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Introduction

First language acquisition refers to the way children learn their native language. Second language acquisition refers to the learning of another language or languages besides the native language.

For children learning their native language, linguistic competence develops in stages, from babbling to one word to two word, then telegraphic speech. Babbling is now considered the earliest form of language acquisition because infants will produce sounds based on what language input they receive. One word sentences (holophrastic speech) are generally monosyllabic in consonant-vowel clusters. During two word stage, there are no syntactic or morphological markers, no inflections for plural or past tense, and pronouns are rare, but the intonation contour extends over the whole utterance. Telegraphic speech lacks function words and only carries the open class content words, so that the sentences sound like a telegram.

Three theories
The three theories of language acquisition: imitation, reinforcement and analogy, do not explain very well how children acquire language. Imitation does not work because children produce sentences never heard before, such as "cat stand up table." Even when they try to imitate adult speech, children cannot generate the same sentences because of their limited grammar. And children who are unable to speak still learn and understand the language, so that when they overcome their speech impairment they immediately begin speaking the language. Reinforcement also does not work because it actually seldomly occurs and when it does, the reinforcement is correcting pronunciation or truthfulness, and not grammar. A sentence such as "apples are purple" would be corrected more often because it is not true, as compared to a sentence such as "apples is red" regardless of the grammar. Analogy also cannot explain language acquisition. Analogy involves the formation of sentences or phrases by using other sentences as samples. If a child hears the sentence, "I painted a red barn," he can say, by analogy, "I painted a blue barn." Yet if he hears the sentence, "I painted a barn red," he cannot say "I saw a barn red." The analogy did not work this time, and this is not a sentence of English.

Acquisitions Phonology:

A child's error in pronunciation is not random, but rule-governed. Typical phonological rules include: consonant cluster simplification (spoon becomes poon), devoicing of final consonants (dog becomes dok), voicing of initial consonants (truck becomes druck), and consonant harmony (doggy becomes goggy, or big becomes gig.)

Morphology:

An overgeneralization of constructed rules is shown when children treat irregular verbs and nouns as regular. Instead of went as the past tense of go, children use goed because the regular verbs add an -ed ending to form the past tense. Similarly, children use gooses as the plural of goose instead of geese, because regular nouns add an -s in the plural.

Innateness Hypothesis

The "Innateness Hypothesis" of child language acquisition, proposed by Noam Chomsky, states that the human species is pre-wired to acquire language, and that the kind of language is also determined. Many factors have led to this hypothesis such as the ease and rapidity of language acquisition despite impoverished input as well as the uniformity of languages. All children will learn a language, and children will also learn more than one language if they are exposed to it. Children follow the same general stages when learning a language, although the linguistic input is widely varied.

The poverty of the stimulus states that children seem to learn or know the aspects of grammar for which they receive no information. In addition, children do not produce sentences that could not be sentences in some human language. The principles of Universal Grammar underlie the specific grammars of all languages and determine the class of languages that can be acquired unconsciously without instruction. It is the genetically determined faculty of the left hemisphere, and there is little doubt that the brain is specially equipped for acquisition of human language.

Critical Age Hypothesis

The "Critical Age Hypothesis" suggests that there is a critical age for language acquisition without the need for special teaching or learning. During this critical period, language learning proceeds quickly and easily. After this period, the acquisition of grammar is difficult, and for some people, never fully achieved. Cases of children reared in social isolation have been used for testing the critical age hypothesis. None of the children who had little human contact were able to speak any language once reintroduced into society. Even the children who received linguistic input after being reintroduced to society were unable to fully develop language skills. These cases of isolated children, and of deaf children, show that humans cannot fully acquire any language to which they are exposed unless they are within the critical age. Beyond this age, humans are unable to acquire much of syntax and inflectional morphology. At least for humans, this critical age does not pertain to all of language, but to specific parts of the grammar.

In comparison, younger students found memorising the words more enjoyable and useful as they were using these words in context (Nation & Wright, 1987). This is an example of how older learners may respond differently to strategies that are usually used with younger learners.

In contrast to their negative attitudes toward studying vocabulary, older learners do show similar levels of motivation to learn new words as younger pupils. However, there are differences between the two groups which make it more difficult for older learners to meet their goals (Cook & Norris, 2001).

One distinction is that younger learners learn at a faster pace than older learners (Cook & Norris, 2001). A number of factors may be responsible for this difference. For example, younger learners often have greater levels of motivation and interest in general, which leads them to actively seek out new words and phrases. By contrast, older learners often view classes as a burden and therefore they do not actively seek out vocabulary information (Cook & Norris, 2001).

