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Review Article

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AFTER THE CRITICAL PERIOD: DO ADULT LEARNERS FOLLOW A DIFFERENT ROUTE IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION?

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ABSTRACT
The effect of age on second language acquisition represents one of the most recurrently investigated and debated issues in the scope of Second Language Acquisition. There is a broad agreement among scholars that age plays a major role in second language acquisition, yet there is great controversy concerning the degree of such particular role. The widespread idea is that as we age, our ability to manage language successfully declines. It expresses the fact that before the offset of puberty age, it is believed that language acquisition is manipulated through our implicit learning mechanisms, in contrast, in post-pubertal language acquisition; we must deliberately employ our explicit learning mechanisms to learn a language. This paper attempted to exhibit the mechanism of language acquisition after the critical period. At first, different views regarding the existence of critical period was discussed. In the subsequent sections certain features of adult language acquisition that are distinguishable from early starters were raised for debate. These characteristics include the knowledge of first language, the cognitive system style and self-regulatory learning, and finally some certain mechanisms that adult learners pursue in the course of learning the second language were argued. In doing so, the paper hoped to clarify some ambiguous dimensions of language acquisition after the age of puberty.

Keywords: Critical Period, Cognitive Style, Autonomous Learning

INTRODUCTION
Regardless of the theoretical or applied orientation of researchers, learners’ age has been a topic of discussion for some decades. It has been one of the central concerns in the realm of second language (L2) acquisition. The effects of age have been the area of interest for research chiefly in natural settings concerning the immigrants’ level of proficiency in the target language. Their age of arrival in the L2 society has been considered as a crucial factor that determines their success. As Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) argued, the age variable is a significant one to construct a theory in second language acquisition research, for educational policy-making, and for language pedagogy. If it can be demonstrated that older learners vary from younger ones, the claim regarding the accessibility of adults to Universal Grammar is called into question. The idea about the way in which children learn languages is in fact in line with naturalistic language learning, that is, to learning that happens in a circumstance with unlimited contact to quality input. In conclusion, there has been an attempt to generalize both the product and the process of learning a second language in a natural setting to the circumstances of foreign language learning.

It is regularly believed that younger language learners show better performance and in fact researchers have found a relationship between age of acquisition and ultimate attainment in at least some facets of the second language, while age exhibiting itself to be the strongest forecaster of accomplishment. The findings comparing younger and older learners have constantly shown a benefit for early starters over those who entered at an older age. These results supplied encouraging facts for the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) exhibiting that there exists a phase in life after which language acquisition may be defective or incomplete (Lenneberg, 1967). Lenneberg hypothesized a lower bound for that period at the age of 2 and an upper bound around the age of puberty. This separated pre-puberty learners from post-puberty learners and assumed that while the younger ones will consistently be successful, the older ones will not – with only very rare exceptions cannot attain native-like proficiency (Bley-Vroman, 1989).
Critical Period Hypothesis actually affirms that language acquisition takes place before puberty enabling the learner to reach native-like fluency. Penfield and Roberts (1959), for example, asserted that the most favorable period for language acquisition lies within the first ten years of life, the period when the brain maintains its plasticity.

Primarily, this period was associated with the period taken for lateralization of the language function to the left side of the brain. Research on children and adults experiencing brain injuries showed that damage to the left hemisphere caused few speech disorders and was speedily mended in children but not in adults (Lenneberg, 1967). Although following work (Krashen, 1973; Whitaker et al., 1981) has questioned the exact age when lateralization occurs, leading to doubts about the neurological basis of the critical period hypothesis, the age question has been a topic of interest for researchers. This debate concentrates on both whether there are noteworthy differences in L2 learning based on age, and also on the theoretical foundations for those differences which researchers claim to have reached. The benefits of an early start detected in a natural setting have been powerful for educational decisions regarding the best time for students to deal with foreign language learning in schools.

Particular Positions Regarding the Existence of Critical Period

There are three basic positions concerning the existence of a critical period. Some researchers believe that there is a critical period. They normally count on one particular sort of proof: that is, L2 learners do not homogeneously gain success at acquisition the way L1 learners do. It means that all normal first language learners reach at the native level equally despite having difference on topics like vocabulary size, rhetorical ability, discourse styles, and so on. However, such matters are not (narrowly speaking) concerned with the formal properties of language. L2 learners, conversely, differ deeply regarding the quantity of the formal properties of language they acquire. In addition, they sound to vary in important ways from native speakers on a range of measures.

