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English as a Foreign Language at the Age of Eight

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In the first part of the article we discuss the relevance of the sources that have contributed insights into the process of learning a foreign language (in this case English) at the Piagetian "concretely operational level" of the child's cognitive development.
In the second part, we review the first and second stages of the Zagreb research project on learning English at the age of eight, and the third stage of the Project is analysed — the focus of analysis being the motivation of the subjects and the sources of difficulties during the learning process.
In the third part we discuss the advantages of an early start in a foreign language: the familiarization with the linguistic properties of the foreign idiom at an age when it is readily accepted; the beneficial effect upon the cognitive growth of the individual, and the prevention of the development of ethnocentric tendencies in later life.
The conclusion we reach is that foreign language learning at the age of eight is a "whole-person" process with distinctive features of its own — it is not a duplication of the process of acquisition of a first language, nor is it identical to the acquisition of a second language — although it resembles both processes in certain aspects.

THE STATE OF THE ART

1.0. The ultimate aim of introducing a foreign language into the school curriculum while the learner is very young is the production of competent bilingual speakers throughout the population.

Our immediate concern is with the initiation of the process: when and how to start a foreign language to ensure a sound basis for the accomplishment of the goal —

a bilingual speaker. For appealing though the idea of a community of bilingual children might be we are, for reasons of economy, interested in it only marginally — as an eventual by-product — while our main target is the bilingual adult capable of using a foreign language in his life and vocation.

Why, then, are children brought onto the scene at all, if we agree with Rousseau that a child is not a miniature adult and his mind is not the mind of an adult on a small scale? The consequences of this truism, so much sinned against in the past, is the necessity of inventing techniques and strategies of learning different from those used in teaching adults or adolescents.

The reasons that speak in favour of an early start stem from three different sources:

— the findings of neurophysiology, and developmental psycholinguistics;
— empirical and experimental evidence derived from the results of acquiring a second language by groups and individuals through a variety of immersion programmes organised in the countries where the target language is indigenous;
— empirical and experimental evidence derived from the results obtained by formal classroom tuition in different sociocultural settings in the learners' mother-tongue environments.

The point to be made with regard to neurophysiological evidence is that much of it is derived from the study of the abnormal, as Roberts has already cautioned (Roberts, 1973; 105). Developmental psycholinguistics, on the other hand, observes the behavior of children acquiring their L 1, so neither of these investigations is directly connected to the acquisition of an L 2. Nevertheless, a number of as yet unresearched hypotheses, (highly relevant for the study of acquisition of an L 2 at an early age), about the linguistic and intellectual deveolpment of the child can be drawn from the evidence collected both by neurophysiology and developmental psycholinguistics.

Experimental and empirical evidence from different programmes conducted in the L 2 country, used in designing the programmes for formal classroom teaching in the learner's L 1 country, can be vastly misleading, as a number of environmental and operational factors are as a rule entirely different — time of exposure to L 2, and the socio-cultural setting in which learning takes place, being the most obvious

ones. But once the differences are identified, evidence from such programmes can be utilised in classroom situations especially when it offers insights into the process of acquisition of an L 2, which seems to have — from the little we know about it at present — certain universal features.

As regards the third source — experimental and empirical evidence from the results of teaching an L 2 in classrooms in the learners' own country — this should not be generalized before the conditions in different programmes (which do not occur frequently) have been identified and verified, the variables being so different. Differing motivation and attitudes of learners towards a particular L 2 can account, for example, for the differences between the results obtained.

The only logical conclusion that can be inferred from what has been said is that, valuable as it is, evidence stemming from any of the three sources must be treated with caution and regarded as raw material which should be further processed and investigated rather than used as a premise on which to build theories about L 2 acquisition at an early age. And if it ever comes to theories, it will probably be possible to prove them only in the specific social, linguistic and cultural setting in which the research has been conducted.

In the following pages we shall have a closer look at the inventory of data coming from the three sources.

Neurophysiology and developmental psycholinguistics

1.1.1. In the clinical centre and childrens' hospital at Harvard, E. Lenneberg examined brain injuries and their implications for the development of language. His observations present an important source of evidence. The relevance of his observations for the acquisition of an L 2 stems from his hypothesis that language learning is tied to a certain period of life. It cannot begin to develop before a certain level of physical maturation has been reached.

> "Between the ages of three and the early teens the possibility for primary language acquisition continues to be good; the individual appears to be most sensitive to stimuli at this time and to preserve some innate flexibility for the organization of brain functions to carry out the complex integration of subprocesses necessary for the smooth elaboration of speech and language. After puberty, the ability for self-organization and adjustment to the physiological demands of verbal behaviour quickly declines. The brain behaves as it had become set in its ways and primary, basic language skills not acquired by that time, except for articulation, usually remain deficient for life. (New words may

be acquired throughout life, because the basic skill of naming has been learned at the very beginning of language development)" (Lenneberg, 1967, 158).

Although Lenneberg's primary concern is with L 1 acquisition he does not fail to take into consideration L 2 learning. He maintains that 'language-learning blocks' increase rapidly after puberty, that foreign accents cannot be easily suppressed after that time, and that automatic acquisition from mere exposure to an L 2 disappears after this age (Lenneberg 1967, 175). W. Penfield (the neurologist from Mc Gill University) also investigated the influence of brain injuries on the ability to acquire language in different periods of life, and came to almost identical conclusions (Penfield 1969).

The results of these observations are consistent with the empirical evidence of generations of practitioners who experienced puberty as a landmark in the process of learning an L 2 — a time when strategies ol learning change. Lenneberg's idea of cortical lateralization taking place in puberty and having effects upon the acquisition of language — the first language as well as the second, has been contradicted. According to some recent studies it is completed at the age af five (Krashen, 1973) and so cannot account for the difficulties in L 2 acquisition after puberty. Apparently, we still lack sufficient scientific evidence to attribute this phenomenon to biological causes alone. Nevertheless, puberty remains the time in human life in which difficulties in L 2 acquisition seem to begin. Some authors attribute them to psychological and social causes (Larsen & Smalley, 1972; Curran, 1972).

1.1.2. Developmental psycholinguistics, with its prolific bibliography on different aspects of the child's linguistic development, offers valuable insights into the mental processes at work during L 1 acquisition. The main interest of psycholinguists is directed towards the early stages of linguistic development. So, R. Brown in his already classic monograph "A First Language" deals with the acquisition of 14 grammatical morphemes in three children after the age of 3. This age group is explored in most of the investigations of U. Bellugi, W. Miller, S. Ervin Tripp, R. Campbell, C. Cazden, D. McNeill (to give a random list of psychologists and linguists) who, by analysing the beginnings of speech, try to solve the mystery of language acquisition in humans.

Research of this sort gave way to experiments in the field of L 2 acquisition, the hypothesis being that in a child's L 2 acquisition, the developmental stages of L 1 acquisition are repeated. Unfortunately, recent empirical and experimental evidence has not confirmed this hypothesis (Gillis, 1975; Hakuta, 1976).

It seems that transferring the findings of linguistic developmental studies from L 1 into the field of L 2 does not bring the desired results, as the two processes are different in more than one respect. While acquiring its L 1, the child builds concepts from objects, situations, events. It is the way the child constructs reality (Piaget, 1954). It is hard to expect that the child would go through the same linguistic stages, this time in a different code, once he has reached a much higher level of mental and intellectual development. He has already constructed a communication tool which serves his needs, and developed concepts that are valid in his world.

So, many confident attempts to discover the same developmental stages in the child's L 2 acquisition as were found in his L 1 did not produce the desired results for two obvious reasons: the difference in age at which the child acquires his L 1 and his L 2, and, consequently, the difference in the child's intellectual abilities; the difference in the entire setting of learning which ruled out the possibility of a mere duplication of the process. Nevertheless, it seems that psychology and developmental psycholinguistics can offer valuable help in providing answers to two crucial questions: the age at which to start a foreign idiom; and, this decided, the child's intellectual capacities, his attitude towards the objective world and his use of language at a particular age.