In addition to differing levels of motivation and interest, there are also differences in the way students approach learning vocabulary. Younger students frequently seek out meaning-focused strategies to help them decipher new words (Graziano & Oakhill, 1995). For example, students might say a new word slowly and repeatedly in order to remember it. In contrast, older learners often utilise vocabulary-focused strategies because they find meaning-focused strategies too difficult or frustrating (Graziano & Oakhill, 1995). For example, they might guess the meaning of new words based on their familiarity with similar ones.

The fact that older learners are more likely to use vocabulary-focused strategies has implications for how teachers approach their teaching of this area (Cook & Norris, 2001). From a non-formal perspective, vocabulary development is often considered to be a natural process that can be supported by providing meaningful contexts for these words. However, Cook & Norris (2001) argue that most older learners do not have the

experience of using such contexts to learn vocabulary, so they do not experience the benefits of such strategies.

Theories that can be used to explain how a child learns his or her first language:

Principles and parameters theory: Principles and parameters theory suggests that languages all share the same principles, but the way these principles are applied differs from one language to another. The question then becomes, "How do children figure out which grammar principles apply to their own native language?" The answer is: through experience. Principles and parameters theory proposes that at birth, our brains come with a default setting for each parameter (i.e., IF THIS then THAT). However, if a child hears something different, like French for instance, the principles change (i.e., IF THIS then THAT).

The critical period hypothesis: The critical period is the time span from birth to puberty in which an organism is most susceptible to social influences and most easily learn new skills such as language. For language acquisition to occur, the critical period hypothesis suggests that there must be a complete absence of first language exposure during this period of time. Thus for an adult learner to acquire a second language it must occur before puberty ends.

Critical period claimed that human are genetically programmed to acquire certain kinds of knowledge and skills at specific times in life. The idea of "critical period " was introduced by Penfield and Roberts (1995). According to Penfield and Roberts , a child's brain is more plastic compared with that of an adult and before the age of nine, a child is a specialist in learning to speak, he can learn 2-3 languages as easily of one. The studies of Lenneberg(1967), based on the field of neurophysiology, as applied to the brain (he limits the critical period for L2A from(2 years of age to puberty).

Lamenella(1977) introduces "sensitive period" which is equivalent to "critical period". Also Bornstein in(1989) and Pinker(1994), which all believed in the "critical period".

These above studies and researches indicated that the most researches do agree that there is a potential advantage to an early stage in childhood.

Result from the studies suggest that early exposure , even when it is minimal & there is little productive use of second language may be of importance to ultimate success. Early exposure activate innate neurofunctional system.

The correlation between age and L2A is generally negative, the maximum age for native like achievement in L2A is 15 years .

We reached to the result that children, adolescents & adults have neurological, cognitive, & psychological differences in L2A, thus these differences demand different teaching approaches .

Construction grammar: Construction grammar uses grammatical constructions that are defined by cognitive principles and entail conceptual structures which provide information about the meaning of particular constructions. The idea is that meaning constrains the form of individual constructions, and also that certain meanings are only expressed by certain constructions.

Usage-based: Usage-based theories argue that children infer the underlying grammatical regularities from their accumulated knowledge of utterances they hear in their environment. This approach assumes that a child's ultimate goal is to produce an approximation of the adult language he or she hears around him or her. Therefore, this approach suggests that when there are two competing grammatical constructions for a specific input in a child's language, the best structure is chosen based on how frequently each structure is used.

Social interactionist: The social interactionist theory suggests that parents (or caretakers) help to shape their children's language. This view emphasizes social context and the role of adults (particularly parents) in the child's acquisition of language.

Classical: In the classical view, language is acquired through imitation and reinforcement.

Theories that can be used to explain how an adult learns a foreign language:

Compensatory: The first approach to second language acquisition is the compensatory model. This model suggests that learners rely on existing knowledge of their native language to understand the new language they are trying to learn. This means that if a learner knows some words in his or her native-tongue, then it can help him or her acquire words in a foreign language because he or she already possesses the building blocks of that particular language.

Usage-based theories look at language acquisition with reference to the actual use of language in context. Language is an integral part of the environment and is acquired through interaction with others. Thus, there exists 100% usage in social situations which vary from situation to situation. The general hypothesis is that a pattern of usage leads to acquisition of linguistic forms.

Neural plasticity: The term neural plasticity refers to how neurons can make new neural connections throughout life as a result of learning or brain injury.

Consideration of Age in L2 Attainment

Consideration of Age in L2 Attainment in older learners:

Consideration of Age in L2 Attainment Age is a crucial variable. Older learners' language attainment often differs from that of younger learners, and age should be considered when discussing the language abilities of bilinguals. In particular, it is necessary to take into account the significant impact that age has on the quantity and

quality of exposure in a second or foreign language program (Mollenhoff & Painter, 2008).

