

# Effect of Age in Second Language Acquisition: A Critical Review from the Perspective of Critical Period Hypothesis and Ultimate Attainment.

Mohammad Mosiur Rahman<sup>1</sup>, Ambigapathy Pandian<sup>1</sup>, Abdul Karim<sup>2</sup>, & Faheem Hasan Shahed<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup> BRAC Institute of Languages, BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Correspondence: Mohammad Mosiur Rahman, School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia. E-mail: mosiurbhai@gmail.com

## Abstract

This article addresses the effect of age in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), posing the relative question that whether the Critical Period hypothesis (CPH) exists in Second Language (SL), and if existing, how it is associated duly with SLA. The justification of comparing the achievement of L1 and L2 learners on the basis of Ultimate Attainment (UA) in the establishment of Critical Period Hypothesis, is also discussed. In the methodology, secondary data analysis was used to answer of research questions. To achieve a reliable result from the wide range of secondary data primarily from journal articles, a systemic search has been adopted. In conclusion, compare and contrast was made with earlier studies to show the findings of the study and to scope future research.

**Keywords:** SLA, Bi-bilingualism, Critical Period hypothesis, ultimate attainment

## 1. Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA) increasingly generates pragmatic debates in the broader field of psycholinguistics. Considering the importance and differences with language acquisition in L1 and L2, SLA flourished as a distinct paradigm for research and has become a widely taught subject in graduate and postgraduate programs worldwide (Rahman & Pandian, 2016). SLA has drawn more attention from researchers because the success of L2 learners is wide-ranging. The differential success was caused by various factors, which often were due to age constraints related with SLA, which is absent or not as eminent in the development of a first or native language. Age having an influence on SLA is an undeniable fact, and studies regarding age-related issues in SLA is broadly divided into two types: the existence and characteristics of maturational constraints and identifying Age of Acquisition (AoA), and differences in second or foreign language learning (Muñoz, 2008, p. 578). Therefore, a discussion regarding effect of age in SLA from the perspectives of CPH and UA is necessary.

As mentioned above, the two aspects, age of acquisition and differences in second language learning correlate with each other and reasonably comprise the hypothesis of age effect in SLA. The effect of age in SLA is encircled by the notion of Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH); therefore, a comparison to Ultimate Attainment (UA) is particularly relevant regarding CPH since UA is often considered to be the determining factor to identify successful SLA learners. In literature, the discussion of Ultimate Attainment or proficiency like a native speaker is closely related with CPH, as the prior claim behind this is that exposure to a second language from a very early age often can result in proficiency like a native speaker. Perhaps, it is true that children can attain a native-like proficiency without much striving, while adults study hard and diligently for years with unsatisfactory results (Li, 2015). Moreover, besides having an accent or certain pronunciations, many researchers oppose the advantage of being young learners and claim that older learners are more effective learners when they get to be in a linguistics environment and have language input (Ellis, 1994). As a result, the existence