DeKeyser and Larson-Hall (2005) trying to elaborate the CPH asserted that based on some available data, they were against any total rejection of the CPH. According to DeKeyser (2000) Children count extensively on implicit processes to acquire a language, and adults (or somewhat, post-CP learners) depend on explicit processes. Since the linguistic mechanism only works implicitly, consequently it can be concluded that post-CP learners are not involved in such mechanisms because of their learning explicitly. Since universal grammar is an abstract and implicit process, it can be inferred that adults do not have access to universal grammar, and as a result employ general cognitive-learning mechanisms for language acquisition and consequently it can be said that there is a critical period.

The other group of scholars rejects the idea of a critical period. These researchers either suggest evidence that non-natives really can gain native-like capability or they reinterpret the data from the pro-CPH position to show how the data can be analyzed differently.

Birdsong (2005) contended that the CPH as formulated is on shaky ground. Particularly, he recognized that the loss of language capacity is not related to a particular period; instead, language acquisition ability subsides gradually over time. This process is progressive and as a result cannot be restricted within a “critical period”. He points out that not everybody is losing it to the same extent. Such results led to the conclusion that a critical period doesn’t actually exist. Similar ideas are expressed by Bialystok and Hakuta (1994). They, also, assert that the decline in L2 learners’ native-likeness is not a cutoff period task; rather it is more a gradual process. That is, those who start language acquisition at a later age will be more likely to fall from native-likeness. In other words, one is more probable to be native-like if he/she starts at an earlier age.

Herschensohn (2008) expresses similar ideas, but concentrates on the likelihood that the existence of an L1 is a significant factor. She proposes that the shortages surveyed in later L2 learners are not essentially due to the loss of the language learning mechanisms employed in L1 acquisition. As an alternative, she believes in the “excellence” of the L1 linguistic structure and the mental structural design that encircles it. She argues that such strongly built-in mechanism may restrain total acquisition of an L2. As older learners have such fitted apparatus in their brain for the L1, this apparatus causes an obstacle in the way of the processes and mechanisms employed for language acquisition in second language.
A different view is that considering critical period as a monolithic construct is wrong, mostly because of the ambiguity in using the concept of language by scholars. Eubank and Gregg (1999) have proposed that language is inherently componential. It includes syntax, morphology, phonology, and so on, some probably have critical periods and others donor, even in the field of syntax there are different categories and subcategories. Within universal grammar, we see principles and parameters. They believe that it is likely that universal principles are still accessible to L2 learners, but new parameters are not. Since universal principles must govern an L1, they cannot fade away when the L1 is set. These principles stay with speakers for their whole lives. But when parameters are set for the L1 values, other values are not active anymore and cannot be regained in adult SLA. Therefore, there is no critical period for universals (principles inherent to all languages) but there is a critical period for resetting parameters.

Some Fundamental Issues Regarding Critical Period

One main question with respect to the critical period is related to its origin. The reality of a critical period for language acquisition has been one of the most extensively crucial matters in second language acquisition research since some decades ago. Today the majority of researchers agree on the existence of enduring advantages for child starters – particularly after no counter evidence have been found to this debate (Krashen et al., 1979; Long, 1990). However, regarding the origin of this critical period, there are different perspectives. Some attribute it to biological scheduling, that is, by constraints that are in conjunction with maturation, others to social/psychological elements. As a result, the argument about the critical period remains as forceful as ever (Birdsong, 1999a; Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2001).

Maturational constraints suggest that there ought to be some genetically presequenced mechanism that highlights the language acquisition route. This built-in factor is expressive of an inborn predisposition for language acquisition, that is, some form of linguistic naturism. The mechanisms elaborating how an intrinsic element specifically would constrain second language acquisition has mainly focused on universal grammar framework. Although, based on Wolfe-Quintero (1996) the theory of UG has been the most extensively explored alternative of linguistic naturism in the area of language acquisition. All existing theories of language development are nativist and could therefore be researched particularly for their claims on maturational constraints.