For instance, older learners will benefit from a more vibrant curriculum with greater opportunities for interactive activities than would be possible for younger students who are primarily learning through listening-based activities. In addition, older learners are often more willing to make mistakes than younger learners (Zobl, 2005), and they may have a better understanding of why language learning is difficult. Once these characteristics are understood, adult language programs can utilize them to create an optimal learning environment for language acquisition. The purpose of this essay is to introduce various factors related to age and language acquisition in a second or foreign language, with the ultimate goal of creating a "best practice" program that encompasses age-related difficulties as well as older students' strengths.

Older learners also tend to have more difficulty with vocabulary acquisition than younger learners do (Cook & Norris, 2001). One explanation for this difficulty is that older learners have a reduced frequency of exposure to new words; as students enter school, their vocabulary development slows down dramatically. In addition, younger students typically have greater access to multiple sources of input for learning vocabulary (e.g. peers, teachers) than older learners do (Cook & Norris, 2001).

Another factor that can contribute to older learners' difficulties with vocabulary development is their relative lack of participation in classroom communicative activities. Although a great deal of language acquisition research focuses on single-participant conversations between young children and adults, people's real language usage involves a great deal of group interaction (Munro & Derwing, 1995). In fact, most people's daily lives involve interactions with at least three or four other people at one time (Munro & Derwing, 1995). Group interaction not only provides more opportunity for input but also allows learners to test what they have learned. In addition, the dominant role of teacher as source of input in classrooms can also lead to a decrease in input outside the classroom (Munro & Derwing, 1995).

The few studies that have examined age effects on language acquisition in the real world have found that older learners do not always fare better than younger learners. For example, Munro and Derwing (1995) found that although older learners were less likely than younger learners to use English in their adult daily lives, they were as likely as younger learners to use English for purposes related to work or leisure activities. In addition, Gobl and Drews (1994) found no significant differences between older and younger learners' spoken English proficiency levels in a bilingual community. In terms of their written proficiency, older learners were significantly more likely than younger learners to be proficient in writing—a skill that is rarely used in the real world. Although most of these studies did not consider whether age differences might vary based on the learner's country of residence or other factors, it has been shown that age effects in language acquisition are influenced by important variables (e.g. gender, culture, and socioeconomic status; Gobl & Drews, 1994; Munro & Derwing, 1995).

Consideration of L2 Attainment One factor that must be taken into account when studying age effects in second or foreign language learning is cognitive development levels. In particular, there are four levels of cognitive development: preoperational, concrete operations, formal operations, and abstract thinking (Piaget, 1970). In the early stages of cognitive development, learners often have a tendency to experience egocentrism—the viewpoint that one's own thought process and actions are correct regardless of their external environments (Piaget, 1970). As learners mature, their egocentrism decreases and their thinking moves from concrete to abstract modes of cognition (Piaget, 1970).

As discussed earlier, another important aspect of this aspect arises from the fact that older learners have a reduced frequency of exposure to new words. In addition to their other cognitive limitations, older learners are less likely than younger learners to be involved in conversation with native speakers of the target language. This lack of exposure has led some researchers to argue that older learners should not be given language tests (Cook & Norris, 2001). Test setting may often impose additional limitations on older learners' ability to speak a second language. For example, when a test requires a person to read aloud, older learners may struggle with reading fluency because they have never learned how to read aloud (Cook & Norris, 2001). As a result of their oral production limitations, they might focus on improving their ability to read aloud rather than focusing on improving their conversational skills.

When older learners' vocabulary development is considered in combination with their other limitations, the complexity of the task of teaching them may seem overwhelming to teachers and learners alike. In support of this argument, Gobl and Drews (1994) found that textbooks were disproportionately used by older learners. For example, older learners were significantly more likely than younger learners to use a foreign-language textbook when learning how to write in their first language (Gobl & Drews, 1994).

Acquisition vs. Learning Language

Acquisition vs. Learning Language acquisition has been defined as "the process by which we acquire native competence" in a second or foreign language (Cook & Norris, 2001). However, research on age and language acquisition has often been limited to a second language only. Those studies that have recognized the importance of age effects in the development of a second or foreign language have frequently focused on learning strategies, vocabulary size, and linguistic structures.

Teaching adolescents vocabulary: formal vs. non-formal

Another distinction between older and younger learners is their ability to learn words through formal learning processes such as grammar and translation (Cook & Norris, 2001). Older learners are generally less successful at finding meaning in grammar or translation and therefore rely on more direct ways to gain this information (Cook & Norris, 2001).

It is important for teachers to recognise the difference between older and younger learners and to make sure that materials are aimed at the needs of each group (Cook &

Norris, 2001). Older learners can benefit from having more challenging tasks , such as asking students to write the sentence using only words they have just learnt. Younger learners may do better when they are asked to write in a language other than English, or perhaps spend less time on grammar and vocabulary and more time on comprehension. Depending on the age of their students, teachers can use different teaching strategies to produce these desired outcomes.