In Piaget's widely accepted classification of developmental periods in children (sensorimotor, birth to age 4; preoperational, 4 to 7; concrete operational, 7 to 11; formally operational, 11 to adulthood), the 'concrete operational' period emerges as the obvious time to start learning a foreign language.

> "Between the ages of roughly seven and ten the child enters upon a third stage of intellectual development, which involves the use of operations, albeit only 'concrete' operations, such as remains applied to things. He now arranges things in series and understands that in lining them up, say, in order of increasing size he is at the same time arranging them in order of decreasing size; the transitivity of relations like *bigger than*, and so on, which previously went unrecognized or was noted as a mere matter of fact, is now something of which he is explicitly aware.

> Classification is now accompanied by quantification of what is included... The chief limitation from the perspective of adult intelligence, is that compounding proceeds by approximation and is not combinatorial" (Piaget, 1971).

In intelligence which has reached the stage of concrete operations the object is clearly differentiated from the child's person and exists in the child's mind whether or not it is in sight (Piaget, 1954).

Some recent experiments have shown that there is a systematic difference in the language of children at the pre-operational level as opposed to those at the concrete operational level. There is a correlation between the operational and the linguistic level — "children in the pre-operational group rarely use any except scalar adjectives: 'that one is big, that one is little'; children in the concretely operational group, on the other hand, employ vector vocabulary: 'That one is bigger than the other' " (H. Sinclair de Zwaart, 1967).

Piaget makes a distinction between a child's ideas of reality developed through his own mental efforts and those influenced by adults, e.g. concepts taught at school. He designates the first group as spontaneous, the second as nonspontaneous (Piaget, 1933). Apparently L 1 acquisition should be listed among spontaneous concepts whereas formal classroom learning of L 2 belongs to the list of non-spontaneous. (In the case of a child exposed to L 2 in a natural environment, when L 2 has to be acquired as a compulsory tool of communication, L 2 obviously becomes a spontaneous concept).

Vygotsky's point is that the development of spontaneous and non-spontaneous concepts are related, and that they constantly influence each other. Most non-spontaneous concepts are, for him, scientific concepts. He draws an analogy between the interaction of the native and the foreign language and the interaction of scientific and spontaneous concepts since both processes belong in the sphere of developing verbal thought.

> "Success in learning a foreign language is contingent on a certain degree of maturity in the native language. The child can transfer to the new language the system of meanings he already possesses in his own. The reverse is also true — a foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native language. The child learns to see his native language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of his linguistic operations" (Vygotsky, 1962, 110).

Considering Piaget's authority and the positive evidence from a number of teachers working with children, we can hypothesize that a favourable age to start and L 2 would be between 7 and 11. This would be in keeping with the investigations of neurophysiologists who maintain that puberty is the landmark in L 2 learning, the time when difficulties begin. Starting between 7 and 11 the learner would have a long enough period of uninhibited learning.

According to Piaget this period includes the development of conscience and socialization. The child builds upon his previously acquired ability to concentrate and behave in a self-directive manner as he becomes joyful, careful, responsible and loving toward his associates (Piaget, 1973).

The next important thing that should be subject to examination is the child's use of language at this age. At this stage he possesses language, he uses its capacity for symbolic representation, he handles its grammatical and phonological structure. The difference between learning L 1 and L 2 is the difference between learning language and learning a language, as V. Cook (1977) rightly observed. And contrary to the earlier hypothesis that children achieve mastery of their native language by the age of 5 some recent investigations show that only by about 10 is the child's command of structure found to approach that of the adult. Very few investigations of children's linguistic competence between the ages of 5 and 10 have been carried out so far, probably because it has been assumed that the most significant linguistic development is more or less complete by the age of 5. Consequently, L 2 teaching materials for children under 10 almost never take any notice of the child's intellectual maturity and ability to grasp certain linguistic concepts which not unnaturally frequently results in poor results from L 2 teaching methods. Bitter experience has shown that most of the efforts using different AV and AL methods based on mechanical acquisition of language results in little more than parroting a number of well-pronounced utterances which are very soon forgotten. It becomes obvious that analysis of L 1 development at a given age should be a prerequisite of any research into L 2 acquisition.

Psychologists agree that children pass through similar stages of cognitive development. L 1 acquisition is very closely connected with the cognitive processes; indeed, "Language and thought are links in a genetic circle" (Piaget, 1968). The

logical conclusion is that L 2 teaching material should be the same as that which is conceptually acceptable to children in their L 1.

Carol Chomsky's interesting research has shown (as early as 1969) that, contrary to earlier opinion, the process of acquisition of syntactic structures continues actively during the early school years. She argues that to have learned a word in one's own language involves two aspects of knowledge. On the one hand the speaker knows the concept attached to the word, and on the other he knows the constructions into which the word can enter. A complete knowledge of the word includes semantic knowledge and all the syntactic knowledge relating to it. C. Chomsky has chosen four different constructions and analysed how children understand or misunderstand them. The focus of her interest was on the child's competence, not performance. In this way she determined the degree of comprehension of the structures in question. Consistent misinterpretations of given structures by a number of children helped to build a picture of the linguistic knowledge of children at a given stage. She found out that most 6-year-old children could not interpret correctly the word *promise* in the sentence "John promised Mary to shovel the driveway" (they thought it was Mary who was to shovel the driveway) although they knew the semantic meaning of the word *promise*. C. Chomsky also found that most children under six had difficulties with the concept of pronominalization which, by a slightly older age, was universally acquired.

It seems that the only logical conclusion that can be drawn from this work is that before designing any L 2 teaching materials for children of different chronological ages, we should ask whether it is comprehensible to a child of the same age in his L 1, both semantically and syntactically.

The empirical and experimental evidence from features of the learning processes in the L 2 sociocultural environment.

1.2.1. Roger Brown's studies of the acquisition of English as an L 1 on the basis of "natural order hypothesis" ("... the possibility is that children work out rules for the speech they hear passing from levels of lesser to greater complexity, simply because the human species is programmed at a certain period in its life to operate in this fashion on linguistic input") (Roger Brown, 1973, 105), inspired H. Dulay and M. Burt to undertake a series of studies on groups of Spanish and Chinese children who between the ages of 5 and 8 acquired

English in a number of different areas in the USA (Dulay and Burt, 1972, 1973, 1974a, 1974b). They hypothesised that in children's L 2 acquisition a "creative construction process" takes place (not a habit-formation process learned by imitation, reinforcement of the correct associations between verbal responses, and immediate correction of incorrect responses). In their first research study they found that most of the errors made by children were developmental and not of the interference type, this strongly supporting the "creative construction process" hypothesis.

In their next study they examined Spanish-speaking children's acquisition of certain English grammatical structures and found that the acquisition sequence was approximately the same for the following eight structures (Roger Brown's "functors"): plural (-s); progressive (-ing); copula (is); article (a, the); auxiliary (is); irregular past (ate, took); 3rd person singular (-s); possessive (Noun's). In a following study they found that the acquisition sequence was approximately the same for Spanish and Chinese children. (11 out of 14 of Brown's 'functors' were included in the analysis.)

All their studies were conducted in situations which included English-speaking peers and teachers, and took place in English socio-cultural environments. The obvious outcome of the research was that a child's second-language acquisition is

> "a process in which children gradually reconstruct rules for the speech they hear guided by universal innate mechanisms which cause them to use certain strategies to organize that linguistic input until the mismatch between the language system they are exposed to and what they produce is resolved" (Dulay and Burt, 1974 b, 255).

