

C. AGE OF ACQUISITION

1. Infant bilingualism

ie the simultaneous acquisition of two or more languages. Common. Successful.

2. Child bilingualism

ie the successive acquisition of two languages. Children will learn rapidly if they are exposed to another language. This CAN work, if there is enough exposure to both languages.

3. Adult bilingualism

Usually (but not always) associated with a poor accent.

4. Does ability to learn a second language diminish with age?

- a. This opinion, that children seem to learn languages easily and quickly, is based on uncritical observation (naive realism). Children use a lot of time in learning. When adults put in the same time, they do just as well, pronunciation excepted. Adults do better in the rate of acquisition, but less well in terms of the final outcome. It is not so simple that older people learn slower. It is like the tortoise and the hare.

All things being equal, adults do better. For instance, in a two month course of intensive language for adults, adults will do better than children learning naturally over two months. Children usually get a lot more language exposure. Children usually do not stop learning languages, adults commonly do.

- b. Adults can learn to make fine distinctions of pronunciation, and CAN do so faster and better than children. The foreign accent is due to:
 - 1) Bad teaching and practice, ie repeating bad habits.
 - 2) The need (conscious or unconscious) to show that they are different. Eg compare monolinguals who hang on to traces of their original accent years after they have moved away from the original community. A learner's attitude towards a new linguistic community is central. Combine this with the usual peer pressure, and pressure from parents and the community, and you get significant pressure to learn and use a language.
 - 3) Children have more opportunities, in terms of time and quality. Society is organised to teach language to children, and children have little else to do or to think about.

5. **Motivation/attitude** and **opportunity** are more important factors than age. Adults are often not willing or not interested in changing. But sometimes there are *stubborn* children!

6. **White L & Genesee F 1996.** How native is near-native? The issue of ultimate attainment in adult second language acquisition. *Second Language Research* 12/3 p233-265

- a. After age 15, it is much harder to attain Near NS competence.
- b. Near NS is attainable, but the reaction times may be slightly slower.

Except in immersion schools, there is no real advantage to beginning early. In a home, the sooner the better.

Singleton 2001 in ARAL vol 21. NB.

7. Much age-research has been concerning the evaluation of early L2 instruction in schools. Most show little advantage in beginning early except for pronunciation. In which case, the quality of the teachers is key, and if the teachers do not have excellent pronunciation there is little advantage – in fact it could be counterproductive. It is a different story when more natural L2 is involved. L2 begun in early childhood show clear advantages. For immersion programmes though, there is a clear advantage for early immersion. Go for it early on, or wait.

Some learners who begin after age 12 can acquire an L2 accent which is perceived as native by native speakers. (p80).

Time spent in the L2 country, and time spent listening and practicing with native speakers, are major elements of L2 accent. ie there are other factors besides age.

So, L2 as a child, yes. L2 early in kindergarten schools, yes where it is immersion. ie go for it, or not at all at this stage, but L2 early kindergarten just to trickle feed: NO.

8. **Swain 2000 in Aral vol 20. French immersion research**

- a. In Canada, immersion education takes several forms, but the basic idea is to study content for at least 50% of the school day using French, which they are simultaneously learning.
- b. Shown that **output as well as input is important**. Canadian students have little opportunity, outside the classroom, to practice French and get feedback.
- c. "Older learners are more efficient learners" p206.

9. **SH Marinova-Todd, DB Marshall, CE Snow 2000** (TESOLQ vol 34(1):9-34 "Three misconceptions about age and L2 learning".

- a. Widely agreed, critical period exists for L1. Controversial for L2.
- b. Older learners can learn L2 to a very high level. Introducing L2 to youngsters cannot be justified solely on the basis of the biological argument.
- c. Widely known that adult L2 learners, on average, do worse than younger L2. But this in itself is no ground to argue for a critical age for L2.

You cannot use biology to argue for the timing of L2.

- d. "children pick up languages so quickly". False. The claim is a misrepresentation of the facts. Older learners are generally faster and more efficient in the early stages of L2. This is true even for phonology. Evaluations of immersion programmes in Canada show that late immersion students perform equally or better than early immersion. Children also learn much slower than adults do.
- e. Some researchers report differences in the brain organisation for early and late L2, and then misattribute proficiency differences to this brain data. It is possible that adults do the same tasks as children, but in different parts of the brain.