Older learners' difficulties

Older learners' difficulties with vocabulary development can be attributed to a number of factors related to older learners' cognitive development (Cook & Norris, 2001). For example, issues surrounding abstractness have already been discussed. Another issue is the discrepancy between knowledge of language and knowledge in the world. Linguistic knowledge and children's knowledge in a second language are not directly linked at the early stage of cognitive development (Piaget, 1970). Younger learners tend to have greater access to linguistic input as well as a greater focus on external reality, whereas older learners' attention is often more focused on internal aspects such as word meaning (Cook & Norris, 2001). The result of this discrepancy can lead to confusion between learning a language and learning about the world.

Another cognitive factor that can contribute to older learners' difficulties with vocabulary development is their difficulty understanding the relationship between concepts and language (Cook & Norris, 2001). Younger learners often understand words in terms of their unique meaning. Older learners, on the other hand, understand words in terms of how they are used in different contexts (Cook & Norris, 2001). As a result of this shift from reliance on individual words to reliance on the conceptual relationship between concepts and language, older learners are less likely to make connections between new words and their meaning when those connections are not apparent.

There is also concern about the way in which vocabulary is defined for students in different contexts. When considering vocabulary for learning purposes, often only words are counted for purposes such as testing or teaching (Cook & Norris, 2001). Older learners are less likely than younger learners to be exposed to the structured connections between concepts and language. For example, when learning vocabulary, definitions of words can be useful as they provide a way of remembering the meaning of new words—an important strategy for vocabulary development (Cook & Norris, 2001). However, because older learners tend to select more abstract words based on their meaning rather than their use in a particular context, they may resist definitions as a way of learning new vocabulary (Cook & Norris, 2001).

In addition to cognitive age-related concerns about vocabulary development, there is also concern that the amount of time spent on different tasks such as reading and writing will affect older learners' ability to develop these skills. When these aspects are considered independently, it is often assumed that older learners' problems with vocabulary development are due to the amount of time they spend studying vocabulary (Cook & Norris, 2001). However, studies of younger students have shown that the amount of time spent studying vocabulary does not predict scores on vocabulary skills

tests (Munro & Derwing, 1995). This suggests that time alone might not be a factor for vocabulary development.

Further research has suggested that the nature of tasks may be more important than their quantity. For example, reading and writing are not equally difficult for older learners (Cook & Norris, 2001). In general, writing is more difficult than reading. Because of this difficulty, tasks that focus exclusively on reading—such as asking students to read aloud—might not be a good measure of older learners' abilities. When the effects of these differences in task demands are considered in combination with the aspects discussed earlier, it becomes clear that older learners have a more limited ability to learn certain parts of vocabulary development.

Given the unique challenges of teaching older learners vocabulary, some researchers have suggested that teachers and educators adapt their teaching styles accordingly (Cook & Norris, 2001). For example, when teaching grammar, it might be useful to use a more formal approach that focuses on correct usage rather than the meaning of new words (Cook & Norris, 2001). Similarly, if learning vocabulary is interpreted as a cognitive process that can be improved with specific strategies, then vocabulary development might become an educational goal for older learners.

As with older learners, regardless of the age of their target language learner; teachers have concerns about teaching adolescents vocabulary and what strategies are most effective when tackling this issue. These concerns are often based on research findings from earlier studies (Cook & Norris, 2001). For example, any attempt to teach adolescent learners vocabulary is often met with resistance due to the perception that this approach is considered to be artificial, boring and unproductive (Cook & Norris, 2001).

The nature of this resistance has been investigated extensively by researchers. For example, one group studied adolescents' responses to reading lists that are often given in preparation for school entrance exams (Hirsh & Nation, 1990). In order to provide a basis for comparison, a group of younger learners was also surveyed on their reactions to the same materials. As expected, adolescents were strongly opposed to the idea of studying vocabulary in order to learn it; most said they thought it was boring and useless (Hirsh & Nation, 1990). Younger students were less opposed to the idea of studying vocabulary in order to succeed at school.

This difference in attitude may stem from the way in which older learners were exposed to language as children. When investigating their own experiences with vocabulary learning as children, adolescents said they had not encountered many opportunities to learn new words because they were not yet prepared for school (Hirsh & Nation, 1990). In contrast, younger students described situations where they had encountered new words that related directly to their daily lives. The fact that older learners' earliest encounters with vocabulary did not lead to vocabularly development suggests that current approaches will fall short of producing results for older learners (Cook & Norris, 2001).

In addition to being exposed to vocabulary in a less direct way, older learners may have different attitudes toward learning new vocabulary than younger learners. For example, when older learners have been given lists of words to study, they often feel frustrated with the lack of meaning behind the lists. For example, one group asked students to memorise a list of nonsense sentences (Nation & Wright, 1987b). This list was created by pairing nouns with common adjectives that are used for describing them. The researchers found that students were able to remember about 50% of these words within two weeks (Nation & Wright, 1987b).

