



## AGE AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

*Jumaniyozova M.*

*Nukus, Uzbekistan*

*3<sup>rd</sup> year Student, English Language and Literature Department*

*Berdakh Karakalpak State University*

**Abstract:** *Age has been considered as a crucial factor in acquiring second languages successfully as well as in acquiring first language. In this article, there is given some studies and guidance with reference to age and language acquisition. And the aim of this article is to differentiate the age factors.*

**Key words:** *age factors, Second Language Acquisition, critical period, puberty bilingualism, young learners*

### Introduction

Second language acquisition is clarified as the learning and adopting of a language that is not our native language. After you have acquired a foreign language, you have mastered that language. For making maximal progress with their own learning methods second language learners should be identified and observed with their individual differences. A number of theories suggest that personality factors have a significant impact on the degree of success individuals have achieved in learning a second language (Gass & Selinker, 1994) some characteristics of a student's personality by strengthening certain aspects of language learning, or by hindering others based on the assumption that it can stimulate or inhibit second language acquisition (Cook, 1996).

Most trainees learn faster and easily a new language than others. Obviously, some language learners succeed because of their perseverance and hard work. Nevertheless there are other essential factors that affect success that are not controlled by the learner. These factors can be classified as internal and external.

### Reviews of linguists about second language acquisition

There are many theories researched by the linguists to notice the differences and similarities between first language acquisition and second language acquisition. For example: Krashen focused on the age role in SLA. He dictated that the difference between an adult learner and a child learner ability of language acquisition, where adults use subconscious and conscious processes, whereas children use only the subconscious processing. He refers to the conscious process in which the adult learner of a second language analyzes the rules and forms of a language as 'monitor'. He also states that achieving a native language-like qualification requires us to encourage L2 students to use the tools they use when children master their first language. For that reason, Krashen's recommendation was to inform the teachers that they should help their students acquire a language rather than learning it consciously.

Another great linguist, Khomsky, carried out studies that had a great influence on SLA studies, where views on language, learner and the learning process surrounded by theories of structuralism and behaviorism were made. Then, as SLA research matured and the basic constructions that form its theoretical basis were established, the field was able to look outwards and explore the role of the different contexts of learning. Later,



interest in grammar pedagogy was renewed (Lightboun 2002), in part due to the failure of educational contexts promoting ‘natural’ communication (teaching communicative languages) in producing students who are consistently clear in their productions. Consequently, the role of teaching and the role of access in facilitating the L2 learning process has generated more interest for many studies.

### **Critical period hypothesis**

There is a very important period for mastering the first and second language, and children have a great advantage over adults or adolescents. This critical period of exposure is used to refer to the general phenomenon of a decrease in powers that are increasing in age.

This hypothesis was first presented by Penfield and Roberts (1959,p.5). Ellis also observes that there is a period when language acquisition can be natural and effective, but after a certain age, the brain is no longer able to process language in this way (1986, p.107). This critical period is defined by Scovel (1988, p. 2) as follows:

In short, the critical period hypothesis is the notion that the language is best studied in its early years after childhood and the first decades of life, everyone faces certain limitations in their ability to acquire a new language.

•Some adolescents or adults who begin learning a second language would fall through language fluency, whilst children those exposed to a second language at an early age appear to be as proficient as native speakers (cf. Lenneberg 1967).Furthermore, the language environment takes a main role when language learners begin acquiring foreign languages. This hypothesis can be argued that children seem to be engaged in an effective way of obtaining new language when set in a foreign language (see Singleton and Ryan 2004, p. 61). On the other hand, teenagers or adults have great difficulties in acquiring a new language and maintaining a trace of foreignness

### **Early age second language acquisition**

It is said that It can be difficult to raise a bilingual child, but the benefits of learning a second language at an early age are certainly worth the struggle.

The benefits of learning a second language at an early age:

- Learn faster and easier.,
- Improve problem solving and creativity,
- Enhance future career opportunities,
- Connect with other cultures and build tolerance,
- Prevent age-related mental illness.

Most importantly, it’s much easier to learn a second language at an early age.

In addition, learning a second language isn’t as difficult as it used to be. Because of modern and useful technologies scientists are constantly studying second language acquisition and developing new methodologies to help kids learn faster.

### **Second language acquisition after puberty**

From many previous researches,there are always some discussions on “whether the adults’ second language acquisition is easy or not”. Some researchers agree that adults’ second language acquisition is easy. However, some researchers have given the opposite view that the adults’ second language acquisition is not as easy as the children’s native language acquisition. From the strengths of adults the logical thinking aspect is a special one. This ability has improved and their language consciousness is very strong.



Adult maturity expands their cognitive skills, resulting in strong abilities for analysis and interference thus giving the benefits of conveying grammatical rules and sentences: giving a good chance to figure out complicated problems. All these gathered knowledge and abilities will absolutely give an assistance in mastering second language.

The suggestions of the critical period hypothesis adults may have lost their natural language acquisition abilities after a certain age so adults can not effectively acquire the second language on the same level of fluency as children's native language acquisition. From some views of linguists adults spend a lot of energy and time, however they can not entirely obtain second language.

### **Conclusion**

When education institute proposes new the foreign language learning programs for foreign language teaching, the government should support and invest money so as to put it into effect should consult the teachers as well as the students to get more information about the foreign language country, the books. The education institute needs to introduce the international publishers' books or materials from the English speaking countries. Authentic materials and task-based contents need to be taken into account when our educators choose the teaching materials. When our teachers teach young learners' foreign language, we should pay more attention to their personality, learning style, learning strategy, interest, motivation, etc. All these factors would affect their second language learning acquisition.

It has been clear that the language learning processes in adults and children have advantages and disadvantages. Many scientists' views also were given there about Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

In short the purpose of this article review is to give some points about critical period in second language acquisition and about age factors.



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