The other side of critical period is concerned with the extrinsic component. It deals with mechanism of environmental variables manipulating language development. Harley and Wang (1997) assert that the influence of environmental variables is ignored in critical period studies. Among other elements, frequency and quality of input in addition to identity topics sound to play a significant role and interact with maturational constraints for the result even at a low age (Hyltenstam, 1992). What can be concluded is that one should recognize the relevance and validity of the human potential to utter sounds, to learn words, to create narratives, to take part in conversations, to produce and recognize metaphor, to accommodate to another's speech, to encourage …, and, in general, to engage in social discourse (Schumann, 1995). In short, a framework for the understanding the notion of “language” would require the human cognitive potential for language learning (language knowledge, learning, and processing) (Wolfe-Quintero, 1996).

The other issue in conjunction with critical period is related to the areas of language acquisition that would be influenced by it. It has long been confirmed that foreign language learners reach a certain stage of learning - a static stage with little success – stabilization of learners occurs at this stage. Development stops, and no tangible success will be visible, though few changes can be possible. Selinker (1972) named this phenomenon ‘fossilization’. Fossilization sounds to be observable in learners who have achieved a certain point of competence which guarantees communicative success, despite the fact that its grammar may not be similar to that of a native.

Sometimes through a classroom drill with abundant opportunity for conscious monitoring, a change can be observed. But minutes later during the break, all the old forms reappear - completely unaffected. In children who are learning their first language, there is no fossilization. The initial age of language learning at school looks to be the critical element with regard to the studies being done concerning foreign language learning.
Over the process of first language acquisition, definite Stages must definitely be passed through; the system remains plastic until success is achieved. It is not entirely clear exactly as what makes up this quality. The mechanisms that trigger fossilization in foreign language are not clear. The difficulty of ‘defossilization’ is also puzzling. There seems to be little systematic research on fossilization (but the concept of brain rigidity/plasticity of Penfield and Roberts (1959) may possibly be relevant). However, because this phenomenon is so recurrent in second language acquisition, it comprises a serious barrier to the contention that adult and child language acquisition are fundamentally the same. A range of studies tried to investigate the effects of age on the route of second language acquisition. One such study was concerned with the order of acquisition of a set of English morphemes. The results indicated that the order was the same for children and adults (Bailey et al., 1974; Fathman, 1975). Though the results based on the morpheme studies must be treated cautiously because of their methodological problems. The other set of studies concentrated on the sequence of acquisition in developmental stages such as negatives and interrogatives. They exhibited that adults follow the same stages of acquisition as children (for example, Cancino et al., 1978). It can be concluded that age does not seem to influence the overall developmental pattern. By far the most detailed study of is Harley’s (1986) study concerning the effects of age on the acquisition routine showed outstandingly similar patterns in the two groups’ acquisition of French verb phrase. For instance, the two age groups showed similar kinds of errors and both had inclination to employ somewhat unmarked French verb forms more precisely than the marked forms. Despite a few minor differences, Harley believed that they were not indicative of different mental processes; instead he believed that such differences represented the fact that learners were exposed to various kinds of input. Riney (1990) contended that regarding the learners that began before the age of 12 years, no open syllable preference is clear as Sato’s (1987) study shows, but for learners beginning following 12 years there was, as in Tarone’s (1980a) study. Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle (1978) examined the naturalistic acquisition of Dutch by English-speaking children at the age range of eight- to ten-year-old, twelve to fifteen-year-old adolescents, and adults over a period of ten months. Morphology and syntax analysis of the adolescents showed their superiority, the adults were placed at the second rank, while the children were last. However, there were only minute divergences in pronunciation, and the grammatical differences were reduced over time as the children started to progress. Experimental studies indicated the outperformance of adults in the short term. Olsen and Samuels (1973) realized that English-speaking adolescents and adults had a better performance than children in short German pronunciation sessions. However, other studies exhibited that, at least as far as pronunciation is concerned; adults’ progress is not always faster than children. Subsequent experiment in which the two groups received instruction in phonemic distinction was the area in which children outperformed the adults. It advocates Krashen, Long and Scarcella’s generalization that adults learn faster than children. It seems to be more relevant to grammar than pronunciation (where children seem to learn as rapidly as adults, if not more rapidly than them).