Investigations by Dulay and Burt gave rise to much optimism (to which the author of this paper was not insensitive, either) as regards the sequencing and grading of the syntactic material in a foreign language class; if the order of acquisition of grammatical elements is known, and is more or less universal, it will have to be utilized in L 2 teaching strategies. The process of L 2 learning in children (and even adolescents) (Fathman, 1975) will be substantially facilitated in this way (Vilke, 1976 b).

It has already been hinted at in this paper that the optimism was in fact short lived, probably not so much as a result of erroneous conclusions by the authors, as of the assumption that one "creative construction process"

functioned in a vacuum in which nothing counted but the development of the individual's L 2 system.

Many erroneous generalizations originated in the absence of any distinction between what Lamendella calls "two forms of non-primary language acquisition" (Lamendella, 1977, 176), and all the implications of these distinctions, such as the impact of the mother tongue, length of exposure to L 2, the whole native versus foreign setting, to mention only the most outstanding ones.

Dulay and Burt's research has itself evolved as more data were collected, and in 1974 (in *A New Perspective*) it was suggested that for future research "acquisition hierarchies of English syntactic structures that are of a higher level than functors must be obtained"; that effects of native language phonology, semantics and syntax should be clarified, and that "within a given language, second language acquisition hierarchies may vary depending on the type of exposure available to the second language learner" (Dulay and Burt, 1974 b, 275). Even here, the authors still do not overtly distinguish between foreign and second language learning as processes in their own right, although they make allowances for the differences among learning conditions which amount to this distinction.

Further research on the "creative construction process", especially the "functor tree" concept initiated by Dulay and Burt (1974 b), could probably offer certain clues to the processes at work in a child's L 2 acquisition device; this in turn could have a beneficial effect on the techniques of learning a foreign language, provided account is taken of the differences between the process of L 2 acquisition in a natural setting, and in formal schooling in a child's native environment.

1.2.2. In research carried out by Hakuta, some features of the interlanguage produced by individual children while trying to acquire English as their second language are examined. Although the study does not include foreign language learning in the school environment it does offer some valuable hints which should be considered in any analysis of the process of foreign language learning in schools. He discusses features of children's speech which he calls "prefabricated patterns" — regular, patterned segments of speech which the learner uses without any knowledge of their underlying structure, but with the knowledge as to which

particular situations call for what patterns. Hakuta explains the existence of prefabricated patterns by the need of the learner to express a wide range of functions from the beginning of the learning process: "as the learner's system of linguistic rules develops over time the externally consistent prefabricated patterns become assimilated into the internal structure" (1976, 333). Prefabricated patterns show a characteristic rigidity of usage and lack of variability, as well as frequent misuse in linguistically inappropriate contexts. As one of the examples quoted by Adams (1974) Hakuta reports "Do you got X".

1.2.3. Unlike Dulay and Burt (who maintain that children in naturalistic settings should pick up syntax and not be taught it), Edie Garvie argues that such a view

> "demonstrates a singular lack of understanding about the function of language in the learning process. A considerable amount of help must be given if the second language is to become for many children more than a pidginised lingua franca for day-to-day communication reflecting the dialect of the local peer-group" (1976, Preface).

In another context, Garvie, an expert on teaching English to immigrant children, continues: "Too much variety in the beginning can bewilder a child and hinder the main purpose of the learning activity" (Garvie, 1976 a).

Not long ago, thanks to views such as those expressed by Dulay and Burt, there were attempts to expose children learning a foreign language during formal schooling to unstructured (spontaneous) talk in the foreign language, even if they were exposed to it for only a couple of periods per week. The failure of such attempts to provide children with even the slightest clues for communication illustrates the danger of applying, in a foreign language learning class, techniques that might have worked in certain 'secondary' language acquisition classes (to use Lamendella's expression), although even there not in many if we are to depend on Garvie's authority.

Speaking about the young children of immigrant parents, Bühler (1972) maintains that they master their new language so much better than their parents because L 1 acquisition is a process that runs parallel with the discovering of the world, and they still have to make some discoveries; for this they are putting the new language to use.

This explanation does not however account for the fact that in the new environment some young children recode

their verbal expressions very successfully from L 1 into L 2, even when the concepts they have already discovered through their L 1 are in question. Are the young children linguistically so competent that they acquire a new code with the utmost ease, or is it that they replace the old code (which has not been completely internalized) with the new one? There is evidence that in some cases the L 1 is rapidly forgotten if the child is fully immersed in the new language.

The empirical and experimental evidence from features of the learning process in the L 1 school environment.

1.3.1. It is not only the research of psychologists that predicts that the child of early school age is capable of starting the process of foreign language learning; practising teachers working with this age-group have often observed — on the basis of sporadic work and small-scale experiments — its capacities for foreign languages. This age has recently been much discussed as the optimum time to start a foreign language.

> "Almost everybody who has taught young children — of, say, 8 to 11 years af age has found them in general eager and cooperative, a delight to teach. Problems of class management lie not in arousing and maintaining their interest, but in keeping it within orderly bounds... In view of what has been achieved in many places, nobody can seriously dispute that young children at school can — but only if certain conditions are fulfilled — successfully learn a foreign language to the extent of speaking it in a way felt by native speakers of the language to be natural. Need one ask whether they are better at arithmetic, singing, history, geography, or elementary science? We strongly suspect that they are not. Yet, it is rarely suggested that these activities should be postponed until the pupils reach the secondary school. We do not ask whether they would learn to read and write their mother tongue more quickly if they were to wait a few years longer for initial instruction" (W. R. Lee, 1977, 264).

The Unesco Institute for Education has organized a number of meetings for experts on the subject of foreign languages in primary education, and two volumes have been published on the topic (H. Stern, 1967 and 1969). There are not many countries left with developed education systems that have not stimulated research activities in this field (for example, the Epal project in Sweden).

1.3.2. Probably the biggest undertaking in the field was ETML in Great Britain, a pilot scheme for introducing French

into the curriculum of primary schools. It started in the early sixties (Kellerman, 1964) and was evaluated in the early seventies (Burstall, 1974). Burstall's verdict upon it and the reaction this verdict caused attracted much attention within and outside education circles. It is a pity that the time and effort spent arguing about the validity of the testing methods and reliability of the testers was not spent on further research. Luckily, the unfortunate outcome has not completely ruined the efforts of those who worked hard at introducing French into primary schools in Great Britain (Spicer, 1978), although it did considerable damage by turning some public opinion against it.

1.3.3. In the bibliography on the topic, consisting mainly of reports on small-scale experiments and speculative thinking based on sporadic observations, the prevailing attitude is in favour of starting at an early age.

A negative attitude is expressed by those who believe that more mature children (11+) or even adults are faster learners of foreign languages. This turns out to be true if language learning is reduced to the counting of structures and words memorised per hour. But then this is equally true of many other school subjects as W. R. Lee rightly observed (1977), and put in this way it could be a strong argument in favour of postponing education until children become more mature. A contrary argument hardly need be advanced, as it is common knowledge that learning and intellectual growth are interrelated and constantly influence each other.

Van Parreren (1976) argues that an early start in teaching a foreign language could create motivational problems — learners would spend too long a period learning a foreign language and would soon lose enthusiasm for it. A later start and more concentrated effort would avoid problems of long-term motivation.

The only counter-argument that can be offered here is that the basic idea of introducing a foreign language into school curricula at an early age is to make the learners motivated *for life* to *use* the foreign language. It is only natural that the more familiar the learner becomes with it and the better he can manipulate it the more likely he is to be willing to use it.

The dilemma whether to introduce a foreign language in the early years of primary school is not easy to resolve because, as Jakobovits has put it, "... decisions must be made

within a complex matrix of interacting factors, educational, social, political, philosophical, etc." (1970, 59). But once a positive decision has been made "it should be sufficient to show that the primary years are a good period for beginning a second language, offering certain special advantages", as H. H. Stern stated as early as 1963.

