

## English Linguistics Critical Analysis

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE THREE SCHOLARLY ARTICLES ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING  
IN YOUNG CHILDREN

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### Abstract

Li 2007 grounds her research on Coleman's social theory of family capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Coleman explains his theory around the family dynamics for children's educational attainment. He provides three distinct forms which includes capital-physical or financial capital, human capital and social capital. By the first, he means the financial status of a family plays a role in the children's language learning because they can send their kids to good public schools, can buy books and CDs for them and so on. By human capital he maintains the educational background of the parents and by social capital he suggests the social environment given to children outside the school. This study argues that classrooms are the sole reason for a child's language learning development. In fact, it is governed more by the above-mentioned factors. These three factors are interrelated and can be dealt in the same way. Among the four families that were studied, two of them were in academics and two of them were in their restaurant business. The first two families didn't have much money and they were surviving either on assistance money for the University or by doing some menial part time job. But they managed to provide children's book to their kids, used public library and spent quality time with their kids to teach them English vocabularies and stories. The other two business families were better in their financial condition, but because of the lack of parental education, they didn't spend time in teaching their kids. They were rather busy in their business and kids were left unsupervised. Consequently they couldn't communicate well in English and had only limited social exposure to English language. Li concludes by saying that it is not the financial condition of a family but the way money is being spent that matters to the children's second language learning. She emphasizes on the human capital and social capital as it is important for the parents to understand that their children need supervision and social exposure, visits to libraries and fairs to improve their second language.



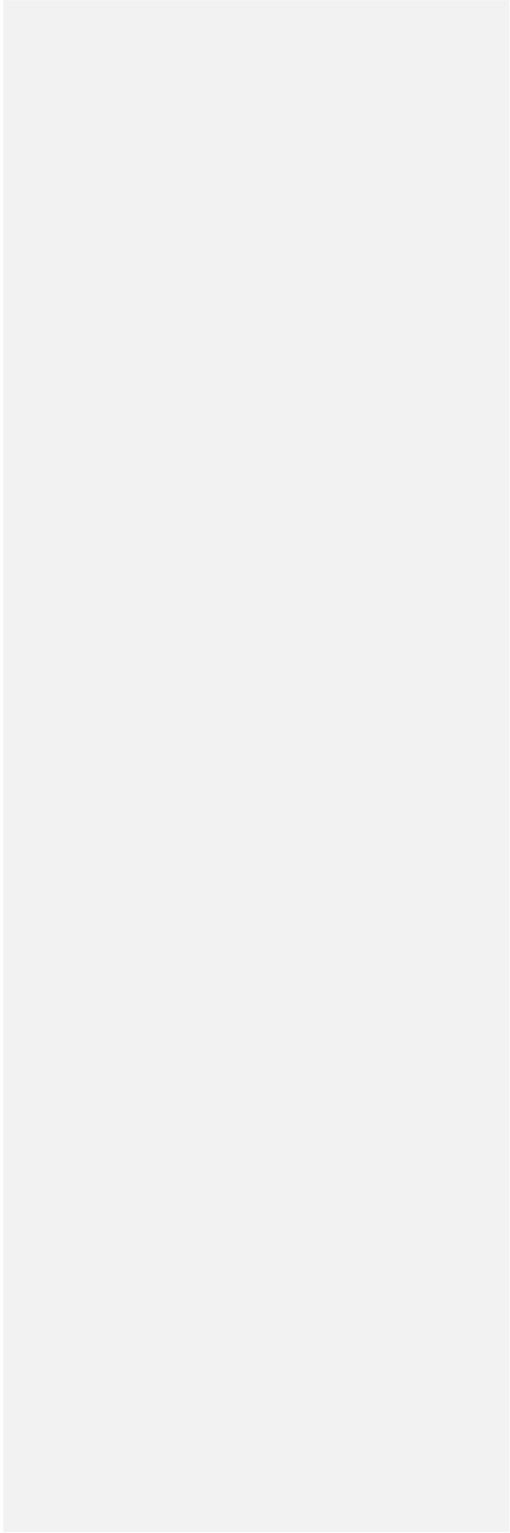
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## INTRODUCTION

I would like to postulate my research question in the area of 'second language learning and acquisition in young children'. I would specifically like to focus on the children who come to a place where English is native or official language and is widely used. I would like to shape my interest in this topic because of my first-hand experience with one of the neighbors who recently shifted in my neighborhood with his wife and two younger kids of five and eight years old. They belong to Nepal and moved here to find some job. The parents and the kids speak only Nepali for the parents are not so educated. Since English is widely used in my city, he is facing many problems in settling down himself. Above all, the kids feel left out without the company of their same age group. They remain indoors and whenever they come out in the evening, they stand near the park and keep silently watching the other children playing games and enjoying with their peers. I have noticed it for a month, and it gave me a very different feel of how it is to live in the community and not speaking their native or official language with ease.

