

## THE SUITABILITY OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR AN EARLY AGE

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### Abstract

Globalization is deemed to be interconnection between countries that are more and more widely accepted by the vast of majority. In this way, thanks to the advances in the world of technology and increasing international communication, the significance of foreign language learning is generally growing as well as a trend toward teaching foreign language at younger ages. This paper aims to determine the impacts of distinct age groups on second language acquisition and the connection between age factors. Meanwhile, the beneficial sides of learning second language at an early stage could facilitate to promote cognitive skills; creativity, attentional aptitude, memory and other social skills. Nevertheless, disappearing the sense of native languages and culture gradually, extra academic burden and tuition fees also could hinder this process. Apart from that learning a dual language would affect children's mental development as well. Hence, the human brain has been genetically prepared for language learning in an early childhood is to improve human language power as early as possible. (Aim Matun Nihayati. January 2023).

**Keywords:** SLA, Critical Period, Age factors, the younger the better, advantages and disadvantages of SLL.

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### 1. Introduction

In the modern era, one of the most optimal ways to make use of your spare time is to embark on acquiring a new skill. Individuals that prove to be succeed are those that are obsessed with learning something new such as how to operate state-of-the-art technological devices and foreign languages. Simply put, children who have a profound grasp of second language, they are more likely to obtain remarkable achievements in a long run as we live in a multilingual world, where connections are of great importance these days than ever. The world is becoming increasingly globalized and knowing a second language can always give you a desirable advantage. Therefore, raising kids to speak more than one language can lead to emotional and academic benefits including, speaking fluently in second language and understanding more than one language comprehensively could the world of opportunities.

According to Bamford & Mizokawa, the capacity to converse with individuals from other cultures and backgrounds will be lifetime merit of learning second language. As a bilingual individual, I've experienced some of these tangible benefits during my lifetime. Overall, it's given me a broader perspective and notion about various cultures. I acknowledge that It can be tricky to raise a bilingual child, but the benefits of learning a second language at an early age are certainly worth the struggle. To exemplify, bilingual children learn faster and easier, have promoted problem solving, attention controll, task switching skills, and creativity as well as have numerous career opportunities in adulthood. They also find it easier to connect with other cultures which makes them more open-minded and tolerant of

diversity, and they are less likely to experience age-related mental illness as they reach old age. Most importantly, it's much easier to learn a second language at an early age. There is a tendency toward teaching foreign languages to children at a younger age since the relevancy of learning second language is more likely to increase with the growth of worldwide communication. Having said this the query of whether and how age affects second language acquisition, which age is the optimal age for language learning and whether earlier is better for it which has become a hot topic of debate, while so far there is no definitive and obvious conclusion. This paper demonstrates positive and negative impacts on early second language learning by means of clear illustrations and previous researches.

## **2. Critical Period Hypothesis.**

Lenneberg's critical period hypothesis (1967) suggests that there is a biologically determined period of life when language can be acquired more easily. Beyond this time a language is more difficult to acquire. According to Lenneberg, bilingual language acquisition can only happen during the critical period (age 2 to puberty). The critical period hypothesis is associated with neurophysiological mechanisms suggesting that in late bilinguals the early and the late acquired languages are represented in spatially separated parts of the brain (Broca's area). In early bilinguals, however, a similar activation in Broca's area takes place for both languages. This loss of the brain's plasticity explains why adults may need more time and effort compared to children in second language learning.