Consideration of ESL/EFL language acquisition in young learners:

Children generally are not consciously interested in language for its own sake and usually tend to direct their interest towards things that are easy for them to understand. They possess a natural desire to actively participate in the social life around them that helps them to learn new languages. If they know how to pronounce a word it is easy for them to add it to their speaking vocabulary, the immediate uses of the language makes for communicative confidence. (Annie & Carol, 2004).

ESL language acquisition in young learners is an emerging field that still lacks clarity on best practices and research. In this blog post, we review the state of research and current practice with a focus on the practicalities of teaching ESL to early learners as well as some possible areas for future inquiry.

The first thing to keep in mind about teaching ESL to young learners is that it is not always appropriate for all children. Children who are three years or younger should be taught English from birth through home learning and simple play materials, not through a formal program or intensive language learning environment (Brooks, 2010).

These early learners are the ones who will benefit the most from teaching ESL to them because that is when their brains and minds are growing the fastest and most strongly. As a result, early learners may reach mastery of their second language at about 17-18 months, whereas children at age 3 or 5 can take longer to grasp even the simplest concepts (Brooks).

Children who are three years or younger should be considered as very young learners of a second language. This is especially true for less advantaged populations because children from these groups often experience a much more difficult time learning to speak, read and write in English (Henry; Kimball-Katz, 2007).

Some of the best ways to teach ESL to early learners is through interest and repeated exposure. For example, children can watch TV shows in English with someone who speaks the language. They are also encouraged to read, write, and speak as much as they can (Brooks).

As they learn more words, their vocabulary will expand in a predictable way as they memorize words they hear and see around them. An important part of helping children

learn a new language is giving them time off so that their minds have time to take in what they have been learning (Henry).

Additional strategies helps ESL teachers reach more young learners include having them write and read in English, joining special interest groups, and working with other groups of young learners (Brooks).

There is strong evidence of the existence of a "Critical Period" for L2A, and there is evidence to show that even in this period there is an age effect, clearly demonstrating the value of early exposure to the second language. From the point of view of educational practice, allocating second or foreign language resources to younger learners has pedagogical credibility and cost-effectiveness. In today's society with much more global movement of people and more accessible worldwide communication, L2 is much more of a survival necessity rather than a school subject (Annie & Carol, 2004).

Factors should be considered in future research on this topic:

- Children's cognitive abilities (i.e. memory capacity and working memory)

- Age-appropriate instructional materials and teaching methods (i.e. media accessibility; scaffolding)

- Amount of exposure (i.e. in the child's environment)

- Children's motivation (i.e. language partner; interest in learning; encouragement and motivation; etc.)

- Individual differences: A number of individual differences are associated with children's acquisition of English. Research is needed to determine which of these differences are most significant in determining how children learn English.

- Motivational factors (i.e. level of interest, ability to tolerate frustration, etc.)

- Intelligence variables (i.e. ability to reason, general intelligence)

- Specific types of learning disabilities (i.e. dyslexia, autism, etc.)

- Language exposure (i.e. amount of exposure; age at which children first learn a second language)

- Perceived motivation (i.e. how influential adults are in the children's learning)

- Cognitive processes: What cognitive processes affect young learners' acquisition of a second language? There are two ways in which young learners can acquire a second language:

In both cases, however, it is important to use an appropriate instructional method that takes into account factors such as their level of experience and degree of prior knowledge.

-The ability to link new words to familiar ones (i.e. known words are easier to learn than new ones)

-The ability to infer meaning from context (i.e. early learners tend to favor making inferences rather than using more direct forms of learning)

-The ability to form novel associations between words, phrases, and constructs (i.e. when the learner doesn't have a large enough linguistic inventory, the process of constructing new words from phrases is less successful)

There is currently a large gap in the research of how cognitive processes affect young learners' acquisition of English. Research is needed on the impact of cognitive processes on young learners' acquisition of English.

-Phonological awareness: Phonological awareness is associated with the ability to segment, manipulate, and analyze the speech signal (Goswami, 1996). It consists of several related abilities including phonemic awareness, phoneme manipulation and auditory memory. Phonemic awareness is the capacity to isolate and manipulate phonemes (e.g., for young learners it involves being able to hear that the word "cat" begins with a /k/ sound).

-Linguistic coding: Linguistic coding refers to how well children mentally encode linguistic information. Coding refers to the mental representation of the sounds, words, and grammatical elements of language. Linguistic coding involves understanding how linguistic representations map back onto corresponding speech and written forms.

Success with children from different backgrounds (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity) who may have different learning styles is important for teachers because it allows them to reach a broader range of learners than what can be obtained in their general classroom setting.

