Early Childhood English Education – A new dawn, or hazy *Sunshine*?

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Research related to the development of language is discussed, including principal landmarks in the development of pre-linguistic communication, the continuity between pre-linguistic and linguistic communication; the focus is on the salient features of early linguistic communication. There are wide gaps between theoretical descriptions of language development and what we see happening in the foreign language classroom. There is also a lack of congruence between the topics that occupy early childhood and those presented in textbooks. Functional gaps occur, as classroom instruction centers on grammatical or linguistic functions, but ignores social functions almost entirely. Movement is sometimes used to help children memorize names of objects, yet true games have a language-like deep structure. If language is to be studied in lower primary schools or earlier, the gaps between L1 acquisition and L2 learning need to be narrowed. Teaching English in early childhood must involve the Language Acquisition Support System, utilize formats and the deep structure of games, and focus on topics of interest and relevance to very young children.

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