The Zagreb Project on Early School Teaching of Foreign Languages should be included among those investigations dealing with the empirical and experimental evidence from features of the learning process in the L 1 school environment.

THE ZAGREB PROJECT

2.0. In 1973 a project was started in Zagreb with the aim of providing evidence of the characteristics of the process of learning English at an early age in formal school environments.

2.1. In the first stage, completed in the school year 1973/4, research was conducted to find out to what degree (if any) children learn English with more ease before puberty than learners who have passed Lenneberg's "critical period". 60 beginners aged 9 and 60 beginners aged 17-19 were supplied with the same language material, delivered by the same method and approximately the same techniques of work, for the same period of time. Care was taken that both materials and techniques used should suit learners of both age groups — pedagogically, an almost impossible task.

The results proved that there were differences between the pre- and post-puberty group. The post-puberty group had certain advantages, such as more insight into the functioning of language, the experience of studying their mother tongue and some other language, intellectual maturity, and so they were faster learners of structures and vocabulary. The pre-puberty group were far superior in mastering the phonetic system. On the level of pronunciation the most striking differences were noticed between the two groups: the older group as a rule used mother tongue approximations of English phonemes. The deviations from the norm were such that they sometimes blurred the meaning of utterances. The younger group reached a considerably higher standard of pronunciation, using authentic English phonemes and intonation patterns in most cases.

The findings of the investigation were consistent with Lenneberg's statement about "language learning blocks" which become frequent after puberty.

The results of the investigation led us to conclude that learners should start foreign languages well before puberty. This would provide them with sufficient time to acquire a good command of the phonetic system with a limited corpus of structures and vocabulary, and provide them with a feeling of security and self-confidence as regards the foreign language. Once they pass the age of the "maturation of the brain" they will be able to proceed to more subtle and abstract uses of the foreign language (Vilke 1975, and Vilke 1976 a).

2.2. The second stage of the Project started in 1975. The aim of the investigation was to find out which age between 6 and 9 would be best to start a foreign language at school, and what factors play an important role in the learning process at this age.

70 children aged 6 to 9 were observed during a year-long English course at a language school in Zagreb (Institut za strane jezike). The results provided the tentative answer that 8 to 9 would be the optimum age at which to start English for most children, and that 6 to 7 would suit those of above--average intelligence. But these results are valid only in this particular socio-cultural environment in Zagreb and should not be generalized without further research. The children in question came from middle-class families who had sent their children on an English course for a variety of reasons, one of them being the realization of the need to be able to communicate in a foreign language (especially English), and another "to keep up with the Jones's" whose children also studied English.

As this stage of the Project was conducted in a specialized foreign-language school where the courses are not part of the compulsory educational system provided by the government for the entire population, it was evident that the motivation to study English came from parents who were paying for the tuition. So initial motivation had little to do with the child's real interest in English (which by no means could have been expected in this age-group, anyway). The parents' attitude, on the other hand, was positive, and this was helpful in the initial stages. During the course of study, however, the children developed their own attitudes towards English which very largely depended on their personal attitude towards the teacher. It was observed that the child's feeling at ease, and a positive emotional link with the teacher, accounted for the greater part of the success of individual children.

Children progressed through the language corpus making their own discoveries of its system (for example, "It must be cars for three"). They were guided through it by the teaching materials designed to provide appropriate context for the 5 functors found by Dulay and Burt to be internalised first by groups of Spanish and Japanese children acquiring English in the USA (Vucelić, 1977).

Unfortunately, the "natural order hypothesis" worked only where there was no negative transfer from L 1. The errors observed were of both interference and developmental type, which was not in keeping with one of Dulay and Burt's statistics in which they found only 3% interference errors (Vilke, 1976 b). So the empirical evidence has supported the view expressed earlier in this paper, that acquiring a second language and learning a foreign language are different processes whose confusion can be dangerous.

2.3. The third stage of the Project (which will be examined in more detail in the present paper) was started in 1977.

This stage of the Project was sponsored by the Society of Applied Linguistics of Croatia, and by the educational authorities of Croatia (Zavod za prosvjetno-pedagošku službu) as they realised that the undertaking might be of wide social and pedagogical interest. If the results of the investigations favour an early start they could well be of assistance in effecting the introduction of foreign languages into primary school curricula at an earlier age than at present.

150 second-graders aged 8, from 5 suburban schools in Zagreb, were chosen as the subjects of the investigation. 10 groups, each consisting of 13-16 learners, started being taught by 7 teachers specially instructed for the purpose. In 1978/9 those learners who had started in 77/8 continued learning English in their third grade, and a new total of 120 second-graders joined the experimental groups. The Project was extended to include German and French classes.

One of the aims of the Project was to record and measure the differences in the ability to communicate in the foreign language, be it English, French or German, between those who started at the age of 8 and those who started at the age of 11. Therefore in each school there is an experimental and a control group. The results will be compared at the end of each school year up to the age of 14 — the end of the primary school.

The team working on the Project includes applied linguists, teachers of foreign languages, and psychologists.

The work on the Project has been allocated according to the special interests of individual experts. The author of the present paper has, since the beginning of the Project in 1973, been trying to investigate the factors that seem to be important for the success in learning English, and to identify constantly recurring features in the process of children's learning English at an early school age. The following pages will present a summary of the 3rd stage investigations on *Motivation of Students* and *Sources of Difficulties.*

Motivation

2.3.1. What is most necessary for children starting a foreign language in a familiar sociolinguistic environment is motivation to accept the intrusion of a new code which will be of but little use except in the long run.

Jakobovits distinguishes between "interested" and "motivated" students: "Interest usually refers to the condition where the source of the drive to study lies in the student... 'To motivate a student', on the other hand, refers to a condition where it is felt that there is an absence of interest and hence the drive to study lies in some area extrinsic to the goal to be achieved" (Jakobovits, 1971, 243). If we accept his definition, then we must admit that our students were by no means interested in English. They did not ask for it, they did not come of their own will, nor the will of their parents, English was brought to them when they did not expect it.

Foreign languages are as a rule introduced in class IV of the primary school, and our experiment started in class II. What we feared at the beginning was a general rejection of English, which might be seen as a potential source of difficulties in the rather overloaded school schedule the children had to cope with.

The schools chosen for the experiment were situated in suburban areas in which there was little tradition of communication in any foreign language. On the other hand the situation in these schools would resemble fairly accurately the situation in any suburban area or village in the country, and therefore would be valuable as a pilot experiment prior to the introduction of foreign languages into the second class on a large scale.

2.3.1.1. Before we started any teaching we tried to obtain certain clues about the attitude of our students to things English. Every child was interviewed by a member of the

Project, but not his future teacher. The interview was conducted individually, and care was taken to make the students feel relaxed and free. (They were even offered sweets, and this also helped to overcome the tense school atmosphere.)

Children were asked 13 question — 9 of them connected with the child's idea of English and the English, and 4 in connection with their parents' and friends' attitudes to English. Gardner and Lambert have in the course of their studies proved that "parents who are instrumentally oriented to their children learning English appear to pass their orientation on to their children" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, 128). We could not have expected to have parents motivated with respect to their children studying English, but we feared their negative attitude which could have caused very serious damage to the entire undertaking.

(The interview questions and answers are presented in table 1.)

Discussion of the results

2.3.1.2.

1. (Are you looking forward to studying English?) The results — 95% prospective students answered yes, 2% did not like the prospect, and 3% did not know what to think — seemed to provide a good basis for the start. They were obviously curious to find out what it was going to be like and they did not object to some extra effort.

