Yes, red ... red what?
Miguel: Red pants.
Marion: Do you want me to attach this to your red pants?
Miguel: Yes.
Marion: Okay. I'll do that for you.

I found myself in just this same situation one day with Leandro. As I was leaving the art table Leandro walked by, stopped in front of me, and pointed to his untied shoelace. I said, "What do you need?" He paused for a moment and said, "Please do my shoes." I said enthusiastically, "All right!" letting him know how pleased I was at his linguistic accomplishment.

Fine Tuning

When communicating with second-language-learning children, teachers must always estimate what level of proficiency a child has achieved so that their language can be calibrated to that level. Of course, this is a very difficult task and many mistakes can be made along the way to successful communication. Fortunately, most communicative situations allow for a process of fine tuning, when it is possible to reiterate a message in a form that might be more understandable. Not surprisingly, successful communication with second-language learners requires a lot of fine tuning on the part of teachers.

For example, after lunch one day in early November I found Leandro alone in the block area looking at a book. He had a pair of plastic glasses with him that he had been wearing off and on all day. I picked them up and said, "I like your glasses. Are they yours or do they belong here at school?" This complicated question did not get a reply. Then I said, "Do these come from school?" and Leandro shook his head and said, "House." Then I said, "Are they from Halloween?" And he said, "Yes." Slightly later Leandro spotted a piece of candy in my pocket. He asked, "What's this?" I replied, "Candy," and he repeated, "Candy." I said, "Sally gave it to me." He said, "Halloween?" I answered, "Yes."

By realizing that my first question was perhaps too complicated for Leandro to answer and by rephrasing it to make it simpler, I made it possible for Leandro to understand what I was asking. I then took a chance that he would know the term Halloween as there had been a lot of talk about Halloween in the classroom. He not only knew what I was talking about but demonstrated how much he knew by turning the conversation around later and using the term to

ask me a question. By fine tuning my initiation I was able to prolong a conversation that turned out to be very successful.

Combining Techniques for Communicating with Second-Language Learners

Although these techniques for communicating with second-language learners have been presented individually, they rarely appear separately from each other. In any attempt to communicate with second-language learners, teachers will combine techniques and keep trying until they find out what will work in any given situation. The transcript of my discussion with Leandro at the end of Chapter 4 shows a variety of these techniques being used simultaneously in my efforts to keep the conversation going.

Furthermore, although these techniques have been presented as relevant for communication with second-language—learning preschoolers, they are, in fact, very similar to techniques used to communicate with first-language learners of a slightly younger age group. Marion, for example, talked about how similar the second-language children were to prelinguistic toddlers:

> When I first started here I had a lot of children who really had no English at all, and then—since I'm comfortable with toddlers, toddler was one of my favorite periods with my own children and the use of preverbal communication—that was sort of the level on which I began things.

Intuitively, Marion discovered that she could use the same communicative techniques with her second-language learners that she had previously used with 18-month to 2'/2-year-old first-language learners. Teachers who have worked with a younger age group will certainly recognize many of these techniques as being those that are needed to communicate successfully with toddlers. Imported into the second-language—learning preschool classroom, they make it possible for teachers and second-language learners to communicate more quickly and with less frustration right from the beginning.

ORGANIZING THE CLASSROOM FOR SECOND-LANGUAGE LEARNERS

How the classroom is set up can have a major impact on how comfortable and secure a second-language—learning child may feel there. As discussed in the previous chapters, there is a strong social component to a second-language—learning child's adaptation to the classroom. Classroom organization can be used to ensure that adaptation occurs more smoothly and more quickly.

Physical Setup: Providing Safe Havens

In observing second-language—learning children in preschool education classrooms, I have often noticed that they choose to settle down to play in physical settings where manipulatives (like Legos, puzzles, playdough, or small blocks) are available. As the portrait of Byong-sun in Chapter 2 shows, his first choice that morning was to go to the table where the Legos were available and to play there for quite some time either alone or in proximity to another child, whom he ignored. The obvious advantage of these locations is that they provide an activity that a child can pursue without asking for help from anyone else or having to negotiate play with other children. As long as there is a space and some materials available, a child can

proceed to play without interference, eventually making a decision about whether to interact with other people.