Factors should be considered in teaching ESL in future research:

-Need for research: A review of the literature reveals that there is no consensus on the most effective methods for teaching ESL to young learners. It also appears that there has not been any research done to investigate this topic empirically. Future research should take into account a number of factors including the following:

-Teaching pedagogy (i.e., using context-relevant materials, scaffolding, etc.)

-The efficacy of teaching ESL to young learners in classroom settings (i.e. teacher-child interactions, use of multimedia, etc.)

-The benefits of specific approaches (i.e. beginning with basic vocabulary and gradually increasing complexity)

-The ability to target specific skill levels (i.e. corresponding to child's cognitive abilities)

-The use of multiple modalities (i.e. auditory and visual)

-Instructional materials for young learners (i.e. children's books, flashcards, etc.)

-Teaching Materials: Another area that needs some attention is what types of teaching material are best for young learners. There are a lot of pre-made materials available to teachers today but they are often not targeted to the specific ages in which they can be most effective. Teachers should consider the following when selecting teaching materials:

-Impact of age on learning (empirical research should be done to determine best practices)

-Language complexity (i.e. how many words are in a sentence, how technical the terms are, etc.)

-Clarity of the pictures

-Proficiency Acquisition: What factors influence young learners' acquisition of English and the degree to which they can master it? As children age, their brain structures change; this could affect their ability to learn a second language.

-Cultural differences in language (i.e. use of different terminology; pronunciation dialects; etc.)

-Use of media (i.e. amount of exposure to media, type of media)

-Amount of exposure (i.e. language partners; amount of time spent with children)

-Language learning experience (i.e. foreign language learning experience, previous experience in acquiring a second language)

-Motivation (i.e. how much the child wants to learn English)

-Children's cognitive abilities (i.e. memory capacity and working memory; ability to problem solve)

-Language complexity (i.e. use of formal or informal speech, use of technical terms, etc.)

-Age-appropriate instructional materials and teaching methods (i.e. media accessibility; scaffolding; early introduction of grammar concepts, etc.)

-Amount of exposure (i.e. in the child's environment; amount of time spent with children)

The influence of age in second or foreign language learning

There is little research regarding the influence of age in second or foreign language learning. One study looked at age differences in vocabulary size across languages by examining French children's acquisition of English and German (Zobl, 2003). The author found that French students engaged in a more formal way with English and German than English-speaking children were with English words. As a result, French students derived more meaning from their words when learning them than did English-speaking children. The study illustrates how the interaction of age with language acquisition can either positively or negatively affect the target language.

At the preoperational level of cognitive development, learners often experience egocentrism and problems with integrating information into a coherent whole. They also have a tendency to interpret the objective world around them in terms of how they would like things to be. At this stage, learners use language to communicate in only one way: subjective self-reference. For example, at this stage, an English-speaking student will refer to "s" as "z" because that is how he or she thinks English sounds. At the next stage, concrete operational thought (CO), learning occurs through qualitative reasoning. At this stage, learners become increasingly egocentric. For example, the student might believe that English "s" sounds "z," regardless of a speaker's pronunciation, and will not receive information that conflicts with his or her thinking.

When cognitive development reaches the formal operations stage of cognitive development, learners not only develop a sense of objectivity in relation to how they interpret themselves but also begin to think abstractly (Piaget, 1970). At this stage, learners can interpret events objectively by comparing their knowledge base with the objective world. They also realize that behaviors and ideas can be grouped into categories based on their similarities. For example, a student who has just begun formal operations might believe that "d" is a sound that can be pronounced "z" at the same time. Therefore, for the student, learning both English and German would mean learning two sounds that are combined into one.

The fourth stage of cognitive development is the most abstract and involves the ability to analyze logical relationships within and between ideas (Piaget, 1970). At this stage, learners are able to derive meaning from situations based on their thinking and have a greater concern with abstractness than commonsense knowledge. For example, rather than believing that all English "z"s sound like "d," an older learner may view them as similar but distinguishable sounds.

As a result of these shifts in cognitive development, periods of time during which individuals can learn a second or foreign language with ease will vary based on the learner's current level of cognitive development. These stages are most difficult to achieve when a student is not yet in school, but according to the National Education Association, approximately 30% of the population between ages 5 and 20 is enrolled in school at any one time (NEA, 2000). Thus, schools must take into account these factors when creating programs for older students who are living through two developmental stages simultaneously.

Language Acquisition Research Despite being limited to second language acquisition studies, research on age effects in language acquisition has yielded valuable insight into how age affects acquisition. For example, research has shown that older learners tend to rely more heavily on grammatical rules than younger learners do (Cook & Norris, 2001). This tendency toward rule following is especially evident in older learners who are making the mental adjustments demanded by learning a second language. This shift toward rule following often leads to the overgeneralization and overuse of rules.