2. (What is it like to learn English, in your opinion?) The answers to this question — 40% of the children answered that it was easy, and 30% that it was pleasant — support the view that they were looking forward to the activity. 6% of the children who did not want to venture an aswer (which was interpreted as a complete lack of interest) were those whose answer to the first question was also negative. 18% of the children thought that it was going to be difficult, and 5% that it would be sometimes easy, sometimes difficult — which shows that at least a number of them did not underestimate the effort they were going to make.

3. (How do you think you will be learning English?) The answers to the third question revealed that more than

half the children (47% by reading and writing + 9% as other subjects) expected routine school work, and only 31% more pleasurable activities such as play, conversation or drawing (children at that age are extremely fond of drawing).

4. (Why is it good to study English?) The variety of answers to the question illustrates the fact that children of that age, if not influenced by parental attitudes (and they were certainly not influenced in our case) have no clear ideas of reasons for studying languages. 30% could not give any reasons and 23% suggested that it was good to know it, without any further explanation. More than 50% of the children were, from the point of motivation, raw material whose attitude towards the English language had as yet to be moulded on the course — a responsible job, very likely with life-long effects. The 19% who thought that knowing English would be useful when travelling abroad, the 10% that it would be needed for communication purposes with foreigners, and the 2% who wanted to use it when speaking to relatives living abroad (mostly cousins of their own generation who cannot speak their mother tongue) — could be attributed with some sort of instrumental motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The same sort of motivation was traced among "the other answers" where some of the interesting replies offered were: "to be able to read books in English", "to buy goods in England", "to be able to work in England if a job cannot be found in this country", or "to become more intelligent".

   The 2% who thought that it was good to study English "because everybody else did it" reflect a general trend in Croatia where among the world languages — English, German, Russian and French — English is permanently increasing in popularity as *the* foreign language studied both in schools and adult education centres. In urban areas and among older students the percentage who would give the same answer would probably be much higher.

5. (Will you go to England one day?) The answer showed that our children did not connect English with the country in which it is spoken as a native language. 77% of the children did not show any interest in travelling to England (43% "perhaps", 26% "did not know", and 8% "no").

This can be explained in two ways. The first is the lack of interest in foreign countries in general in children of this age who have not as yet studied about them at school and whose parents do not cherish cosmopolitan ideas. Indeed, many a parent of our children would regard his village as if it were the whole world, rather than see the whole world as a big village. (Once again, it became clear that the responsibility of the future tuition of English was to develop ideas of international understanding in these children). The other posible explanation (in this particular case probably too far-fetched because of the age of the subjects) would be lack of integrative motivation on the part of our students.

Observing the attitudes of students of English in this country by and large, one could venture the statement that integrative motivation virtually did not exist. By far the majority of those who study English are instrumentally oriented.

> The orientation is said to be instrumental in form if the purposes of language study reflect the more *utilitarian* value of linguistic achievement... In contrast, the orientation is *integrative* if the student wishes to learn more about the other cultural community because he is interested in it in an open-minded way, to the point of eventually being accepted as a member of that other group (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, 3).

English is regarded by most of those who want to learn it as a lingua franca, the language "which will take you anywhere in the world". Yet within the vast group of instrumentally-oriented students, certain emotional factors seem to be of importance for success in learning. These range from the affection towards the English teacher in the 8-year olds, or admiration for an American pop-star in teenagers, to the feeling of shared knowledge and experience of one scientist to another who uses English for communication. Gardner & Lambert's two major fields of motivation — instrumental and integrative — find their full application in the case of second language learning, whereas in foreign language learning different norms of behaviour should be identified. But this is not within the scope of this paper.

6. (Who speaks English?) Answers point to the fact that more than half of the children (the English — 48%, Americans — 12%, Australians — 4%) had an idea of who the native speakers of English were. The 2% of

children who thought that it was Germans or Russians who spoke it either had not conceptually grasped the idea of different nations (and subsequently distinguished only between a native language which they understand and a non-native which they don't) or else they regarded English as the language of international communication which they hear spoken by many different people. In the "other answers", Canadians, Swedes, Norwegians, Italians and "those who can speak it" were offered, this supporting the latter view.

7. (How have you recognized a native speaker of English?) The 50% of subjects who claimed to have recognized a native speaker of English offered some interesting answers. 8% had been told by someone that it was an English-speaking person, 10% deduced it from the fact that he was a negro, and 6% were able to tell by his car registration. 22% claimed that they have recognized English, which would have been a marvellous achievement had they not been misled by the native, non-native dichotomy, and this, of course, cannot be tested. Among the "other answers" a boy was found who recognized an Englishman by the steering wheel of his car being on the right-hand side.

8. (Where in this country can you hear English spoken?) Children gave a fairly relevant picture of English as it is spoken in this country (on TV, at school, from foreigners, on the radio, at the cinema). Among the "other answers" one could find: at the seaside, where rooms are let, in the market, in hotels and shops — all answers referring to tourists coming to the country. 14% of children could not offer any answer.

9. (Can you say anything in English?) Answers to this question provided some information as to the inventory of English children had before the course. 34% of the children knew some numbers, 4% were able to recite a rhyme or two, 22% knew some words. 36% could say nothing in English.

The next four questions were connected with the attitude of children's parents and friends towards English. Questions 10 & 11 illustrate mothers' and fathers' attitudes to the children's studying English at school.

10. (What did your mother say when she heard you were going to study English?)

11. (And your father?)
Mothers were more interested in the affair and 62% of them consented to it. Only 50% of the fathers agreed to it. 18% of both fathers and mothers were indifferent, and 32% fathers were not even told about it. 20% of the mothers did not know that their children were starting English at school.

It was apparent that although the parents had no strong positive feelings about their children studying English, they were not opposed to it either.

12. (Do your parents speak English?) Question 12 revealed that in only 22% of cases did one of the parents know any English. Even this cannot be taken for granted, as sometimes children like to exaggerate when their parents are in question.

13. (Does anyone you know within your family or outside speak English?) This question showed that English was not very popular among the people who formed the children's immediate surroundings. A few older brothers and sisters studied it at school (7%), and 19% of them had relatives who could speak some English. Probably the number of siblings studying it at school would have been higher had the question been more precise. Some subjects apparently included the process of study in the concept of "knowledge", whereas others did not.

Summary:

2.3.1.3. The analysis of the interview showed the following attitudinal characteristics of our potential learners:

1. They were looking forward to the English classes.
2. They expected routine school work.
3. A minority of students realised that learning English could be useful. As a rule they diplayed instrumental orientation towards it.
4. They did not show much desire to visit English-speaking countries.
5. The subject gave a relevant opinion of English spoken in this country.
6. In the children's families there was no tradition of

cultural influences coming from English speaking countries. Parents were fairly indifferent to their children studying English; they did not encourage it, but neither did they oppose it.

All this led us to conclude that the task ahead was a very responsible one. The raw material we had to mould was in the hands of the teachers. If they manage to motivate children to study English at that early age it may have a life-long beneficial effect not only on their ability to use English but also upon their attitude to foreign languages and other nations in general.

2.3.1.4. One school year should suffice to find out if the learners have got used to the new subject and developed their own attitudes towards it.

Each group of 12—15 students had 2 periods of English per week on a regular basis. Another interview on motivation was conducted at the end of May 1978. The objective was to find out whether attitudes towards English classes had changed, and if so, in what direction. This time they were given 9 questions, from which a picture of their likes and dislikes could be formed. It was considered important to hear their interpretation of what they do, like, and find difficult in English lessons. The parents' attitude was tested again to find out whether it had changed in the course of the year's study.

(The questions and answers of the second Interview are given in table 2.)

Discussion of the results:

2.3.1.5.

1. (Which subject do you like best?) 24% of students answered "English", whereas others singled out others subjects. But when the interviewer asked "What about English?" in many cases the answer was "Of course I like it, but I forgot it was a school subject". This was due to fact that the teachers were instructed to create a relaxed and happy atmosphere in the classroom, with no strict regulations and no taboos. It resembled so little the typical school situation that the students treated it as something different from routine school work. This was considered a success of the course.