In setting up a classroom for second-language learners, teachers can make sure that they are providing places in the classroom where second-language learners can feel comfortable, competent, and occupied. These areas, which I think of as safe havens, can provide the children with a base of operations from which they can move into the rest of the classroom activities when they are ready.

Classroom Routines: Helping Children Become Members of the Group

The social aspect of the nursery school classroom that proved most helpful for the second-language learners in my study was the fact that the teachers established a consistent set of routines for the children. These routines meant that, with a little observation, the second-language—learning children could pick up cues as to what to do and when, using the English-speaking children as models, even before they could understand the language being used around them. The daily schedule of arrival, free play, cleanup, snack time, outside play, and circle time gave the second-language learners a set of activity structures to acquire (e.g., put jackets in cubby, go to rug, find a place at a table for snack, help put toys away), which immediately allowed them to act like members of the group.

For example, one morning early in the school year, when Marion began to organize a soup-making operation at one of the tables, Sook-whan was standing nearby watching. Marion asked her, "Would you like to help, too, Sook-whan?" Sook-whan nodded her head. Marion then announced, "Okay, there will be five helpers." Sook-whan sat down at the table as Marion named the five helpers, including Sook-whan.

In this example, Sook-whan is addressed by the teacher in a questioning tone that includes her name. This routine is similar in general format to routines that occur again and again in the classroom: The teacher begins to display particular types of ma-terials for a project and invites children to engage in the project. From previous experiences, Sook-whan can guess that Marion has asked if she wishes to join the group. Then when she hears her name and sees the other children start to sit down at the table, Sook-whan does the same, indicating that she understands that she has been included. Even without knowing anything more than her own name, Sook-whan could look like she knew what was being asked of her because the situation was a routine one in the classroom.

Other researchers have observed similar situations with young second-language learners. In their case study of a 5-year-old Taiwanese boy acquiring English in a child care center, Huang and Hatch (1978) found that

> Paul's prompt non-verbal responses to verbal commands were frequently misleading. For example, on his second day at school, when the teacher ... said, "Paul, would you like to sit there?" he smiled and sat down immediately. (p. 121)

The researchers' speculation was that

> If he responded to any verbal cue at all it would be to "Paul." More likely he saw the other children seating themselves and (the teacher) pointing to the chair as she spoke to him. His response was the expected one and could not be taken as evidence of sentence comprehension. (p. 121)

Because children are so good at using established routines to guess what an appropriate action might be in a given situation, it is only when a child guesses incorrectly that this strategy is fully revealed. One day in the nursery school classroom, Naoshi and Rebecca were sitting side by side working independently with story pieces. I sat down next to Rebecca who was having a dif-ficult time setting up the pieces on the plastic stands. Naoshi, however, had figured out how to set up the pieces and was putting some together. Rebecca said to me, "I want to do what Naoshi did." I answered, "Go ahead." She said, "I don't know how." I said, "Ask Naoshi to help you." Rebecca turned to Naoshi and said, "Can you help me to do that?" He handed her one of the plastic pieces. She asked again, "How do you do it?" He gave her the plastic bag that still had one extra piece in the bottom.

In this example, Naoshi's best guess is that Rebecca has asked him to provide her with pieces that she cannot reach, a typical request in this situation; not. actually understanding what she has said, he still responds with an appropriate, if misguided, action in an attempt to be helpful.

In interviews, both Marion and Rosa pointed to these routines as being an important aspect of the classroom, particularly for the second-language learners. (In the following interaction, P = author and M = Marion.)

P: What kind of patterns do you think you have established with the kids? ... What helps the kids, particularly the second-language kids?
M: I think, one thing, the structure and rhythm of the day is fairly well set. We do have a definite routine ... at the beginning particularly we try to be fairly consistent about the routine ...
P: Does it surprise you…how quickly the kids seem to pick up on the routines and fit right in and, on the whole, not be confused and ...
M: Right, it really does.
P: It surprised me!

