

Abstract

There are a growing number of Japanese students studying English outside school in Thailand and it is consequently important for teachers to understand how Japanese children acquire English. Thus, this study focuses on how five Japanese children acquire English in an informal setting. The purposes of this study are to investigate what progress can be seen in children's development of English in an informal setting (in the *Voice Hobby Club*) and how children use language for developing cognitive processes.

In order to help answer the research questions, video tape recording were made and transcribed over a period of three months at the *Voice Hobby Club* in Bangkok, Thailand.

The results indicate that with the help of the teacher and the peer group, the children can progress albeit in a rather limited way in acquiring English. However, it would seem that the language or languages that the students have, in these cases Japanese and English, can be used to develop some of the basic cognitive processes. Also, although the students' languages were limited by their age and experience, they used the two languages to access the meaning of the objects, which is what a bilingual child does in switching codes. In the final chapter of this thesis, the question is posed as to whether the present format of the *Voice Hobby Club* is really as effective as it could be. Suggestions are made for what might be termed a 'mini' English immersion as a more effective program.