The three scholarly papers that I have selected in order to make me capable of doing research in my interest area have provided several new insights to me. Li 2007 presents her study with four Chinese immigrant families in Canada. Her paper discusses the cause and effect of second language learning. The children from all the four families were exposed to English language and provided English medium schools from early childhood. Despite that there was a good deal of difference in their English language communicative skills. What affected their language skills remains the purpose of the author's detailed study. DeBey and Bombard 2007 developed a program called dual language in Bennington, Vermont and conducted their studies

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on the children of two to six. They immersed the children in two language; English and one other language throughout the day. All the classrooms had two teachers, one for English and one for the other second language exclusively. Children learnt their second language in the same way as they learn their first language for all the activities for example playing, singing, dancing and so on were provided in second language. The results were remarkably interesting. Karin Sandwall 2010 reflects the case study of a student who is learning second language at a work placement. My reason to take this study in my essay is to look at the differences in language learning from different perspectives. How an adult second language learning differs from the children's is my aim here. Sandwall presents the insufficient learning opportunities as the student's activities were limited to some tasks without any evaluation of her work placement interactions.

Commented [A2]: All necessary details summed up well.

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Li 2007 grounds her research on Coleman's social theory of family capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Coleman explains his theory around the family dynamics for children's educational attainment. He provides three distinct forms which includes capital-physical or financial capital, human capital and social capital. By the first, he means the financial status of a family plays a role in the children's language learning because they can send their kids to good public schools, can buy books and CDs for them and so on. By human capital he maintains the educational background of the parents and by social capital he suggests the social environment given to children outside the school. This study argues that classrooms are the sole reason for a child's language learning development. In fact, it is governed more by the above-mentioned factors. These three factors are interrelated and can be dealt in the same way. Among the four families that were studied, two of them were in academics and two of them were in their restaurant

business. The first two families didn't have much money and they were surviving either on assistance money for the University or by doing some menial part time job. But they managed to provide children's book to their kids, used public library and spent quality time with their kids to teach them English vocabularies and stories. The other two business families were better in their financial condition, but because of the lack of parental education, they didn't spend time in teaching their kids. They were rather busy in their business and kids were left unsupervised. Consequently they couldn't communicate well in English and had only limited social exposure to English language. Li concludes by saying that it is not the financial condition of a family but the way money is being spent that matters to the children's second language learning. She emphasizes on the human capital and social capital as it is important for the parents to understand that their children need supervision and social exposure, visits to libraries and fairs to improve their second language.

In the study by DeBay and Bombard 2007, the dual language program and a total immersion program is discussed where children did all their activities throughout the day in the second language. The authors suggest on the choice of a particular second language in the immersion program. There are some important reasons behind it. One important reason is to find out a language which can be easily provided to the children when it comes to social exposure; and that's why they decided to teach Spanish because they could easily get Spanish teachers and Spanish speaking people there. In the first year, some children tried to avoid interaction in the second language which limited their language learning as well as cultural exposure. It gave the clue to the authors that learning a language is all about communication, and for that the children need a familiarity with their Spanish teachers. So they modified their program, and started the introduction of the teachers in the initial classes. As soon as children became familiar with the

teachers, they accepted the unfamiliar language with less difficulty. And there are times when they enjoyed it because of their interest in the teacher. Later they introduced cognitively rich ways and the introduction of the play-based development practice for Spanish worked a lot in successfully arousing the kids' interest in second language learning.

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The student in Sandwall's case study was learning Swedish as part of the basic Swedish language program for adult immigrants in Sweden. Sandwall 2010 has provided an ecological theory in order to strengthen second language learning in such situations. In the last decades, second language learning have shifted from an individual focus on language. Now a second language is taught in contexts to give the students a better understanding in which it would be practiced (Canaragajah, 2008). Sandwall's case study was carried for three months from November 2007 and data were collected at various places including the work placement and so on. He bases his study on the ecological approach proposed by van Lier and others (Kramsch, 2002; van Lier, 2002, 2004, 2007). This approach focuses on the ways in which an individual uses language in different situations in his or her social world. He accounts the learning opportunities at such workplace by discussing the importance of proper assessment ways in the school. His findings of the case study suggest that the lack of evaluative interaction could not help the student to improve her language. She was given meaning-making material though it could not help her in getting out of the classroom contexts.

## SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

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The synthesis that could be presented from the three discussed scholarly works focus on the applications which are different from each other but have a common way to learn a second language. In the first article we come across the importance of home education and social

exposure to improve second language through the means of engaging the children in stories, simple comic books, and music and so on. In the second paper we almost find the same way to impart the children but inside the classroom. All the activities they do throughout the day is carried in second language and familiarity with the teachers and interest in the games make the learning easy and smooth for the kids. In the third paper we find out the problems in learning second language because of the lack of interactive strategies used with the student. The student has not been given the contextual knowledge, and therefore finds it difficult in workplace situation.

Recent research has shown language learning is not only dependent on the classroom teaching, but also a good deal on the homes and social circle of the children. It can be different from child to child in amount; some student may learn more in schools while others at homes, but what remains crucial is the combination of both the variables for their successful learning (Hull & Schultz, 2002; Li, 2006). Second language learning largely depends on the students' interest and availability of the language in a particular place. So selecting a language mindfully is very crucial step in this regard. It should not be handled irrationally. In the case of immigrant children home environment has a direct impact on children's learning (Fuligni, 1997; Gettinger & Guetschow, 1998; Parcel & Dufur, 2001).

## CONCLUSION

To conclude this essay, I would like to revisit my research question which is second language learning in young children. There are quite a few things to modify and narrow it down. First of all, I would like to make it more precise and specific. I would investigate the second

language learning in immigrant children till the age of nine. I would take four families with a mix of educated and uneducated parental background to see the differences clearly.

My research would study the four families in all possible situations as in when the kids are studying, when they are playing, when they are going out, and also when they are communicating to their parents as well as to others. I would do a qualitative study of English as a second language. All the children would be above age four and under nine. I would also ground my studies on earlier research done in this area with a strongly proposed theory. The above-discussed papers have provided the background for my research by discussing different theories and their appropriate applications on the children. It has reflected light on the importance of an individual's identity and family support to improve the second language. Engaging children in story-telling and games which have word puzzles and all is also crucial at this stage. Above all, understanding the ways in which an individual child can learn the language and trying to handle him in that way with a proper home care and quality time from the parents are some important stages in the study.

**Commented [A5]:** Main points summed up well with findings and recommendations elaborated to the point.

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### ***Chosen Texts***

DeBey, M. and Darlene Bombard (2007). 'Expanding Children's Boundaries: An Approach to Second-Language Learning and Cultural Understanding' in *YC Young Children*, published by National Association for the Education of Young Children Vol. 62, No. 2, pp. 88-93.

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### ***Background Readings***

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Criterion	Levels of achievement		
	Exemplary	Good	Poor
<b>Writing style and presentation are clear</b>			
• Title	Title is concise and informative so readers can anticipate the contents of the contribution and interested people look forward to reading it.	The title gives a general indication of the material covered in the contribution, but have to read the document to fully appreciate what is covered. Some potential readers may be lost because they can't clearly anticipate the material covered by reading the title.	The linkage between the title and the text is not clear. Reader may skip the contribution because they don't appreciate its relevance.
• Introduction	Introductory statement clearly indicates the main purpose of the contribution and suggests the plan of organization, so the reader can anticipate the text that will follow.	Introductory statement indicates the main purpose of the contribution in general terms, so the reader has some idea of what will follow.	The introduction does not give an overview of the contribution so the readers are not sure what to expect as they read the text.
• Main Body	Main body of contribution makes connected points that clearly build the argument so the text flows from introduction to conclusion in a logical manner, thereby helping the reader to follow the thinking behind the text.	The main body presents a number of points that allow the reader to understand the argument, but lapses in the writing may force the reader to make some connections between the parts.	The text is not well structured so the reader must stop reading at times to try to makes sense of the text.
• Conclusion	The main point of the contribution is clearly indicated and reinforced so the reader can clearly remember it.	The main point of the contribution is indicated, but may be stated in an unconvincing manner.	The concluding section does not reinforce or revisit the main point so the reader is unsure about it and likely to misinterpret or forget it.
• Written expression	Sentences and paragraphs are well structured and clear so the reader can focus on what is written. Each paragraph has a topic sentence that indicates the subject matter.	Minor lapses in sentence structure, such as run-on sentences and unnecessarily complex sentence structures, force the reader to pause and reflect on the meaning of the text. Paragraphs present a complete argument, but may not flow so well.	Many sentences are poorly structured so the reader must stop often to reflect on the meaning of the text. Many paragraphs lack topic sentences or have poor flow so the main points and linkages among explanatory text are not clear.
• Grammar, punctuation and spelling	Grammar, spelling and punctuation are flawless, which allows the reader to focus on the message.	Some minor errors in grammar, spelling and/or punctuation detract from the quality of the text, but do not impair the communication.	Many errors in grammar, spelling and/or punctuation make reading the text difficult and communication is impaired.