Second Language Acquisition Teaching Methods

Grammar-translation: the student memorizes words, inflected words, and syntactic rules and uses them to translate from native to target language and vice versa; most commonly used method in schools because it does not require teacher to be fluent; however, least effective method of teaching

Direct method: the native language is not used at all in the classroom, and the student must learn the new language without formal instruction; based on theories of first language acquisition

Audio-lingual: heavy use of dialogs and audio, based on the assumption that language learning is acquired mainly through imitation, repetition, and reinforcement; influenced by psychology

Natural Approach: emphasis on vocabulary and not grammar; focus on meaning, not form; use of authentic materials instead of textbook

Silent Way: teachers remain passive observers while students learn, which is a process of personal growth; no grammatical explanation or modeling by the teacher

Total Physical Response: students play active role as listener and performer, must respond to imperative drills with physical action

Suggestopedia: students always remain comfortable and relaxed and learn through memorization of meaningful texts, although the goal is understanding

Community Language Learning: materials are developed as course progresses and teacher understands what students need and want to learn; learning involves the whole person and language is seen as more than just communication

Community Language Teaching: incorporates all components of language and helps students with various learning styles; use of communication-based activities with authentic materials, needs of learner are taken into consideration when planning topics and objectives

Four skill areas

The four skill areas of learning a foreign language need to be addressed consistently and continually. Good lesson plans incorporate all four: Listening, Speaking, Reading (and Vocabulary), and Writing (and Grammar). Native speakers do not learn the skill areas separately, nor do they use them separately, so they shouldn't be taught separately. However, it is easy to fall into the trap of teaching about the language, instead of actually teaching the language.

The few studies that have examined age effects on language acquisition in the real world have found that older learners do not always fare better than younger learners. For example, Munro and Derwing (1995) found that although older learners were less likely than younger learners to use English in their adult daily lives, they were as likely as younger learners to use English for purposes related to work or leisure activities. In addition, Gobl and Drews (1994) found no significant differences between older and younger learners' spoken English proficiency levels in a bilingual community. In terms of their written proficiency, older learners were significantly more likely than younger learners to be proficient in writing—a skill that is rarely used in the real world. Although most of these studies did not consider whether age differences might vary based on the learner's country of residence or other factors, it has been shown that age effects in language acquisition are influenced by important variables (e.g. gender, culture, and socioeconomic status; Gobl & Drews, 1994; Munro & Derwing, 1995).

Consideration of learning needs - Children, Adolescents and Adults

Children, adolescents and adults all have different learning needs when it comes to mastering a second or foreign language. This is because children can retain information better than adolescents and adults. Linguistic research has shown that children learn languages more effectively by listening to the language spoken as well as reading it. Older learners can learn a language relatively easily but they need to be more focused on their learning, unlike young learners who are often more open minded in the things they are exposed to. Adolescents prefer to use social situations whereas younger people prefer individual study such as flashcard memorization or workbooks. Adults, who do not have the same learning experiences as children and adolescents, face a more difficult task learning a second or foreign language. Adults who are familiar with their native language have to deal with the loss of proofreading capacities in their speech and therefore they have difficulty in pronunciation which can lead to mistakes in the learning process.

There is still no clear-cut evidence that whether adults could compensate for this by spending more time in acquisition but some studies have shown that adults can learn more effectively if they are motivated through a combination of personal experience as well as linguistic factors. Language acquisition is not considered easy because it involves dealing with different issues such as environmental autonomy, cultural relativity, literacy and grammaticality perceptions, among others. For example, language acquisition is not a purely cognitive process; it involves an intricate network of cognitive, affective and psychosocial factors.

This essay will discuss the fact that adults can acquire foreign languages or not, then it will provide a breakdown of the type of learning styles to choose from and finally a description of research on adult acquisition.

Age in learning: According to Aarons (1994) there are two approaches that can be used when deciding on whether an adult should learn a foreign language or not. The first one is the age-based approach that encourages learners to take into account their

own level of achievement and/or experience in mastering the second or foreign language. The second approach is a language-based approach that suggests that the most effective learning of a second or foreign is through immersion.

Age-based learners: This type of learner is generally presented to be adult learners because they are considered as having reached an appropriate level in their native language, meaning they know enough and they can acquire the knowledge of learning a second or foreign language more easily. Thus, they can acquire something which seems to be similar to what children learn. It is believed that adults can learn a foreign language equally well if they compare their skills with those of other adults who may already have mastered the same language. However, the age-based learners' worries that they do not possess enough knowledge about a second language's grammar or unknown vocabulary. Age-based learners are usually seen as risk takers and enjoy trying things out, this may happen through the use of new activities. They like to change the way they learn on a daily basis in order to keep up with the pace at which they are learning. Age-based learners are also considered as motivated learners who have a sense of achievement in what they are doing.