Characteristics of Adult Learning after Critical Period

To answer the question that why we have such differences between adults and children regarding the acquisition of second language, it can be said that adult learning has some particular qualities which make them different from child learning.

Autonomous Learning

At the metacognitive stage, there is an emphasis on the status of learner as an autonomous character. Such autonomy can be defined as a process in which learners attempt to lay down their own objectives and formulate certain strategies to attain those goals. Adults operate intentionally to attain their preselected goals; they actively map performance, analyze the conditions in which they are, and evaluate their own growth. Employing their preplanned decisions offers them a certain stage of both real and distinguished control over their progress as (language) learners (Benson & Lor, 1999; Oxford, 1990). Accordingly, adults tend to approach a task strategically to employ their explicit knowledge about. For example, a group of adult learners may prefer to follow ‘pidginized’ methods containing elementary grammatical tools, though quite successful in accomplishing the communicative necessities of the speakers (Schumann, 1978). Others may be worried about grammatical accuracy; though fluency may be seen to
suffer. Some learners despite having good pronunciation possess primitive grammar. Some underscore vocabulary size. Such variation is expressive of the hypothesis that adult foreign language acquisition is a general process of problem-solving. Cognitive models of general problem-solving include determining ‘goals’. It suggests that problem solving process is viewed differently by different people with different goals in a specified sphere. Differing goals will necessitate devising conflicting subgoals, which can engage different learning strategies. Such process is ordinary in general human problem-solving. Children, in contrast, motivated by the unchangeable action of the domain-specific language ability, basically don’t set their own individual goals. For children, the 'goal' is preplanned by the language faculty that is not under learner control.

Regarding L2 acquisition, research area places the autonomy of learners in the context of language learning strategies. Cohen (2003) described it as the conscious or semi-conscious thoughts and actions employed by learners with the explicit goal of progressing their knowledge and awareness of a target language. Language learning strategies typically indicate precise problem-oriented actions or techniques organized as a reaction to a learning need. Strategies tend to be employed changeably, depending on situational and task-related elements as well as individual learner differences. Moreover, researchers think that strategies can be taught and developed (Cohen, 1998; Ellis, 1994). Generally, it is assumed that learners possessing a good repertoire of strategies will be more likely to complete language learning tasks successfully and competently.

Analytic Capacity at Cognitive Stage
Adult learners exploit their full-fledged analytic ability at the cognitive stage, because it enables them to think 'scientifically', i.e. to have the utmost capability in learning by implementing systematicity and order on the certain area which is supposed involved in acquisition. This performance pattern is represented in society at a larger level: operational principles in all knowledge areas are studied and codified, to communicate skills more easily (Anderson, 1995, 2000). Of course, this all-encompassing human predisposition to take the guesswork out of learning applies equally to language acquisition. To restate it, adult L2 learners may collect knowledge about L2 to be acquired and utilize this knowledge over the learning period to be accessed.

In the field of L2 acquisition, this occurrence has produced a large amount of diverse experiential research, ranging from controlled laboratory experiments to uncover psycholinguistic processes, to classroom-based research looking for identifying the relative advantages of different L2 instructional methods. At the most general levels, these research efforts have led to the certain discovery that explicit learning based on form-focused instruction is without doubt facilitative and generate more successful and competent acquisition than mere contact to L2 input, at least in the short term (DeKeyser, 1994, 2003).

Affective Factor as Facilitative Variable
It sounds that personality, socialization, motivation, attitude, or the like have no role at success in child language development. This is in line with the idea that the process is dominated by the development of an innate capacity. In contrasts, adult language acquisition is highly open to such 'affective factors'. There is a universal agreement among second language acquisition researchers, as well as language teachers and students, that such variables are necessary in foreign language learning. The situation is definitely very intricate; affect itself is a complex trait and hard to measure; different kinds of correlations will be observable among different groups with respect to different situations; nevertheless, the central position of affect in foreign language learning is utterly undeniable.