## **3. Is It True That “the Younger the Better”?**

Morford and Mayberry (2000, p. 111) noted that “individuals exposed to language at earlier ages consistently outperform individuals exposed to language at later ages for first and second languages of both signed and spoken languages” This assumption agrees that people will perform well in language learning at their early age. This is the hypothesis for “the younger the better” position. Another opposite view is ‘the older the better’. It illustrates that older language learners are more successful and efficient than young learners. Some studies have been done to support this view. Ekstrand reveals that L2 learning ability ‘improves with age’ (Ekstrand 1976, p. 130). In Harley's research, he favours the faster acquisition rate among later beginners (1986, p. 112). Therefore, we can get the point that older learners are the efficient language learner. However, another evidence from Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle (1978) supports the view that most children were ultimately more successful than adults in SLA but they were not always faster. Adults appear to progress faster than children in the early stage of processing, while children surpass adults and adolescents in eventual attainment (Dulay & Burt, pp. 94-95). Based on this view, it can be observed that it is the supportive view for “the younger the better in the long run”. Based on these researches and argument, it can be concluded that older learners will learn language faster and more efficient than young learners, whereas young learners will win the achievement in the long period of language learning. It convinces us that the young learner stands the superior stage in the second language acquisition and they will perform better than older learners in ultimate language learning.

## **4. Age as a Factor for Learning Language.**

Age is a huge and significant factor that must be considered when learning language. A first language that is acquired in adulthood might never be as fluent as language that is developed throughout childhood, and the same is similar for a second language acquired in the late teens and onward. A person might be able to read and write this second language fluently, but will almost always have problems with pronunciation. Second languages acquired in childhood, however, can usually be spoken fluently along with the first language.

Age	Commonalities	Differences
Young Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used for communication with others.</li> <li>• Start with basic sounds.</li> <li>• Move onto develop a simple lexicon and then continue to add words to it.</li> <li>• Develops basic grammar.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grammar is developed fully and can be used fluently once adulthood is reached.</li> <li>• Exposed to language from a young age and can speak it fluently and with ease.</li> <li>• Don't learn language in a structured way. It develops with age.</li> <li>• Easier to learn.</li> </ul>
Adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used for communication with others.</li> <li>• Start with basic sounds.</li> <li>• Move onto develop a simple lexicon and then continue to add words to it.</li> <li>• Develops basic grammar.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grammar never fully develops and is generally forever stuck in the telegraphic stage.</li> <li>• Poverty of stimulus means the adult may never be able to form the correct or complex sounds in language.</li> <li>• Learns language in a structured way.</li> <li>• Much harder to learn.</li> </ul>

## 5. The effects of Learning Second language at an early stage

### 5.1. Positive Impacts

#### 5.1.1. Brain and cognitive development

There are numerous theories and papers that second language learning is closely related to the brain especially in the early stage. The prefrontal cortex in the brain plays an indispensable role in it. Precisely, the development of prefrontal cortex is related to the cognitive development which is fundamental to the acquisition of language and other skills. According to Piaget, this ability develops in a predictable pattern through a sequence of well-defined phases and milestones. The kid, between the ages of 2 and 7, enters a representational stage of extended verbal symbolism after a first stage of rudimentary sensory-motor integration and primitive symbolization. External feedback, such as language from other people, gradually gets more complex and regulated. The youngster develops the ability to postpone gratification. From the ages of 7 to 11, language and behavior become more structured, less reliant on external stimuli, and more inventive. Enter games, sports, erector sets, and problem-solving. These two stages in the Stage Theory shows us how the language learning other abilities improve as the development of cognition.

#### 5.1.2. Academic development

Another advantage of learning a second language early is that it can facilitate kids obtain academic development. Recent research is provided date that four- and five-years-old children have excellent academic skills in their home language will learn a second language faster than those who do not have similar skills in their native language. In other words, effective first-language acquisition is crucial for learning a second language. Another study examined the outcomes of kids in Fairfax Country who had spent five years enrolled in the most rigorous foreign language program. To summarize, the students that had learned second language at earlier ages outperformed in comparison with groups who have not any second language acquisition and maintained high academic performance In conclusion, The benefits of acquiring a second language at a young age that can assist children to achieve academic growth.