Language-based learners: This type of learner is presented to be adult learner because they have learnt their native tongue at an older age thus it is assumed that they will acquire other languages such as French just as easily. Language-based learners are also expected to be self-directed and motivated. This is because they are assumed to have experienced a language immersion environment during their childhood, which has made them more open to learning. Language-based learners are usually seen as following a traditional approach towards language learning. In this respect, they like to speak in the target language and they may prefer private study to interaction in the target language. They also care more about grammar and there is often a strong awareness of errors that is present.

Attribution theory: Attribution is an event's causal impact upon individual attitudes and behaviors. In a classroom setting, the attribution process can be affected by the instructor's expectations and the students' perceptions of self-efficacy. Attributions for positive events are generally positive and pleasant; attributions for failure are more unkind, although people will often slurp back at these attributions with some self-praise. In learning a foreign language, an adult learner may have various viewpoints on his or her learning process. The perception that every language acquisition task is inherently difficult may potentially prevent adults from putting in effort into one's attempts to learn a foreign language. Thus, the negative feelings of failure may discourage learners to continue their attempt to acquire a new language. If a learner does not feel motivated, he or she may not invest much effort into a learning process.

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy refers to one's confidence in his or her own capabilities and level of skills. Positive self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief that he or she can perform a certain task (e.g., learn a second language) at an adequate level of success and can do so under realistic constraints (e.g., time constraints). A learner with positive

self-efficacy will find a way to overcome the challenge of constructing new knowledge from his or her environment. On the other hand, negative self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief that he or she cannot perform a certain task and/or cannot do so under realistic constraints. A learner who possesses a negative self-efficacy may believe that he or she does not have the skills to succeed, or may believe that the language learning environment is not conducive enough to learning. In this case, learners may lack motivation and are unlikely to put forth effort into the acquisition of new language knowledge. Self-efficacy is generally formed by a combination of external and internal factors. Environments that impose limitation on learners may also have an impact on the level of negative self-efficacy. This happens when a learner has never tried to learn another language before and the environment does not provide favorable conditions to learning. Thus, learners may construe their failure as a failure in one's skills and/or determination rather than in the learning environment's lack of support.

Language acquisition: Language acquisition is investigated by looking at whether humans are born with an inherited set of linguistic principles, or whether they learn these rules through social interactions with others, such as parents. Language acquisition refers to an increasing mastery of language through experience of using it, as well as less formal kinds of study.

Conclusion

There is an idea concerning the best age for learning ,which is in the earlier stages "earlier is better" and this comes from the concept of a "critical period" in a person's life , during which language acquisition is optimal. It is controversial when it comes to language 2 acquisition (L2A). Proofs From real researches relating age to L2A supports the idea that there is a period in the learner's age when acquiring L2 more efficiency in terms of the final language outcome.

There is a statistical decline in the (L2A) by older learner.

This essay indicates that there is a great influence of the age in L2A and that's refer to the "critical period" . Along with other influences such as the nature of the input and the time committed to learning and these should be reflected in teaching methods to different age groups.

There are many studies and hypotheses have been made to proof the correlation of age of acquisition and the efficiency of acquiring L2.

A number of studies have been made to investigate the question of the a appropriate age to learn L2.

From the education practice perspective , it is important to understand how maturational effects interact with environmental factors in L2A, which indicates the educational policy-makers to plan the allocation of the resources for second language learning especially for younger children.

Critical period claimed that human are genetically programmed to acquire certain kinds of knowledge and skills at specific times in life. The idea of "critical period " was introduced by Penfield

and Roberts (1995). According to Penfield and Roberts , a child's brain is more plastic compared with that of an adult and before the age of nine, a child is a specialist in learning to speak, he can learn 2-3 languages as easily of one. The studies of Lenneberg(1967), based on the field of neurophysiology, as applied to the brain (he limits the critical period for L2A from(2 years of age to puberty).

Lamenella(1977) introduces "sensitive period" which is equivalent to "critical period". Also Bornstein in(1989) and Pinker(1994), which all believed in the "critical period".

These above studies and researches indicated that the most researches do agree that there is a potential advantage to an early stage in childhood.

Result from the studies suggest that early exposure , even when it is minimal & there is little productive use of second language may be of importance to ultimate success. Early exposure activate innate neurofunctional system.

The correlation between age and L2A is generally negative, the maximum age for native like achievement in L2A is 15 years .

We reached to the result that children, adolescents & adults have neurological, cognitive, & psychological differences in L2A, thus these differences demand different teaching approaches .

In conclusion, the essay is to determine the consideration of age in acquiring the second language in children, adolescents, and adults.

The researchers submitted various hypotheses proposed to account for the correlation of age of acquisition and the degree of ultimate mastery of the second language.

A number of empirical studies have been designed to investigate the question of optimal age to learn a second language.

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