The bulk of second language learners after puberty age cannot attain the ability at native-speaker levels. The extent to which such extrinsic variables (affective factors) have strong correlation with the age is a controversial issue. The issue of age effects is obvious in such learners. Do learners initiating the task of language acquisition as children attain higher levels of proficiency than the ones starting as adolescents or adults? This question is going to compare the level of proficiency achieved by children with that of learners who started as adults. Of course such studies are going to exhibit the effects of age on these learners’ final level of achievement; as a result, the supposition of _final state_ (fossilized) may not be justifiable.
Burstall (1975) compared two groups of students with five years of instruction. This study showed a very strong effect for *age of arrival* but nearly no effect for ‘number of years’ in the United States. She realized that the youngest arrivals performed in the same range as native-speaker controls. Other studies which have investigated the effects of age on pronunciation (for example, Asher and Garcia, 1969) support the younger-is-better position.

Studies concerning grammar exhibited similar results. Patkowski’s study (1980; 1990) on immigrants to the United States showed that learners entering the United States before the age of 15 were more syntactically proficient than learners entering after 15. Patkowski also investigated the effects of number of years, amount of informal exposure to English, and amount of formal instruction. Only the amount of informal exposure had significant effect, and even this was unimportant in comparison with the age factor. In the same line, Singleton (1989) found that regarding the hypothesis that the ones who initiate acquiring a second language in childhood in the long run normally attain higher levels of proficiency in comparison with the ones who start later, it can be concluded that there is some good encouraging evidence and that there is no definite counter evidence.

The effectiveness of age will be different with regard to the acquisition of second language literacy skills, Cummins and Nakajima (1987) investigated the acquisition of reading and writing skills by a group of Japanese children in grades two to eight in Toronto. They realized that the students who were older on arrival in Canada, had a better performance on second language reading skills and, to a slighter degree, better performance on writing skills. Cummins and Nakajima concluded that the older learners had the advantage of previous literacy knowledge in Japanese. Such controversy concerning the effect of age is getting more serious when it comes to deal with the effects of age on the attainment of native-speaker levels of proficiency.

The experiments examining the effects of age on the acquisition of native-like proficiency have produced diverse results and, at this stage, the judgment must stay open. It is possible that under ideal conditions learners starting after puberty can produce speech and writing not easily distinguishable from native speaker ones. Qualitative differences in competence still remain, as claimed by Coppieters, not clear, although Birdsong’s carefully designed study would suggest that at least some learners achieve native-speaker levels of grammatical knowledge.

As it was pointed out, one main point regarding the success at post-puberty language acquisition success is the role of affective factors and how they can influence adult language acquisition achievement. Some case studies show that those post-puberty learners who were regularly taken for native speakers certainly attempted for unaccented proficiency, similarly to contestants in previous studies (Bongaerts *et al.*, 1997). These successful language learners possessed intrinsic motivation in the target language, were proud of their activity and also had awareness of their attainment and worked on their language proficiency energetically by means of finding chances for communicating with L2 speakers and reading and listening lengthily. For many of them, the target language was either linked to their job or they had well-built integrative motivation to become members of L2 society.

**Mechanisms and Tools Contributing to Learning after Critical Period**

Adult learners employ a set of mechanisms and tools that facilitate their language acquisition. The general features of foreign language acquisition exhibit that the language acquisition device of children is not operating in adults and, in addition, adult foreign language acquisition is similar to other general cognitive learning in areas where no specific learning mechanism is assumed to exist. Therefore, it can be concluded that the language acquisition mechanism that directs children is not accessible to adults. The supposition that the acquisition mechanism is not active any more easily foretells failure. However, although few adults fail miserably, there are many who achieve very high levels of proficiency, given enough time, input, and effort. If that innate capacity isn’t available any longer, what can contribute to the process of second language acquisition in adults?

Lenneberg (1967) asserted that *automatic* acquisition from simple exposure to a language may fade away after puberty. In fact, this is the strict formulation of the CPH, reformulated by DeKeyser (2000) arguing that between the ages of 6-7 and 16-17, everybody loses the mental capacity necessary for the *implicit*
induction of the abstract patterns that underlie a human language. It is obvious from these formulations that the maturational constraints are concerned with implicit learning mechanisms, at which children are assumed to be superior. DeKeyser (2000) interprets CPH strictly as implicit learning of abstract structures. However, implicit learning operates slowly and needs many years of gigantic input and interaction (DeKeyser, 2000). In other words, in the case of typical foreign language learning situations, learners don’t need huge amounts of input to activate implicit learning mechanisms; on the contrary, instructed surroundings provide explicit instruction that is appropriate for adolescent and adults because they possess higher level of general cognitive development. This would enlighten the advantage of older learners over younger ones in instructed conditions in the sense that they have an initial faster rate of learning and as the advantage of formal school instruction. The general cognitive mechanisms that adults employ to acquire a language after the age of puberty include benefiting from their mother tongue utilizing universal grammar, employing problem solving cognitive system as well as following self-regulatory learning. These areas are dealt with in the subsequent sections.