2. (Do you like English?) 96% of students gave an unequivocal "yes". One boy who kept giving negative answers was a difficult child who behaved in an egocentric way, causing problems for all the teachers.

3. (Do you like attending English classes?) 98% answers were positive. After this question it was aparent that the children's mild curiosity before the beginning of the course grew into a serious motivation to study English. It was also apparent that their motivation was due to the emotional attitude towards their teachers and to the type of activity they had been performing in class. Teachers were instructed to take special care of children's interests, not to stick to one activity for more than 5—10 minutes, to behave in a warm and friendly way, and to cater for the children's need for physical activity.

   They were learning elements of English with understanding, making their own hypotheses about how the language functions.

4. (What do you find difficult in English lessons?) 32% of the students thought that nothing was difficult, but the same percentage thought that some words were difficult. This problem will be takled in more detail in the discussion on sources of difficulties. The only remaining difficulty that should be taken into consideration was pronunciation, which caused problems for 9% of the students. All the other difficulties, with their distribution between 1 and 6%, are not significant.

5. (Would you like to continue studying English?) 99% students voted to continue, which was a sign of unquestionable success. But even more promising were the answers to the following question. Children were asked (6) Why they would like to continue and 50% of them answered that it was because they liked English classes and 49% answered that they were going to need English. The classes were obviously split into two groups, one being emotionally linked to the personality of the teacher and to the way she conducted the classes, and the other being oriented instrumentally. It seems as if this distribution of motivation into instrumental and "affective" would be applicable to most of our learners of English.

7. (What do your parents think of your English?) The answers to this question also presented a surprise, as 86%

of parents, according to the children's statements, expressed positive attitudes towards English. One is inclined to think that the timespan between the beginning and end of the school year was used by both parents and children to estimate the value of some knowledge of English; it was brought to their attention, and many of them decided that it was useful. In a number of cases the children were even promised rewards if they were good at English. The changed attitude of parents probably accounts for 49% of the children expressing an instrumental orientation, which by no means reflects the reasoning of eight-year-olds, as children of that age are not as a rule guilty of a utilitarian outlook upon life.

8. (What do you do in English lessons?) This question was put in order to discover the children's opinion of class activities. It should be recalled that when in the first interview children were asked what activities they expected in English lessons, 56% of them answered that they expected either reading and writing or work "as in other subjects". In the second interview most children mentioned several activities. They are listed in table 2 according to the frequency of appearance. 43% of the children mentioned play as one of the activities. The same percentage mentioned "learning of words" as an activity utilised in language lessons. The next highest percentage of answers was given to singing and drawing, activities which are favoured by most children at the age of 8. Consequently, if we are to judge by the answers, the content of the course presented the subjects with a pleasant surprise. The 9th question (What do you like most?) in which 27% of the children reported singing and 23% drawing as the most enjoyable activities in the English lessons, confirmed this assumption. If we divide the children into two groups, one experiencing English classes as some sort of fun, and the other considering them a framework for linguistic exercises, we shall have to conclude that both groups enjoyed them — but for different reasons. 71% of the children liked them because of all the fun they provided (singing — 27%, drawing — 23%, playing — 12%, learning songs — 6%, competing in games — 3%) and 29% of the children enjoyed them as a learning activity, leading to a certain goal (answering questions — 9%, describing pitures — 8%, learning words — 8%, speaking — 4%, asking questions — 1,37%).

Summary:

2.3.1.6. Analysis of the second interview answers indicated that a year-long teaching of English changed the children's attitude of moderate curiosity to a desire to proceed with learning English.

1. Approximately 70% of the children liked English classes because the content was adjusted to their interests and because they felt free and encouraged by the teacher. 30% of the children enjoyed them because they felt they were getting somewhere in their attempt to learn how to communicate in English.
2. The attitude of the parents changed from one of general disinterest, to encouragement of children to persevere.

One general conclusion that can be drawn from both interviews is that even in environments where there is no positive orientation towards a foreign language, children can be motivated to study it if they are approached in the right way, and their motivation can influence their parents' attitudes towards it. This, in turn, can have a beneficial effect on the international orientation of the whole community. In our particular case the process was somewhat different from the one observed by Gardner & Lambert in which "parents with positive attitudes towards the other language community more actively encouraged their children to learn that language" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, 6) as here the motivation of the children caused a change of attitude in the parents.

Sources of difficulties

2.3.2. Performance difficulties in the process of learning a foreign language can be expected on the level of pronunciation, command of structures and use of vocabulary, if we take into consideration a narrow linguistic (and not a wider, sociolinguistic) aspect of performance. This is the aspect that will be discussed here, as the subjects of our investigations are for the time being limited to classroom performance and the linguistic content of the course. (This content is communicatively based but most learners will not have a chance to test its effectiveness in real life in the immediate future.)

2.3.2.1. In our Motivation Interview, only 9% of the students claimed that they had difficulties with pronunciation.

A guess could be ventured that the percentage of adult beginners who have difficulties with pronunciation would be much higher.

Observation of the children's performance have proved once again that they can master the phonetic system of the foreign language provided they have good models to imitate. Accordingly, complete accuracy in pronunciation, rhythm, intonation patterns and individual phonemes should be insisted upon with no fear of overloading the learners, who should make the most of the advantages their age offers them. It should be remembered that one of the reasons for introducing a foreign language at this early age is to familiarise the learner with a pronunciation system different from his own, at an age when he does not feel threatened by it.

2.3.2.2. Contrary to the case observed in the mastering of all the elements of English pronunciation, it has been observed that some words are remembered, pronounced and used by the children with the utmost ease, whereas other words present difficulties. Lado's division of vocabulary into easy words, words of normal difficulty and difficult words according to the transfer from the mother tongue (difficult words are those in which the quality and distribution of pnonemes interferes with the quality and distribution of phonemes in the L 1) did not help to explain the penomenon as phonologically similar words in which no negative transfer on the phonological level could be identified were learned with widely differing results. In the second interview on motivation 32% of the children complained about difficult words.

In an experiment specially devised to test this phenomenon we opposed two pairs of words, the first pair being *bottle — kettle,* and the second *television — fire place.* The learners from three of our 5 experimental schools were included in the experiment — 80 children altogether. The vocabulary items were practiced over the same period of time, using more or less identical techniques and aids. Neither children nor teachers were informed of the content of the experiment beforehand, so they could not have had any additional practice. The subjects were shown a bottle and a kettle and asked what the English words were for the objects. 56 examinees were questioned on the kettle-bottle pair; one class did not have sufficient practice beforehand, so their answers were not accepted. 30 children remembered the word *bottle* and only 7 remembered *kettle.* It was repeated with the words

television and *fireplace.* Out of 80 children, 74 could use the word *television,* and only 22 *fireplace. Kettle* and *bottle* were selected because on the phonological level they are similar; in both, the same consonant cluster /tl/ occurs, and neither consists of phonemes that do not appear in our own phonological system.

Fireplace and *television* were selected as both words are compounds; neither presents any special phonological difficulty and their length is approximately the same. However, teachers reported difficulties in practicing the words *fireplace* and *kettle.* What is the source of this difficulty? We hypothesised that it is due to the fact that neither *fireplace* nor *kettle* present concepts familiar to the children. (In this country, homes are rarely heated by means of fireplaces, and a kettle is not acommon object in most households as we are a nation of heavy Turkish coffee-drinkers). The teachers found the same sort of difficulty with words like *mantelpiece, chest of drawers* and many others that would be perfectly simple for a child coming from a British cultural background.