#### 5.1.3. The door of social and cultural opportunities.

One of the most exciting benefits of learning a second language at an early age is being able to communicate with more people from different cultures By doing so, they are more likely to be both

socially and culturally intelligent as well as have a greater understanding of others' feelings, thoughts, desires and intentions. According to Wellman & Petersons' theory, when children become between 4 and 5 ages, they will embark on thinking about perspective of others. Children who learn a second language will have incredible opportunities to travel around the world and get to know other cultures. English has become the world's lingua franca which means English is the common and prevalent language that people use to communicate when they don't share a native language. These days, many young people all around the world have a pretty good understanding of English. That being said, children who speak English natively are extremely lucky. As they grow and mature, they will be able to travel to many places and interact with many people from all around the world. In this way, they can easily form the sense of tolerance and appreciation for cultural differences.

## **5.2. Negative Impacts.**

### **5.2. Impairing the use of the first language.**

“Subtractive Bilingualism,” the name given the problem by Wallace Lambert who first discussed it in relation to French-Canadian and Canadian immigrant children whose acquisition of English in school resulted not in bilingualism, but in the erosion or loss of their primary languages. The phenomenon is well-known in the United States. It is the narrative of numerous American immigrant and native children and adults who have lost their ethnic languages as a result of linguistic assimilating into the English-speaking environment of school and culture. Even if it was the only language they spoke when they first started school, few American-born children of immigrant parents are totally skilled in the ethnic language. Once young children have learned English, they are less likely to retain or develop the language spoken at home, even if it is the only language their parents know. Native language maintenance is also an essential factor in the retention of personal identity. Isolation and rejection can develop in the social realm if the native language is not maintained. Teachers and parents should actively encourage and help these children to preserve their native language in order to prevent the loss of their bilingualism.

#### **5.2.2. Exerting pressure on kids and parents**

Another disadvantage is that bilingual children will have to deal with the additional academic load that comes with learning to read and write in another language on top of the first; this means that they will have to work twice as hard. The stress of an increased academic burden and higher tuition costs of learning a second language on top of the first could be faced by both parents and children. If parents want their children to not only speak another language but also read and write it, they will need to provide extra instruction outside of regular school hours. Silke Rehman believes “Organizing language lessons requires considerable effort, both financially and in terms of time. However, all parents would agree that the advantages outweigh the effort.” An additional academic burden or supplementary tuition, on the other hand, becomes boring and difficult for children. As a result, they prefer to engage in other types of activities, such as sports and consequently, they make a decision to discontinue their process.

#### **5.2.3. Losing your cultural identity**

In some cases, especially for younger people, learning a second language comes at the cost of ignoring your first which can be considered a negative of learning a second language. For example, if you've moved to a new place and you have to communicate in a different language most of the time (except maybe at home), you might end up neglecting your first language. Since language is strongly connected to your cultural identity, this might result in feeling as though you don't have as much of a connection to your culture anymore.

## **6. Summary or Conclusion**

Globalization is considered to be an international situation by many as of wide range of countries are simultaneously participating in the process of employment, production and investment that its system has spread beyond the territorial boundaries to the international arena. The majority of people believed that globalization is a future trend in the world. Hence, most of these individuals have a burning desire to learning the second language or send their children to learn second language. Now that education was

a lifelong process, the consequences of which had a lasting influence on outcomes. Having said that the first three years of schooling proves to be indispensable for development of basic learning skills and attitudes. Through exams prior studies found that there are many positive and negative impacts on learn a second language at an early stage. It illustrates three advantages and disadvantages respectively. First of all, the cognitive benefits of bilingual education could be even seen in the early stages of schooling. People's thinking and memory capabilities can be improved by learning a new language and students who are bilingual could focus better than those who only know one language. Secondly, studies are illustrated to find the relation between children's second language and academic performance, which suggest that early second-language learning may promote in a children's academic development. Thirdly, children who are grow up speaking at least two languages generally have a wider social circles and cultural perspective. In terms of drawbacks of it, to start with, while learning a second language might help one's connected with the other community, it should be equally considering the effects of losing its native language. Then, both kids and parents could face the pressure of an additional academic burden and a supplementary tuition fee for language lessons. Bilingual children could work much harder than before that could take their activity time or leisure time. And may result in children deciding to give up their second language learning. Nevertheless, in terms of their language potential and aptitude, children are more likely to be capable and competent than others during their both working and studying process in the future.

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