- f. Well known that many adults do badly with L2, and then people falsely conclude it will always be this way, and that no adult is capable of true L2 ability. But, whereas there is great uniformity of behaviour with children, adults show huge variability. Little research has paid any attention to this variability. The good L2 learners need studying so that others can learn from them! Even for pronunciation, the range of normal variation within L1 needs accounting for, and also the fact that native speakers have accents! Thus judgements of <native speaker-like> vary widely.

One researcher, Neufeld, found that Native L2 pronunciation could be achieved if there was a <silent> period of intensive listening without the demand to speak. Also, living in the L2 environment. Also, motivation is very important. This rings true.

- g. Children do not retain L2 unless this is prolonged for at least 5-7 years.
Collier 1992 has argued that **L1 instruction is more important than L2 for ultimate literacy and academic achievement in L2**. This is an argument for late English in schools.

For instance, when learning advanced French, I had to do summaries and syntheses. I found these easy to do because I had already achieved University level ability in these skills, and used them in writing research reports in English. Also, because I had already learned reading skills to a high level in English, including very fast reading, and the ability to search, find, summarise, and evaluate, extremely quickly, these skills transferred easily to French.

h. The following contradicts the critical age theory:

- 1) Children in late language programmes do better than in early ones (USA, not very intensive!)
- 2) Children who arrive as immigrants in U.S. schools, and arrive late, do better in academic performance than those who start in Kindergarten.
- 3) Late starters and adults can achieve native speaker level, if all the other features and circumstances are right.

10. **MC Pennington**. The teachability of phonology in adulthood: a re-examination. IRAL 36(4) 1998 p322-341. Basically repeats in more detail above material, especially the multifaceted nature of accent, from muscular control, perception, identity etc.

Clearly, almost all children do well in languages, but very few adults do really well in a second language. Why?

- a. Time
- b. Practice
- c. Teaching
- d. Motivation.

11. Beware, a lot of the work on this subject has been ESL rather than EFL.

12. **Cepik & Sarandi 2012** looked for evidence in Turkey, where there is a variety of schools. In their review of the literature they conclude, "Overall, the bulk of the studies show that when the length of instruction is constant, the late starters are at an advantage"(p3203). In their work "The findings show that early starters had no advantage over late ones in any of the measures used in the study" (p3206).

13. Nikolov & Djigunovic 2006

p9. What is known from research on the CP and immersion students has important implications for young learners of FLs:

- (1) young children are slow at developing in the target language, therefore they need a longer period to achieve levels adolescents and adults can achieve faster;
- (2) they benefit from meaning- focused activities;
- (3) they rely very little on explicit rules, declarative knowledge, and inductive/deductive reasoning skills;
- (4) but rely on their memory and procedural knowledge;
- (5) because young learners tend to surpass adults in the host environment in the long run, classroom instruction providing children with opportunities similar to 'natural' SLA are appropriate in FL contexts;
- (6) early language learning experiences may enhance children's cognitive control;
- (7) there is no reason to assume that the L2 will have a negative impact on L1 if it is also developed in parallel;
- (8) both early and late immersion programs contribute significantly to learners' development. Thus, it is impossible to decide whether early or later immersion program models should be favored.
- (9) It is possible that an early start contributes to young learners' attitudes and motivation, which later ensure good proficiency; in other words, most probably it is not the actual early language gain that matters in the long run. SLA is a life-long enterprise; both proficiency and willingness to maintain and develop it further are crucial. Finally
- (10) teachers need to be proficient users of both languages and able to apply age-appropriate methodology.

