

Practical and Theoretical Issues in the Study of Partial Language Acquisition

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It is now well established that a significant number of children learn language based on experience that is native-like in its quality (it occurs in a naturalistic setting in the early months and years of life), but not in its quantity (it is restricted to a few hours a day inside the home). The limited proficiency achieved by these learners raises important questions about the nature of their linguistic competence (Does it differ in degree or in kind from that of monolinguals?), the nature of the mechanisms underlying language acquisition (How much experience is actually required?), and even the nature of language itself (Why are some phenomena more likely than others to be mastered with relative success?) Drawing on work on the partial acquisition of Korean by children of immigrants in Hawaii as well as work on first language acquisition in a monolingual setting, I will attempt to address these issues in a way that identifies various avenues for possible further research, both in Korean and in other languages.