Abstract

While there is an increase in support for foreign language programs for young language learners in the U.S. and worldwide, educators are faced with a lack of training in research-based strategies for developing effective and motivating instruction that meets the needs of younger language learners in the primary grades. This project examines what the research literature has shown to be effective practice for young learner language teaching in the areas of fostering community in the classroom, facilitating interactions, the use of gesture, teaching listening, and using stories, songs and games effectively. Using the framework of sociocultural theory and the second language acquisition theories of Krashen, the project focuses on socially constructed learning in the zone of proximal development, providing comprehensible input and lowering the affective filter as the basis of effective practice in young learner language classrooms. The strategies were compiled into a handbook for teacher training. It is hoped that this project will contribute to teacher confidence and effectiveness in teaching languages to young learners.