

**AGE AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION****Qosimova Yulduzxon Abdullajon kizi**

Master's Student, Kimyo International University in Tashkent, Namangan Branch

Email: [yulduzxonqosimova4@gmail.com](mailto:yulduzxonqosimova4@gmail.com)Supervisor: **Lazokat Dadabayeva**

Kimyo International University Toshkent, Namangan branch

[Lazokatdadabayeva91@gmail.com](mailto:Lazokatdadabayeva91@gmail.com)

0009-0001-0035-2722

**Abstract:** Age is frequently discussed as a significant factor in second language acquisition (SLA). Scholars hold different views regarding whether children possess a biological advantage or whether adults can reach comparable proficiency through cognitive maturity and developed learning strategies. This paper examines five major studies related to age and SLA and highlights their core arguments. The reviewed evidence shows that learners who begin earlier tend to develop more natural pronunciation and grammatical patterns, whereas adults may demonstrate faster improvement at the initial stages. Nevertheless, age does not function alone; motivation, exposure, environment, and individual abilities play equally essential roles. The findings suggest that age shapes SLA outcomes, but successful learning results from the interaction of biological, cognitive, and social influences rather than age alone.

**Keywords:** age; second language acquisition; critical period; adult learning; child learners; pronunciation; grammar; language factors

**Introduction**

Age has long been viewed as an influential element in the process of acquiring a second language. Although many researchers support the idea that children possess natural learning advantages, others argue that adults also have strong potential due to their cognitive development and strategic learning skills. Because opinions vary, the role of age remains an important subject within linguistics and language education. Understanding how age impacts learning helps instructors design more effective approaches and assists learners in recognizing their capabilities.

This paper aims to examine how age affects second language learning and to answer the question: How does age shape both the process and results of SLA?

**Literature Review**

Different scholars have attempted to explain the relationship between age and language learning. One key concept is the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH). Johnson and Newport (1989) reported that individuals who begin learning a second language before puberty generally achieve better grammatical performance, supporting possible biological advantages in younger learners.

Similarly, Flege, Yeni-Komshian, and Liu (1999) noted that early exposure often results in more native-like pronunciation. At the same time, their work shows that age is not an absolute predictor, as many adults also reach high proficiency levels.

DeKeyser (2000) found strong age-related differences in mastering grammar, especially when learning requires explicit rule application. Still, he emphasized that highly motivated adult learners may achieve outstanding results, indicating the role of non-age factors.

Bialystok and Hakuta (1999) questioned the idea of a strict cutoff age, arguing instead that learning ability decreases gradually. They pointed out that cognitive factors, previous linguistic knowledge, and opportunities for exposure significantly influence learning.

Birdsong and Vanhove (2016) further highlighted that the social context, duration of exposure, and quality of interaction strongly contribute to success in SLA. Their findings show that age interacts with various environmental and personal variables, suggesting that the relationship is complex and multifaceted.

Overall, the reviewed studies demonstrate that age influences SLA, but its effects are intertwined with motivation, environment, cognition, and social condition.

### **Methodology**

This study uses a theoretical approach and does not include new empirical data. It relies on content analysis of five well-known academic works related to the role of age in SLA. By comparing arguments, evaluating results, and identifying shared themes, the paper provides a synthesized understanding of how age shapes second language learning.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The analysis of previous research yields several important observations:

1. Early starters often demonstrate more natural pronunciation and grammar, supporting the possibility of a sensitive period in childhood.
2. Adults frequently progress faster at the beginning, benefiting from advanced learning strategies, cognitive maturity, and awareness of language structure.
3. Different aspects of language are affected differently by age. Pronunciation is the most age-sensitive, while vocabulary, reading, and some grammatical skills can be successfully developed at any age.
4. Age is not the dominant factor in every case. Motivation, quality of exposure, social environment, and learner differences may allow adults to reach or even surpass the performance of younger learners.
5. Research supports a gradual decline in language learning sensitivity, rather than a sudden cutoff point.

### **Conclusion**

The review indicates that although age plays an important role in SLA, it is only one component of a larger system. Younger learners may be more successful in producing natural-sounding grammar and pronunciation, whereas adults benefit from cognitive experience and effective strategies. Ultimately, SLA success depends on the combination of biological factors, cognitive development, motivation, and the surrounding environment. Teachers should design activities that support learners of all ages through meaningful, engaging, and rich language input. Future studies may explore age effects on particular skills or compare different lea

### **References**

1. Bialystok, E., & Hakuta, K. (1999). Confounded age: Linguistic and cognitive factors in age differences for second language acquisition. In D. Birdsong (Ed.), *Second language acquisition and the critical period hypothesis* (pp. 161–181). Lawrence Erlbaum.

2. Birdsong, D., & Vanhove, J. (2016). Age of second language acquisition: Critical periods and social concerns. In E. Nicoladis & S. Montanari (Eds.), *Bilingualism across the lifespan* (pp. 163–182). De Gruyter.
3. DeKeyser, R. (2000). The robustness of critical period effects in second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 22(4), 499–533.
4. Flege, J. E., Yeni-Komshian, G., & Liu, S. (1999). Age constraints on second-language acquisition. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 41(1), 78–104.
5. Johnson, J. S., & Newport, E. L. (1989). Critical period effects in second language learning. *Cognitive Psychology*, 21(1), 60–99.