Rosa mentioned that in the beginning it was a lot of work to establish the routines in the classroom—she could not just stand back and "let it happen"—but, in the long run, it was worth the effort.

Just how powerful routines can be in helping children be-come members of a group occasionally becomes apparent when a routine changes without the child being aware of the change. Snow (1983) observed just such an incident in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, where a 5-year-old English girl, Nicola, attended a kindergarten classroom. Nicola seemed to be a fully functioning member of the class:

> She participated in art projects, listened attentively during story reading, executed all the steps to the dance during music class. Her only failure came one day when the teacher announced, while passing out snack, "Today we're going to wait until everyone is back at his seat before we open our milk." Nicola failed to observe this deviation from the standard routine, since she understood not a single word of Dutch, and she was soundly scolded for having disobeyed. Nicola had done such a good job of acting as if she spoke Dutch that betrayal of her ignorance was treated as obstinacy rather than poor language learning. (pp. 148-149)

Fortunately, most teachers of young children in second language—learning situations are more sensitive to the possibility of a child not understanding verbal instructions than the teacher was in this situation. But Nicola's reliance on classroom routines as a basis for her activities,

particularly in the absence of any understanding of the language being used, is quite typical of preschool-age second-language—learning children.

In setting up a classroom for second-language learners, teachers can capitalize on the helpfulness of routines. Early in the school year it may be desirable to have a strict schedule in order to get children oriented to a set of routine situations. Minimizing confusion and maximizing structure will help the second-language learners tune in to the classroom and feel more secure there sooner. Allowing children to participate in activities in easily understood ways will help them join the social group and be exposed to more language.

Small-Group Activities: Ensuring Inclusion

In the nursery school classroom, the teachers were always careful to include a mix of first- and second-language children in organized small-group activities. Whenever there was an activity underway, like making pizza muffins or soup, teachers would invite groups of children to join the activity, particularly mentioning the names of the second-language—learning children so that they would know they were being included. This inclusionary policy had many benefits:

1. The invitation from the teacher made it possible for the child to join the group without having to negotiate entry.
2. Once included around the table, the child would be in social proximity to the other children, making interactions easier.
3. The child would hear a lot of language relating to the activity that was being pursued.

In setting up a classroom for second-language learners, teachers can use small-group activities as an ideal time to begin to get second-language learners involved. Small-group activities, under a teacher's direction, can help second-language learners begin the transition from more isolated to more coordinated play activities.

Social Support: Getting Help from the English-Speaking Children

In the English-language nursery school classroom, the support that was provided to the second-language—learning children came almost entirely from the adults; the English-speaking children chose to play with English-speaking playmates in the class-room until the second-language—learning children began to communicate in English. This pattern developed, no doubt, be-cause the English-speaking children probably believed that the second-language children's unresponsiveness to their social advances was meant as rejection rather than an inability to under-stand.

This meant that the second-language—learning children had to wait for months to acquire English-speaking friends and to get involved in activities like sociodramatic play that are heavily dependent on language. Is it possible to get second-language—learning children into contact with English speakers more quickly? And if so, would this enhance the acquisition of the second language for these children?

These questions were the basis for an intervention study by Hirschler (1991,1994) in a preschool classroom serving 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old Khmer-, Spanish-, and English-speaking children at the Demonstration School of the University of Massachusetts, Lowell. This school is based on a multilingual and multicultural model (Tabors, 1988). In this model, children's

preliteracy development in their first language is supported during language periods taught by native-speaking teachers. At other times of the day, however, the children join group activities that are conducted primarily in English. Hirschler believed that the English-speaking children in this classroom could act as valuable language re-sources for the second-language—learning children, if they could be persuaded to interact effectively with them.

