MK Language Acquisition

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What are optimal goals for MKs?
1. To have a positive, nurturing environment at home.
2. To develop their home language well.
3. To get a K-12 education that will meet their college/career needs.
4. To have many positive experiences within the host culture, and feel at home in it.
5. To learn the local language at least to an intermediate level.

My EMQ Article (April 2009) “Language Development for MKs”:
https://missionexus.org/language-development-for-mks/

A Nurturing Environment at Home

Parent and child language study (and ministry) choices need to take into consideration parents’ needs in being able to continue to provide a _______________ and low-stress environment at home.

Developing the Home Language

All research points to the absolute necessity of developing the _________________ language very well. Second language acquisition potential is much _______________ the better the first language is developed. Parents’ most important job in the home is to _______________ well, and usually this means using the _______________ language in the home.

Learning two languages from birth, _________________, is obviously ideal, when caretakers have different native languages. Such bilinguals have two native/first languages, and this is not a case of SLA. A person who has already acquired the first language well, by age 4 or 5, then experiences _________________ when learning a new language, engaging in SLA.

An Appropriate K-12 Education

There are now more educational options than ever. I have experienced these as an MK: national school, one-room MK school, International (English) school, boarding school, home school, and distance (correspondence) education; and these as an MK parent: national school, homeschool, distance (internet) education, and international school. Many factors come into play in selecting the best educational option for children.
National Schooling
More parents now opt for national schooling, so that their children can learn the local language. Factors to consider in national schooling include:

- The child’s ________________: The higher, the less likely the child can learn both the language and the content.
- The amount of ________________ the school provides for students new to the language of instruction. In many parts of the world, schools rarely receive students who don’t speak the school language, and they have _____ systems in place to support learners.
- ________________. If this is too high, language and content learning will not take place, and another option should be sought.

International (English-medium) Schooling
- General factors to consider include the L1 of the ____________, the curriculum used, accreditation, and the training of the _____________.
- Language factors pertinent to our discussion today focus on the question: ________________________________?

Positive Experiences within the Host Culture
Many adult MKs report not really having any ____________ in the host culture. Many experience life in an international bubble driven by the ________________ school. This is a good and helpful community, but parents would do well to also ensure that their children have ________________ interactions within the host culture. Unfortunately, this can be extremely difficult if children do not learn the local language.

Learning the Local Language
Following are the reasons cited by participants in my research for why it was difficult for MKs to learn the local language.

1. Failure of international schools to teach the local language.
   - “Our child who attended International School had only basic language teaching at the school. It was a very weak program for MK students.”
   - “Our international school at that time did not offer the local language for every grade level.”
   - “My daughter asked for a tutor once a week because the language training at school was not very proficient, and she herself was frustrated with communicating.”
   - “Slow progress in language classes at English school.”

2. Frustration with national schooling.
   - “The language is too complex to “pick up” in national school.”
3. Lack of opportunity to be exposed to and use the language.
   - “They didn't have to use it very often.”
   - “Children were not as immersed in the language as others”

   - “The local children wanted to speak English.”
   - “School is in English, home life is in English, and there have been few kids their ages in the neighborhoods we have lived in, therefore they have struggled to learn Spanish.”

5. Mission agency not providing classes for children.
   - “They didn't learn the language at all. They were in an English-speaking school and we spoke English in the home. We asked for language classes for them, but it was denied.”
   - “There was a lack of established language learning options for our children.”
   - “No opportunity [for children] to learn formally”
   - “My children were not encouraged at all by the mission to learn the language, and that was a huge disappointment.”
   - “Children need language training too. It is a big deterrence for going to church if one does not know the language.”

Changes Needed to Facilitate MK Learning of the Local/Host Language:

1. Christian International schools ____________ provide effective classes in the local language. A child in an international school for 5 years or more should achieve at least an ________________ level of proficiency in the local language.

   What is needed to achieve this goal?
   a. Local language teachers ____________ be trained in SLA.
   b. Classes in the local language should be at least 4-5 hours ____________.
   c. The curriculum must be motivating, incorporating local ____________ and ____________, and utilizing ____________________.

2. Parents need better ________________ from their agencies regarding national school options.

3. Parents need to, as much as is possible, ________________ engage in ministry options which are helpful for their children in learning the local language, and by the same token ____________ exposing their children to situations that are demotivating.

4. Mission agencies must value ________________ language learning, promoting it and working with families to achieve it.