First Language Knowledge

One variable which can be helpful to adult learners is getting assistance from first language. Adult’s knowledge of a language is not simply limited to a set of well-formed sentences, but it includes a full range of subtle perceptions that native speakers enjoy. They have lots of information concerning the general characteristics of a language; it means that a great deal of knowledge about language universals is contained in a single language. Consequently, it sounds reasonable for learners to expect that a specific language includes a set of universal features such as being capable of producing an infinite range of sentences based on a finite set of rules. The learner will also expect that the second language possesses a syntax, a semantics, a lexicon which identifies ‘parts of speech’, a morphology supplying systematic ways of altering the shapes of words, a phonology offering a finite set of phonemes, and syllables. Since such operations are active in their mother tongue, universals of this kind are on hand to the second language learner merely by reanalyzing that the process of second language acquisition is not utterly different from the first language.

In syntax, the learner can come up with certain features that are common among different languages including the principles of constituent structure and of recursive embedded constitutions having no limit. Structures such as relative clauses, sentential complements to verbs, as well as Boolean-like connectors, quantifiers, pronouns, anaphors, are among the elements that have similar background in their first language. The other side of this category contains devices for giving orders, requests, asking yes-no and wh-questions.

In some particular dimensions, foreign language learners may have more knowledge than children who possess a general Universal Grammar. They are familiar with the fact that there are words for referring to particular entities, objects, events and so on. In addition, styles, registers, and regional and social dialects are other areas where we can find common background knowledge. As a result, learners of a second language have a chance to access a richer supply of information and to construct an adequate replacement for universal grammar when it is not active after the critical age. Kellerman (1977) exhibited that adult learners had notions of what, in their native languages, was universal and, consequently, could be transferred to the second language. In addition, they have ideas of what are specific to the native language and, as a result, perhaps would not be transferred well. These ideas were at times turn out to be right. He also demonstrated that opinions of universality varied from one learner to the other one and changed during the course of second language acquisition.

Problem Solving Cognitive Style

One of the incentives for considering a language acquisition device for children is that language is actually a complex abstract formal system, and young children are not equipped with the general cognitive capacity to manipulate such system. Adults; on the other hand, obviously possess that capability, which is usually assumed to occur about puberty with the inception of what Piaget describes the stage of “formal operations” (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). This broad human formal Problem-solving ability is enormously powerful, and it can take over a sizeable explanatory burden. But its very powerful
generalization will limit its effectiveness regarding language acquisition. Some certain characteristics; however, are apparent. One such quality is being goal-oriented. It should possess methods of employing feedback and instruction. There must be some mechanisms of comprehending explanations. A range of mechanisms must evidently be obtainable, including distributional analysis, analogy, hypothesis formation and testing.

There ought to be some means to shift from controlled to automatic processing. Working cognitive science during the recent decades has, on the whole, tended toward the growth of very rich models of cognition with characteristics of just the sort that sound necessary.

It can be concluded that adults have the substantial advantages of previous knowledge of a language and a general cognitive capacity to manipulate abstract formal systems. These devices approximately, though not entirely, repay for the loss of language acquisition device in adults which can determine a learning procedure designed particularly to construct grammars. Knowledge of first language and general problem-solving must be conceived as inadequate substitutes. They are not the only likelihood, nor are they the overriding justification in the field of second language acquisition research.

