

## Joanna Rokita-Jaśkow (2025). *The Ecology of Pre-Primary Foreign Language Learning. Multilingual Matters. 167 pp.*

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EFL teaching and learning for very young children is no longer a novel issue. After the publication of *Teaching Foreign Languages to the Very Young* (1979), edited by Freudenstein, this research field has certainly witnessed attention with studies on methodology (Cameron, 2001; Brewster *et al.*, 2002; Pinter, 2006, 2011; Mourao & Ellis, 2020), and edited collections covering multilingual and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) contexts such as Murphy & Evangelou (2016), Schwartz (2020) and Otto & Cortina-Pérez (2023), among others.

Following this trend, this monograph has a two-fold purpose. First, it is aimed to contribute to the rich area of research by considering the foreign language process holistically as most of the early exposure to languages comes from both formal and informal contexts, such as the home. Second, it adopts van Lier's ecological approach (2004) and theories on human development stressing the importance of the ecosystem (environmental, social and political factors) to shape Foreign Language (FL) acquisition and learning at a very young age as opposed to traditional innatism theories. The volume consists of 6 chapters which refer to the name of the nested systems in which the L2 very young learner operates. Alongside, each chapter is beautifully framed into research evidence pertaining to the different elements of the child language learning ecosystem.

Chapter one serves as an introduction as it offers a comprehensible description of the child's biosystem. i.e., "the cognitive predispositions that makes them capable of acquiring language" (p. 9). This chapter is essential to understand the process of mother tongue acquisition and stresses the similarities and differences between L1 and L2/L3 acquisition and learning, it could work as a standpoint for any undergraduate course in this field. In this sense, special mention is made on how first language development impacts early language foreign language learning, and the factors affecting FL development.

Chapter two (the microsystem) addresses the educational institution where the foreign language learning is developed, be it a nursery school, kindergarten, afternoon classes, playgroup, etc. It opens with a clear vision on the role of institutions in shaping the children's motivation and latter attitudes to FL, emphasizing teachers' roles and their techniques to promote language learning, and it ends with a key note on favouring very young learners' agency over teacher agency.

Chapter three stands out as describing the mesosystem of the family environment, an aspect that is frequently overlooked in those educational systems such as the Spanish one where students are enrolled at an early age. It looks at parental involvement as a necessary condition for subsequent FL achievement, the factors which have an impact on FL proficiency, and parental agency along with other factors, namely SES, the latter certainly playing a lesser role.

In chapter four the author deals with the ecosystem or the affordances of the linguistic landscape, which embraces both the natural and digital world. Here, the author wisely discusses the concepts of globalisation and the neoliberal economy, which are naturally manifest in the educational trends. In fact, this is also a very neglected aspect in the literature, and deserves closer attention in those monolingual settings in which the striving for more exposure is made visible in the uprising of early bilingual education programs.

Chapter five delves into the macrosystem as it refers to early language learning policy and planning. This is an excellent chapter for those interested in European early FL policy, and could be a vital starting point for graduate students. Apart from the necessary legal directives, the chapter draws attention to teachers' beliefs and education as key aspects in the success of educational programs, and it describes core areas and competencies that any Early Education and Care (ECEC) FL teacher should possess.

Chapter six covers the chronosystem- the time issues and their role in the FL learning process. In this chapter, the concept of 'window of opportunity' as related to Critical Period Hypothesis, the affective filter and cognitive flexibility is explained. However, it is important to note that while the author acknowledges the biological 'window of opportunity' for language acquisition, she also emphasizes that without a supportive linguistic ecology including

trained educators and parental involvement this window remains a missed potential rather than a guaranteed success.

Finally, the volume is wrapped up with some concluding remarks by the author where she synthesizes the research presented throughout the different chapters to offer a realistic, rather than idealistic, view of early language education. Last but not least, she advocates for more longitudinal and comparative international research to move from past beliefs and anecdotes toward a more evidence-based understanding of how ecological factors truly impact language outcomes.

A veteran voice in second language acquisition, Joanna Rokita-Jaśkow is renowned for her pioneering studies on child language development and her leadership in international research networks dedicated to early years education. In this volume, she goes beyond traditional pedagogical methods to explore the 'ecology' of the pre-primary classroom, arguing that a child's linguistic success is inextricably linked to the synergy between family support, teacher education, and overarching national policies. This monograph serves as a crucial bridge between foreign language acquisition theory and the practical implementation of early learning scenarios, and will surely have a profound impact on both researchers and practitioners.