This finding was, we thought, helpful in two ways: first, it has contributed a little to our understanding of the way children learn a foreign language; they seem to transfer the concepts they have acquired in their L 1 into their L 2, L 2 being a *foreign* and not a *second* language. In this particular case they re-name the spontaneous concepts with foreign names if they are identical, and have to develop non--spontaneous concepts (which are, according to Piaget, influenced by adults) if the concepts are non-existent or different in their L 1 culture, this being a more complex process. One could call it a negative transfer from L 1, on the conceptual level. This finding does not necessarily contradict Hernández-Chávez' opinion that "the bilingual learner acquires two distinct (though obviously very closely related) semantic systems, i.e. he proceeds under the basic semantic functions" (Hernández-Chávez 1977, 149). The key to the difference should obviously be looked for in the difference between the second and the foreign language; that is, the difference in the environment and the intensity of the exposure to an L 2. Hernández Chávez' examinee was a three--year-old Mexican child exposed to English among native English peers day after day in a day-care centre in California. It is only logical that the child should in such circumstances build up a semantic system parallel to the one in his mother

tongue. No analogies with such cases should be made with our learners exposed to English for 2 periods per week, among L 1 peers and teachers. Secondly, the implications of our finding could be applied by those who design teaching materials for young school children; objects denoting concepts not familiar to the children should (if at all possible) be laid aside for use at a later age and a later stage when their introduction may be welcome as another interesting detail revealing new data about the L 2 peoples' ways of life.

In the same experiment, several items were designed to probe children's ability to comprehend and produce structural categories. They were tested on the production of plural forms, the comprehension of spatial relations expressed by the preposition *on,* and on pronominalization. A few characteristics of children's use of structural items emerged as by-products of the investigation.

Test item on plural — in front of them there was one apple, and a little further away three apples placed next to each other. They were asked to name one apple first (to recall the word) and three apples after that. Three variants of the answer were accepted as correct. *Apples, three apples, These are three apples.* Only 27 out of 80 children offered a correct answer, but 95% (76 out of 80) children used one signal of plural (*three apple, these are apple*) in their answer. It seems that children in their process of learning a foreign language understand the concept of plurality, they feel it must be marked, and they mark it, but leave out whatever is (to their mind) redundant.

A practical hint for teachers would be that they should not insist on all the plural markers when teaching this age group, and that they should be content with some signal for plurality if the child wishes to convey his own thoughts and ideas. Drilling the correct forms will come at a later stage, when the child's mind works more systematically.

Test item on the preposition on. They had to perform 2 commands to show their comprehension of *on.* After the bottle and the kettle had been identified, the children were told: *put the bottle on the floor, put the kettle on the chair.* Both commands were performed correctly by 94% of the population which obviously shows that they understand the relations expressed by *on.*

Test item on pronominalization. In the course of the Project it was observed that children are reluctant to use the pronouns *he* and *she* and that they much prefer using nouns. The task of the test was to either confirm

or reject the observed characteristic of children's speech as a regularly occuring pattern. In the test they were presented with the picture of a boy with a red ball and the picture of a girl with a blue flower. The examiner asked *"Who has got the red ball — he or she?"* and, *"Who has got the blue flower — he or she?"* 18 children used *he* or *she* in their answers, 32 children answered *boy or girl,* and 6 children confused the pronouns. Only 56 answers were accepted, as in one class the teacher who was present was truying to help and so influenced the children's answers. These answers could not be regarded as spontaneous, and they were not accepted.

The conclusion of the test, prompted by the observations during the lessons, is that most children understand what *he* and *she* stand for, but prefer using nouns, which probably look less abstract. It is in keeping with C. Chomsky's investigation in which she found the process of pronominalization in English as an L 1 still in the state of development in 6—7 year-old children (C. Chomsky, 1969). As children learning a foreign language cannot be expected to process successfully those features of language not fully mastered by their peers in their mother tongue, it would be advisable to postpone pronouns until a little later. In this way the frustrations of both teachers and learners would be avoided.

In the test several features of children's speech were observed.

1. The permanent misuse of the articles, which they used at random; sometimes as part of the noun; much more often not using them at all, or using them completely inadequately — e.g. indefinite article with the plural — *three an apple.* This is probably due to heavy interference from the mother tongue in which the articles do not exist. The children showed a complete inability to establish a frame of reference for the articles, which Duškova considers to be the gravest form of interference (Duškova, 1969). This characteristic of children's speech has been discussed in preceding papers (Vilke, 1976, b).

2. The existence of "prefabricated patterns" found by Hakuta in acquiring English as a second language has been found in our case too (1974). He defines them as one of the possible strategies employed by learners when they wish to express thoughts in the target language but do not yet know the forms. In our corpus we found *Mary sit down* (after the command *Sit down*) *it's* (*I can see it's a cat*)

I've got (*This is I've got flower*). They seem to be a sign that the student tries hard to express his ideas in the foreign language.

Summary:

2.3.2.3. Observations over the two years, and the results of test administered in the course of the second year, seem to indicate that there are several characteristics of children's performance in English as a foreign language that constantly recur in the course of the learning process:

1. They can master the phonological system of English with the greatest ease.
2. Vocabulary items for which they have not developed concepts in their own culture present difficulty.
3. They can understand basic relationships in a sentence, especially spacial relationships expressed by prepositions, and the concept of plurality, etc.
4. Difficulties in learning structural elements stem from two main sources:
   a) interference of the mother tongue (this can be seen in the use of articles);
   b) immaturity, which makes certain concepts in both the primary and secondary language hard to grasp.
5. Interference from the mother tongue manifests itself at both the linguistic and the conceptual level.

Conclusion

3.0.0. Two successive years of teaching have shown that children in this particular sociocultural environment have been able to start successfully the long process of becoming bilingual.

None of them have yet become bilingual — one could hardly expect this to happen in approximately 150 school periods of learning English. According to Mueller's estimate (1967), six months, with between 6 and 14 hours a day, would be needed to achieve proficiency in a foreign language, but only when selected students are in question. (This amounts to a total of 1000 to 1500 contact hours.)

Motivation to learn English, which was zero before the start, developed significantly. 99% of the children at the end

of the first year of learning expressed a strong desire to continue.

We hope that this has had a strong effect on moulding their life-long attitude towards English as a foreign language and foreign languages in general, preventing the development of ethnocentric tendencies later in life. (Ethnocentrism is defined by Gardner and Lambert (1972) as stereotyped negative feelings toward foreign countries and peoples.) It may well be that the introduction of a foreign language at an age when the student is not inclined to study it but is forced to do it as part of a school curriculum may promote the development of ethnocentric attitudes, especially if accompanied by an inadequate approach to the students.

Our young students have become acquainted with the concept of English in a way that corresponds to their ideas of 'interesting' and 'amusing', most associations connected with it have been pleasant; no fear of punishment (bad mark, ridicule, etc.) — so often a permanent companion of school activities — has been present, and even feed-back of their orientation has been observed in the changed attitudes of parents. In this respect, the Project can be said to have been a success.

One of the future tasks will be to test Peal and Lambert's hypothesis that early bilingualism "might affect the very structure of intellect... a large proportion of an individual's intellectual ability is acquired through experience and its transfer from one situation to another... Intellectually, experience with two language systems seems to have left the bilingual child with a mental flexibility, a superiority in concept formation, and a more diversified set of mental abilities" (Peal and Lambert, 1962, 277, 279).

Our efforts are directed to a more modest goal, to the formation of a bilingual adult, but the hypothesis is that it should have a beneficial effect on his intelligence and his outlook in general.

So far no 'balance effect' has been observed in our learners. The balance effect is a hypothesis that the more time one spends on the second language, the less well one learns the first language, with consequent detrimental effects on the native language, on education and on the intellectual development of the child (Jakobovitz, 1971, 52).

More will be said about this in several years time, when the experimental groups are compared with control groups which will start English in the fourth class.