Recognizing that children are capable of modifying their speech to less proficient speakers (Shatz & Gelman, 1977), Hirschler (1991) designed an intervention in which she trained five English-speaking children in a variety of strategies for approaching and sustaining interaction with the second-language learners in the classroom. These strategies were ones that Hirschler developed from a review of the literature on input that has been shown to be most beneficial for second-language learners. They are summarized in Table 1.

In order to introduce these techniques, Hirschler (1991) and an assistant used role playing to model the desired behaviors before the entire group of children and then individually with the five children chosen for the study. All of the strategies were understood by the children and all but recasts were successfully elicited during the training sessions. In order to remind the children of these strategies, each was equipped with a reminder bracelet, and posters were placed in the classroom as well.

Interactional data collected pre- and postintervention indicated that rates of initiations to second-language learners increased from 2.5 to 3 times for four of the five children. Rates of turn taking and utterances per turn also increased, as did language modifications. The overall effect of the training, then, was to increase contact between the English-speaking target children and the second-language learners earlier than would have been the case otherwise.

Table I. Strategies for interaction used in training English-speaking children to communicate with second-language learners

- *Initiation*: Children were taught to approach other children, establish eye contact, and ask the children to play with them or with a particular toy.
- *General linguistic aspects*: Children were taught to speak slowly with good enunciation.
- *Reinitiation*: Children were taught to repeat the initiation if it met with nonresponse.
- *Request clarification:* Children were taught to request clarification of a response by the second-language learner if the response was not understood.
- *Recast/expansion*: Children were taught to repeat an utterance with slightly different wording when the second-language learner indicated a lack of comprehension through nonresponse, noncontingent response, or other nonverbal signs.

Source: Hirschler (1991).

After the intervention, one particular English-speaking child took on a protective and teaching role with several of the Khmer speakers, consequently greatly increasing her interaction with them. In the following example (Hirschler, 1991), Tiffany is show-ing Therry some shells on the science table:

Tiffany: O.K. have to smell this. O.K.? That don't smell, does it? Ha! That don't smell. That don't smell.
Therry: (giggles)

Tiffany: Hear the ocean? Hear the ocean? Hear it? Oh, this one is loud! You can hear this one. Can you hear it? Wait, come here. Come here. Want to hear it? Look, hear this. Hear the ocean? (p. 100)

In this example Tiffany is functioning much like a teacher working with a second-language learner, using repetition and talk about the here and now to deliver her message. By helping the English-speaking children understand that the second-language learners needed help and by providing in-formation about how they might help, Hirschler made it possible for the second-language learners to hear more contextualized language than would have been possible if their only conversational partners were the teachers in the classroom.

In these circumstances, the second-language-learning children did not have to wait until they could begin to produce English in order to be included in social groupings with their English-speaking peers. Hirschler (1991) speculates that "this benign form of social engineering could act as a catalyst to language development" (p. 125) for the second-language learners. She suggests that it would be useful to integrate "into the multicultural classroom, through discussion and group activities, the idea that some children are learning to speak English and there are ways that we can help them" (pp. 125-126).

In setting up a classroom for second-language learners, teachers can point out to English-speaking children that there are children in the classroom who speak a different language, that it will take time for them to begin to speak a new language, and that there are some ways that they can help in this process. Teachers might even ask for volunteer helpers or buddies who could be partnered with second-language learners early in the school year to help reduce their isolation and increase their contacts with English-speaking children. Rather than making the second-language learners feel different (they are already feeling different), this approach can help them feel more connected, while at the same time giving English-speaking children valuable infor-mation about how to help other children.

CONCLUSION

The suggestions in this chapter related to classroom organization can be seen as ways of accomplishing a particular objective in a second-language-learning setting termed lowering the affective filter (Krashen, 1980). Because the social situation can be so difficult for young second-language-learning children, it is possible for emotional factors to override the language-learning process. By making second-language-learning children more comfortable in the social situation, teachers increase the likelihood that their communicative efforts—and those of the English-speaking children in the classroom—will begin to make sense to the second-language learners. By setting up a classroom environment that helps second-language learners feel secure and competent, teachers make the child's second-language-learning task that much easier.