Baker 2011 provides a synthesis

Reviews of this area are provided by Marinova-Todd et al. (2000), Singleton (2003), Singleton and Ryan (2004) and Cenoz (2009). Their analyses may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Younger second language learners are neither globally more nor less efficient and successful than older learners in second language acquisition. There are many factors that intervene and make simple statements about age and language learning simplistic and untenable.
2. Children who learn a second language in childhood do tend to achieve higher levels of proficiency than those who begin after childhood. This difference found between younger and older learners reflects typical outcomes rather than potential. Thus a finding favoring the young does not contradict the idea that someone can become proficient in learning a second language after childhood. This may be related to social contexts in which language is acquired and maintained or lost (e.g. kindergarten), as well as to the psychology of individual learning (e.g. motivation, opportunity). As Marinova-Todd et al. (2000) suggest, older learners tend in practice not to master a second language as well as young learners, but 'age differences reflect differences in the situation of learning rather than in the capacity to learn' (p. 9).
3. In a formal classroom language learning situation, older learners tend initially to learn quicker than younger learners. However, the length of exposure (e.g. the number of years of second language instruction) is an important factor in second language success. Those children who begin to learn a second language in the elementary school and continue throughout schooling, tend to show higher proficiency than those who start to learn the second language later in their schooling. In absolute rather than comparative terms, this still includes the possibility of late learners becoming highly proficient, particularly when they are strongly motivated or have strong needs (e.g. immigrants) or excellent opportunities (e.g. extensive immersion across many months). Adults can learn to a native-like level of competence in a second language.
4. Support for foreign language instruction at an early age in school can find its rationale from areas other than second language research. For example, teaching a foreign language early in the elementary school may be defended in terms of general intellectual stimulation, the general curriculum value of teaching a modern language, the benefits of biculturalism and the benefits of learning a language for as long as possible rather than as quickly as possible. Second language instruction in the elementary school rests on the suitable provision of language teachers, suitable materials and resources, favorable attitudes of the teachers and parents, and the need to make the learning experience enjoyable.
5. There is some research and much public discussion about the large numbers of high school students and adults who fail to learn a second language (Marinova-Todd et al., 2000). In comparison, there is a lack of research on adults who are successful learners of second and third languages. Research itself is in danger of perpetuating a 'younger is better' belief about age and language learning.
6. In the United States, one pressure is for immigrant children to learn English as soon as possible, particularly since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (see Chapter 9). Some claim that the optimal time to learn a language is from age three to seven, and because of supposed biological constraints, such learning should occur before the onset of puberty. In a review of this area, Hakuta (2001: 11–12) argues that:

The evidence for a critical period for second language acquisition is scanty, especially when analyzed in terms of its key assumptions. There is no empirically definable end point, there are no qualitative differences between child and adult learners, and there are large environmental effects on the outcomes. ... The view of a biologically constrained and specialized language acquisition device that is turned off at puberty is not correct.

Similarly, Marinova-Todd et al. (2000) conclude that 'age does influence language learning, but primarily because it is associated with social, psychological, educational and other factors that can affect L2 proficiency, not because of any critical period that limits the possibility of language learning by adults' (p. 28). While there are no critical periods of language learning, there are advantageous periods. Early childhood and elementary and secondary school days seem two advantageous periods.

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p10. On the whole, it can be stated that although the educational contexts and conditions of early programs vary to a great extent and despite the worldwide spread of teaching foreign languages, most importantly English, to young learners, very little research has been published.

p10. Most countries accept the folk wisdom and findings from L2 contexts without considering questions like the amount and quality of exposure to L2, teachers' competences and motivation, classroom methodology, and continuity of programs.

p17-18. The arguments for early instruction can be summarized around the following points:

- (1) studies in child and adult SLA research indicate that the length of exposure may influence SLA in a favorable way, though the longer the exposure to L2 does not guarantee better outcomes automatically;
- (2) as the general curriculum for learners expands with age, one of the areas of knowledge that could be acquired early is an L2;
- (3) in a globalized world, early L2 learning may contribute to understanding and appreciating different cultures, values, and speakers of other languages;
- (4) the ability to use two or more languages may enhance cognitive development and metalinguistic awareness, and thus, may influence the L1 favorably through raising awareness and may encourage the further language learning.

However, for early FL programs to be useful, certain conditions must be met:

- (1) learners need to have positive attitudes towards the L2, its speakers and language learning;
- (2) the content and methodology of the programs, transfer, and frequency need to be appropriate;
- (3) proficient teachers are needed who not only speak both the L1 and L2, but can also apply age-appropriate methodology successfully.

Baker 2011 Ch 11 is relevant mainly to America and Europe
Ch 12 gives more information on dual language schools.

First, immersion in Canada aims at bilingualism in two prestigious, majority languages (French and English). This relates to an additive bilingual situation. Such a situation is different from 'immersion' or 'structured immersion' of children from language minority backgrounds in the majority language (e.g. Spanish speakers in the US). Use of the term 'immersion' in a subtractive, assimilationist situation is best avoided. **Submersion** is a more appropriate term.

