

# Myths and misconceptions of second language learning



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Children learn second languages quickly and easily. False. Research comparing children to adults has consistently demonstrated that adolescents and adults perform better than young children under controlled conditions (e. g., Snow & Hoefnagel-Hoehle, 1978). The younger the child, the more skilled in acquiring a second language. False. Some research argues that the earlier children begin to learn a second language, the better (e. g., Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979). However, research does not support this conclusion in school settings.

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The more time students spend in a second language context, the quicker they learn the language. False. Research, however, indicates that this increase exposure to English does not necessarily speed the acquisition of English.

Children have acquired a second language once they can speak it. False. For school-aged children, proficiency in face-to-face communication does not imply proficiency in the more complex academic language needed to engage in many classroom activities.

All children learn a second language in the same way. False. Effective instruction for children from culturally diverse backgrounds requires varied instructional activities that consider the children's diversity of experience.