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## Foreign language learning during childhood

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to clarify Importance of learning a foreign language in childhood. Among philosophers, empiricism and the psychologists, behaviourists believe that language is a social creature and like other social behaviours are acquired. This is perhaps the most complex and arguable question that have risen among linguists, psychologists and philosophers about language: how a child learns foreign language? Language learning is natural. Babies are born with the ability to learn it and that learning begins at birth. Many experts believe that learning the language before the age of ten years allow children to speak correct and fluent as an indigenous person. Therefore, whatever the earlier children become familiar with foreign language, he have better chance to speak proficiency. Research suggests that from birth through age 10 is the best time to introduce new languages to a young child. In this paper the child will learn the language faster, retain it better and most often speak it with near-native pronunciation. Finally, this paper highlights advantages and disadvantages foreign language learning in childhood.

*Keywords:* children, foreign language, childhood

### 1. Introduction

Many experts believe that learning the language before the age of ten years allow children to speak correct and fluent as an indigenous person. Therefore, whatever the earlier children become familiar with foreign language, he have better chance to speak proficiency. On the other hand language learning, except native language, can provide develop a lifelong ability to more communicate with others. One of the important advantages of mastering a foreign language is access to better job opportunities and the person will find deeper understanding to their own culture and other nations. Including the benefits of knowing a foreign language in today's society, enhancing economic competitiveness in the external surface, improving global communications and maintains and manage political and security interests of a country. Research has shown that, if languages learning in children before puberty, children are found more chances to speak a foreign language with a completely native pronunciation. In addition, familiarity child with the culture of other nations spread his views and attitudes and provides the opportunity for him to communicate with other people. We know now that studying a foreign language offers surprising benefits to children. Research has demonstrated improved ability to communicate, better cognitive development, richer cultural awareness and, ultimately, better job opportunities for those who know a foreign language Ferreira, F., & Morrison,

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F. J. (1994). What's more, today's children will all be required to have command of two languages by the time they reach college. Research suggests that from birth through age 10 is the best time to introduce new languages to a young child. The child will learn the language faster, retain it better and most often speak it with near-native pronunciation. Recent research indicates a young child up through age 5 can learn and process up to five languages! Many parents deliberate over how to bring a new language into their little one's life. Many experts agree the bilingual approach for the very young child is best. Today's parents know the importance of being bilingual. Now they just need to know where to turn for assistance in finding fun and affordable bilingual products that will bring the target language into their child's life. The internet has made their search much easier than five years ago. Look for bilingual programs that allow you to sample their visual or audio products on line so that you get a good feel for the content and style of the language learning within that particular program.

### 1.1. The Acquisition of Language by Children

These examples of language learning, processing, and creation represent just a few of the many developments between birth and linguistic maturity. During this period, children discover the raw materials in the sounds (or gestures) of their language, learn how they are assembled into longer strings, and map these combinations onto meaning. These processes unfold simultaneously, requiring children to integrate their capacities as they learn, to crack the code of communication that surrounds them. Despite layers of complexity, each currently beyond the reach of modern computers, young children readily solve the linguistic puzzles facing them, even surpassing their input when it lacks the expected structure.

No less determined, researchers are assembling a variety of methodologies to uncover the mechanisms underlying language acquisition. Months before infants utter their first word, their early language-learning mechanisms can be examined by recording subtle responses to new combinations of sounds. Once children begin to link words together, experiments using real-time measures of language processing can reveal the ways linguistic and nonlinguistic information are integrated during listening. Natural experiments in which children are faced with minimal language exposure can reveal the extent of inborn language-learning capacities and their effect on language creation and change. As these techniques and others probing the child's mind are developed and their findings integrated, they will reveal the child's solution to the puzzle of learning a language.

#### 1.1.2. The best time to learn a foreign language

Today, enlightened school systems know better. Foreign languages are introduced in elementary school. Little kids do learn more easily than high school students. But current research says to really do it right, start even earlier. Start when the child is learning a first language. Babies have an astonishing ability to absorb. And in today's complex world, a foreign language is not a luxury – it's a necessity. We know now that studying a foreign language offers surprising benefits to children Bloch, C., & Edwards, V. (1999). Research has demonstrated improved ability to communicate, better cognitive development, richer cultural awareness and, ultimately, better job opportunities for those who know a foreign language. What's more, today's children will all be required to have command of two languages by the time they reach college. Research suggests that from birth through age 10 is the best time to introduce new languages to a young child. The child will learn the language faster, retain it better and most often speak it with near-native pronunciation. Recent research indicates a young child up through age 5 can learn and process up to five languages!