Swain and Johnson (1997) and Swain and Lapkin (2005) provide a list of the core features and variable features of immersion programs, to include contexts where children are learning through French as their third language (e.g. immigrants).

Core Features

1. The immersion language is the medium of instruction.
2. The immersion curriculum is the same as the local first language curriculum.
3. The school supports development in all the child's languages.
4. Additive bilingualism occurs.
5. Exposure to the immersion language is largely confined to the classroom.
6. Students enter with similar (limited or nonexistent) levels of proficiency in the immersion language.
7. All the teachers are bilingual.
8. The classroom culture needs to recognize the cultures of the diverse language communities to which the students belong, including immigrant communities.

Variable Features

1. The grade level at which immersion is introduced.
2. The extent of immersion, full or partial.
3. The ratio given to the first and second language in content-based teaching at different grade levels.
4. Whether there is continuity from elementary to secondary education, and occasionally from secondary to further and higher education (e.g. University of the Basque Country (Cenoz, 2009), University of Barcelona, University of Ottawa, University of Helsinki, University of Fribourg, Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities in Wales; Stellenbosch University – see Van der Walt, 2006).
5. The amount of language support given to students moving from their first to their second language, including the training that teachers need so as to give bridging support.
6. The amount of resources that are available in the first and second language and the teacher training to use these.
7. The commitment of teachers and students, administrators and politicians to immersion.
8. The attitudes of students particularly towards the second language culture.
9. The status of the second language.
10. What counts as success in an immersion program.

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XX. How successful are adults in becoming multilingual?

Baker 2011

How successful are adults in becoming bilingual? There is a distinction between answering this question in an absolute and a relative manner. The 'absolute' answer simply is that adults do learn a second language to varying degrees of fluency including incomplete acquisition (Kroll, 2006; Montrul, 2008). Some fall by the wayside; others reach a basic, simple level of communication, yet others become operationally bilingual. In Israel, Wales and the Basque country, the adult route to bilingualism has many success stories.

CLIL. Incomplete

Baker 2011. ch 10. Limited.

cp ESP for adults.

CLIL involves the learning of a small number of content areas (such as physics or geography) through the medium of another language while (at the same time) developing that additional language (Ruiz de Zarobe & Jiménez Catalán, 2009). Some 10% to 50% of the curriculum may be taught through another language. While there are many variations in CLIL, the additional language is typically taught as a subject in itself and not just as a vehicle for transmitting content. Yet the emphasis is very much on education and not just on language: ‘the major concern is about education, not about becoming bilingual or multilingual, and that multiple language proficiency is the “added value” which can be obtained at no cost to other skills and knowledge, if properly designed’ (Baetens Beardsmore in García, 2009a: 211).

CLIL is present in over 30 European countries with considerable variations in terms of, for example, intensity, starting age, duration and amount of explicit language teaching (Coyle, 2007, 2008).

Davison and Williams (2001) provide the rationale for teaching and learning content through a second language. First, learning a language is quicker when it is via an integration of language and content, and much slower if just learnt as a language. Second, CLIL ensures a student gains language competence in academic domains and not just in social communication. Third, such an integration of language and content is efficient. Two outcomes can be achieved at the same time: learning a language and subject matter learning. Fourth, Met (1998) argues that a communicative approach to second language teaching emphasizes meaningful and authentic communication where the purpose of using language is to interpret, express and negotiate meaning. Thus integrating second language and content provides a purpose for using that second language reflecting real curriculum needs and purposeful learning for success in the curriculum.

Bruton A 2013 CLIL: some of the reasons why — and why not. System 41:587-597

the variations in so-called CLIL initiatives may be reduced to three: 1) Learn the FL separately, in order to learn the content through the FL; 2) Learn the FL through the content, which has already been learnt in the L1; 3) Learn the FL and the content together. It would seem that the arguments in favour of CLIL generally suggest (3), that is, the content and FL learning go hand-in-hand, but, as Mehisto (2008) discovered, “No CLIL teachers stated both language and content goals. This implies that the dual focus on content and language, which is the essence of the CLIL approach, is likely not being applied in a systematic manner by teachers” (p.99).

Bruton 2011

Furthermore, if the content is conceptually difficult, the FL medium will make it even more difficult to assimilate, and the content in turn could complicate the FL development e see Seikkula-Leino (2007:338) on the amount of language above the students’ current competence. Sometimes when the content becomes too difficult, students resort to their L1, especially in peer work.