With respect to the effect of age on the process of language acquisition, some generalizations can be drawn containing the following points: The First one is that language development is dominated by an inborn language acquisition system which does not operate in adults any more. Adult language learning is similar to other general cognitive learning. This supported explanation is called the fundamental difference hypothesis. The second one is that Knowledge of an accessible language interferes with the acquisition of a succeeding language. The LI interference hypothesis. Third point is concerned with a circumstance where something is missing in the input to adults - adults do not get sufficient input, or do not get the accurate kind. It is named the input hypothesis. The affect or socialization hypotheses is the next issue which comprises topics such as personality state, attitude, degree of motivation, way of interacting, stage of ego development, or socialization. It seems children have superiority over adults concerning the points. And the last point is that adults possess a developed general problem-solving cognitive mechanism which competes with their own language acquisition mechanism called the competing cognitive systems hypothesis.

Self-Regulatory Learning

Self-regulation seems to be a device used by adults in the process of second language acquisition. It is indicative of the extent to which individuals are active contributors in their own learning; it is a more dynamic perception compared to “learning strategy,” emphasizing the learners’ own strategic attempts to handle their own accomplishment through particular beliefs and processes (Zimmerman and Risemberg, 1997).

The idea of self-regulation of academic learning may be recognized as a construct that contains several dimensions, comprising cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, behavioral, and environmental procedures that learners employ to increase academic attainment. Accordingly, self-regulation is obviously distinguished from measures of mental capability, and the self-regulated learner can be depicted as calling on a collection of information and applying a set of various skills in the course of studying activities in which success is built (Winne, 1995). By changing to this new notion, researchers had not, by any means, resolved the theoretical troubles weakening the term “learning strategy,” but they had effectively altered the importance from the product to the process, consequently creating more scope for themselves in so doing. This is exhibited by Winne (1995) who embark on defining the concept by supplying an account of the self-regulating learner rather than of self-regulatory mechanisms.

Zimmerman (1989; 1990) argues that self-regulated learning have three basic qualities. At first, learners' internal motivation is excited. Secondly, the learners are engaged meta-cognitively in the actions. Thirdly, the e-learners vigorously take safety measures to build their own learning manners. Bandura (1986, 1991) concentrates chiefly on the prospect of self-efficacy and its connection with the behavioral motivation effect. Pintrich (1995) underscores that self-regulated learners can endeavor to manage their behavior, motivation, and cognition and recognize attainable objectives.
Self-regulation is a very dynamic area of research in educational psychology (e.g. Boeakaerts et al., 2000). Researchers endeavor to produce learner-initiated cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational processes and strategies through employing the new standard. Indeed, from a self-regulatory perspective, learners can increase the effectiveness of their learning through employing creative cognitive functions that is in line with their certain learning styles, in addition to producing motivation to learn and locating ways of preserving their commitment. Generally, self-regulation and motivation are inextricably linked together, since they both concern the precursors of increased learner accomplishment.

Conclusion

The research concerning the age issue has generated different and at times contradictory results; there seems to be agreement on certain points. The first point is that adults have a primary advantage over children as far as the rate of learning is concerned, chiefly in grammar. However, children will ultimately overtake them due to receiving enough exposure to the L2. This is less probable to occur in instructional than in naturalistic conditions, since the crucial quantity of exposure is usually not available in the adults.

The other finding is that only child learners can be native like in certain aspects of language specifically pronunciation in informal learning contexts. Long (1990) suggests the critical age at 6 years, but Scovel believes that there is no reason to advocate this and claims for a prepuberty start. Singleton (1989) mentions that children can acquire a native accent provided that they receive huge exposure to the second language. However, some children receiving such exposure still do not attain a native like accent, perhaps due to their attempt to maintain active use of their first language. Perhaps adult learners can acquire a native accent through getting assistance of instruction, but fit needs more research to be confirmed. The following comment is that Children may have more aptitude v to acquire a native grammatical competence. The critical period for grammar sounds to occur later (around 15 years). Some adults may be able to acquire native like grammatical precision with respect to speech and writing and even full ‘linguistic competence’. Next finding is that regardless of arriving at native like proficiency level, children basically reach higher levels of achievement in both pronunciation and grammar than adults. And finally it can be said that the process of a second language grammar acquisition is not considerably influenced by age, however, that of pronunciation acquisition sounds to be.

In conclusion it can be said that, though post -puberty learners have lost their active manipulation of innate capacity to learn a language, they can be employing a range of general cognitive mechanisms to acquire a second language.

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