<b>Concepts and arguments are well developed</b>			
• <b>Accuracy</b>	All information is accurately reported using appropriate terminology so the information is reliable.	The information is largely accurate but imprecise language could lead a reader to misinterpret aspects of the text.	Although the gist of the information is correct, there are problems with the interpretation of it. A reader can be misled by the text.
• <b>Relevance</b>	Connections between the contribution and the main topic of the discussion are clearly indicated.	Connections between the contribution and the main topic of the discussion are indicated or implied, but the reader needs to pause to clarify those connections.	Although the text is relevant, this is not clearly indicated, so the reader must guess how the text relates to the main topic.
• <b>Significance</b>	The reason why the contribution is important to the overall discussion is clearly described and discussed so the reader takes the contribution seriously.	The reason why the contribution is important is touched on but not elucidated, so the reader must make some interpretations about the author's view of the contribution's significance.	The contribution may include significant material but this is not indicated, so the reader must guess it.
• <b>Clarity</b>	The main points and new technical terms are clearly described and/or explained so the reader is left with no ambiguity about what was written.	Although the text is clear to informed audiences, unexplained points may leave room for alternative interpretations of the text.	Key points and new technical terms are not explained so the reader is confused.
• <b>Independence</b>	The contribution is completely self-contained so the reader does not have to read other contributions or published materials to understand what was written about.	The text is sufficiently clear that the reader can understand the main point without further reading, but some parts of the text are not clear without consulting earlier contributions or other sources of information.	The text is written in a manner that presumes considerable prior knowledge, so the reader must have a thorough knowledge of what has been written about the subject in order to understand the main point of the contribution.
<b>Contribution is responsive to another contribution</b>	The writer links ideas submitted by others to their own contribution in a manner that substantially strengthens the group's efforts to resolve the main problem. This linkage can include elaboration of what was previously written, a critique or questioning of it, demonstration of linkages among two or more earlier contributions, and/or utilization of an earlier contribution as a foundation to build your own.	The writer makes references to earlier works that are a starting point for new ideas but, apart from the reference to the earlier work, not much information is incorporated	The text mentions other contributions but neither explains the reference nor substantially adds to it, so there is no clear benefit to the resolution of the main problem from citing the earlier contribution.
<b>Text is supported by references</b>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sources indicated</li> </ul>	<p>All information and ideas that are not commonly known are supported with references to sources, so the reader has confidence that the information is not based on hearsay or the writer's opinion or assumptions alone.</p>	<p>Most sources are indicated, but in only a few cases the sources are not given or are ambiguous, so the reader has to check some of the sources.</p>	<p>Sources are cited for some specific parts of the contribution, but no references are supplied for information and ideas that are clearly not the author's, so the reader has no idea of the validity and authority of the information.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant references</li> </ul>	<p>Information, concepts and opinions are supported with references to published literature, especially primary (original) sources of information, rather than review articles or textbooks. This allows the reader to independently review the cited sources. More than one reference is cited to support key points, which adds strength and authority to the argument.</p>	<p>One or a few references are used to support the text. Thus the contribution is supported but this may be an idiosyncratic source. Some general references to textbooks are made that could have been replaced by primary references which are more thorough and authoritative.</p>	<p>Information comes from Web sites or other sources that have no recognized authority, so the validity or strength of the source is unknown.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citation style</li> </ul>	<p>References cited appropriately in the text, and the correct format is used in the text when citing information, so the reader clearly knows which information is attributable to which source.</p>	<p>Minor lapses in citation format do not prevent the reader from finding the sources in the reference list at the end of the contribution.</p>	<p>Citation format incorrect or poorly placed in the text, so citations distract from reading.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bibliographic information</li> </ul>	<p>The reference list contains complete bibliographic information (author's name(s), publication date, title, source, date web page accessed), so a reader can easily find the references for their own research. The authority of sources can be evaluated by checking them.</p>	<p>Bibliographic information largely complete, but some information missing so the reader may have difficulty finding some references. Most sources can still be easily checked.</p>	<p>Not all references are listed, information in the reference list is incorrect, or important information is missing from the reference list, so the reader is unable to find the same sources of information and the authority of sources is almost entirely unknown.</p>

**Comments:** Very well analyzed. The aspect of critical analysis has shown up in all sections with diverse citations from various sources.