The learners' intelligence was tested by verbal and non-verbal intelligence tests in the experimental as well as the control groups. So far it has been observed that success in learning English is positively correlated with the learners' intelligence. At the end of the first year the teachers were asked to evaluate impressionistically the achievements of their students by marks from 1 to 5. Correlation was measured by the rank correlation method, and it varied for different clases between 0,58 and 0,67, which proved to be significant.

This relatively high correlation between intelligence and success in learning is probably due to the fact that the learning was designed as a cognitive rather than a habit-forming process. In Jakobovits's well-known table showing the variance contribution of factors decisive for success in learning, intelligence accounts for 20% of the variance, which is less than in our case where the chlidren whose intelligence was lower than average achieved very poor results (Jakobovits, 1971, 98). But as has already been mentioned, this is probably due to the fact that Jakobovits had in mind a learning process based on habit-forming, which requires a smaller input of intelligence on the part of the learners.

We have tried to show that foreign language learning is a process with characteristics of its own, and that it should be investigated as such. It is not a mere duplication of the process of acquiring a first language, nor is it identical to the acquisition of a second language, although it resembles both processes in certain aspects.

There is probably more resemblance between the acquisition of a first language and the acquisition of a second language by a child than there is between the acquisition of a second language and the learning of a foreign language by a child. The difference is explained by environmental factors and the amount of time spent on the language.

The process of learning a foreign language as a child is not identical to the process of learning a foreign language as an adult, either. The difference is between a developing and a fully developed personality, with all the implications the differing concepts bring about.

If the early school years are to be utilised for learning foreign languages (and there seem to be many reasons that support the idea) these differences should be taken very seriously into consideration. But at present we still know very little about these processes, and the main work of finding out more is ahead of us.

Table 1

INTERVIEW ON MOTIVATION No 1

Question:	Answer:	Students %
1. Are you looking forward to studying English?	yes	95
	no	2
	I don't know	3
2. What is it like to learn English, in your opinion?	easy	40
	pleasant	30
	difficult	18
	doesn't know	6
	sometimes easy, sometimes difficult	5
	other answers	1
3. How do you think you will be learning English?	by reading and writing	47
	through play	18
	as other subjects	9
	by drawing	7
	by conversation	6
	doesn't know	8
	other answers	5
4. Why is it good to study English?	it is good to know it	23
	doesn't know	30
	to travel abroad	19
	to speak to relatives living abroad	2
	because everybody else studies it	2
	to communicate with foreigners	10
	other answers	14
5. Will you go to England one day?	perhaps	43
	doesn't know	26
	would like to	14
	no	8
	when he grows up	5
	other answers	4
6. Who speaks English?	Englishmen	48
	Americans	12
	Australians	4

Question:	Answer:	Students %
	Germans	2
	Russians	2
	doesn't know	28
	other answers	4
7. How have you recognised a native speaker of English?	recognised English	22
	he was a negro	10
	somebody said that it was an Englishman	8
	car registration	6
	did not recognise him	50
	other answers	4
8. Where in this country can you hear English?	on TV	29
	in school	25
	from foreigners	8
	on the radio	4
	in the cinema	2
	doesn't know	14
	other answers	18
9. Can you say antyhing in English?	numbers	34
	some words	24
	some rhymes	6
	nothing	36
10. What did your mother say when she heard you were going to study English?	consented	62
	it is all the same to her	18
	she does not know that I am going to study it	20
11. -and your father?	consented	50
	he doesn't care	18
	he doesn't know that I am going to study it	32
12. Do your parents speak English?	yes	22
	no	78
13. Does anyone you know speak English?	a relative	18
	yes	10
	brother or sister at school	8
	no	64

Table 2

INTERVIEW ON MOTIVATION No 2

Question:	Answer:	Students %
1. Which subject do you like best?	English	24
	other subjects	76
2. Do you like English?	yes	96
	no	1
	so, so	3
3. Do you like attending English classes?	yes	98
	no	1
	so, so	1
4. What do you find difficult in English lessons?	nothing	32
	difficult words	32
	pronunciation	9
	when we first learn something	6
	to remember new words	3
	questions	3
	to memorize songs	5
	to memorize sentences	3
	to describe pictures	3
	the meaning of some words	2
	what I don't know	1
	some things	1
5. Would you like to continue studying English?	yes	99
	no	1
6. Why?	I like English classes	50
	I'll need English	49
	I don't know	1
7. What do your parents think of your English?	They encourage it	86
	They don't mind it	13
	They don't like it	1

Question:	Answer:	Students %
8. What do you do in English lessons?	play	43
	learn words	43
	sing	32
	draw	25
	learn how to speak E.	18
	learn songs	18
	describe pictures	14
	do competitions	7
	colour pictures	9
	talk	5
	write	3
	repeat words	3
	answer questions	2
	dance	1,37
	jump	1,37
	learn by playing with toys	1,37
	learn games	0,68
	run	0,68
	read	0,68
9. What do you like most?	singing	27
	drawing	23
	playing	12
	answering questions	9
	describing pictures	8
	learning words	7
	learning songs	6
	speaking	4
	competing in games	3
	asking questions	1,37

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ENGLESKI KAO STRANI JEZIK KOD DJECE OD 8 GODINA

U prvom dijelu članka kritički se prikazuju izvori iz kojih se u suvremenoj glotodidaktici crpe podaci o karakteristikama procesa učenja stranog jezika kod djece u ranoj školskoj dobi, odnosno u Piagetovom "konkretno operativnom stadiju" kognitivnog razvoja. Ti su izvori:

1. saznanja do kojih su došle neurofiziologija i razvojna psiholingvistika;
2. rezultati eksperimenata s djecom koja u prirodnoj sredini jezika-cilja usvajaju drugi jezik;
3. rezultati učenja kod pojedinih skupina djece u raznim sredinama u kojima je strani jezik eksperimentalno uveden u nastavni plan u ranoj školskoj dobi.

Iznose se razlozi zbog kojih podatke iz svakog od ta tri izvora treba podvrći daljnjem provjeravanju prije nego oni postanu osnova za opće zaključke.

U drugom dijelu članka govori se o Zagrebačkom projektu ranijeg učenja engleskog jezika. Daje se kratak pregled prve i druge faze Projekta o kojima je pisano ranije i pristupa se analizi treće faze. Težište ispitivanja je na analizi motivacije učenika i na analizi izvora teškoća u procesu učenja.

Jedan je od rezultata ispitivanja i zaključak da se čak i u sredinama gdje nema pozitivne orijentacije prema učenju stranog jezika odgovarajućim postupcima učenici mogu zainteresirati za strani jezik, što onda pozitivno utječe na orijentaciju roditelja, pa čak i orijentaciju te cijele sredine.

Ispitivanje je pokazalo da teškoće u učenju stranog jezika proizlaze iz dva osnovna izvora: iz interferencije s maternjim jezikom koja dolazi do izražaja na razini usvajanja lingvističkih elemenata i koncepata i iz nesposobnosti djeteta da u ovoj fazi kognitivnog razvoja (i kronološkoj dobi od osam godina) usvoji određene lingvističke koncepte koji mu se u nastavi stranog jezika tradicionalno nude. Ovo posljednje govori u prilog vrlo pažljivom izboru lingvističkog materijala pri učenju stranog jezika u dobi od osam godina.

U trećem dijelu članka govori se, na temelju izvršenog ispitivanja, o prednostima učenja stranog jezika u ovoj dobi. Te su prednosti slijedeće: upoznavanje s lingvističkim osobinama stranog jezika u dobi kad se elementi sustava stranog jezika prihvaćaju s lakoćom, povoljan utjecaj na kognitivni razvoj pojedinca i formiranje pozitivnog stava pojedinca i cijele sredine u odnosu na veze među narodima.