### 1.2. Start language learning

Children begin learning languages at birth (infants pay attention to their parents' voices, as opposed to random noises or even other languages), and haven't really mastered its subtleties before the age of ten years. Indeed, we never really stop learning our language. (David Singleton.) This isn't exactly the sort of behavior (like foals walking an hour after birth) that we call 'instinct' in animals.

But at least it's effortless, isn't it? Well, no, as we can see when children have a choice of languages to learn. What's found is that, to be frank, **children don't learn a language** if they can get away with not learning it.

## Basic Stages of Language Learning

### Stage One – Learning Sounds

When babies are born, they can make and hear all the sounds in all the languages in the world. That's about 150 sounds in about 6500 languages! However, no language uses all 150 sounds. The sounds a language uses are called phonemes and English has about 44. Some languages use more and some use fewer.

In this stage, babies learn which phonemes belong to the language they are learning and which don't. The ability to recognize and produce those sounds is called "phonemic awareness," which is important for children learning to read.

### Stage Two – Learning Words

At this stage children essentially learn how the sounds in a language go together to make meaning. For example, they learn that the sounds *m*, *ah*, *m*, and *ee* refer to that "being" that cuddles and feeds them – mommy. That's a significant step because everything we say is really just a stream of sounds. To make sense of those sounds, a child must be able to recognize where one word ends and another one begins. These are called "word boundaries."

It's not exactly words, though, that children are learning. What children are actually learning are morphemes, which may or may not be words. That's really not as confusing as it sounds. A morpheme is just a sound or sounds that have a meaning, like the word *mommy*. The word *mommy*, however, has two morphemes: *mommy* and *-s*. Children at this stage can recognize that the *-s* means "more than one" and will know that when that sound is added to other words, it means the same thing – "more than one."

### Stage Three – Learning Sentences

During this stage, children learn how to create sentences. That means they can put words in the correct order. For example, they learn that in English we say "I want a cookie" and "I want a chocolate cookie," not "Want I a cookie" or "I want cookie chocolate."

Children also learn the difference between grammatical correctness and meaning. Noam Chomsky created an example of this difference in the sentence "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously." Children will know that although the sentence is grammatically correct, it doesn't make sense. They know that green is a color and can't, therefore, be colorless. (Harrison, B., & Papa, R. (2005))

## 1.3. Children learn languages easily

Imagine that you are faced with the following challenge. You must discover the internal structure of a system that contains tens of thousands of units, all generated from a small set of materials. These units, in turn, can be assembled into an infinite number of combinations. Although only a subset of those combinations is correct, the subset itself is for all practical purposes infinite. Somehow you must converge on the structure of this system to use it to communicate. And you are a very young child.

This system is human language. The units are words, the materials are the small set of sounds from which they are constructed, and the combinations are the sentences into which they can be assembled. Given the complexity of this system, it seems improbable that mere children could discover its underlying structure and use it to communicate. Yet most do so with eagerness and ease, all within the first few years of life.

Young children are uniquely suited to learning a foreign language. The developing brain is hard-wired to acquire language – never again will it be this natural or this easy!

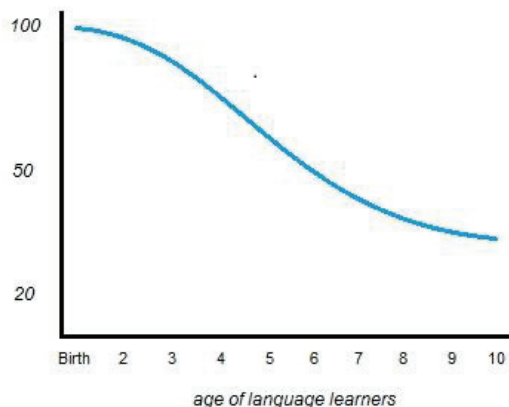
### 1.4.1. Children Learn A Foreign language Naturally

Exposing your child to a foreign language young allows a child to optimize his or her learning potential, helping to shape the brain at its most flexible stage. Young children are uniquely suited to learning a foreign language. Learning a foreign language at a young age is cognitively as easy as learning a first language.

Young children can acquire native-like fluency as easily as they learned to walk. Where adults have to work through an established first-language system, studying explicit grammar rules and practicing rote drills, the young kids learn naturally, absorbing the sounds, structures, intonation patterns and rules of a foreign language intuitively, as they did their mother tongue. The young brain is inherently flexible, uniquely hard-wired to acquire language naturally.

### Window of Opportunity

*Ease of learning*



Early childhood is the best time for language acquisition. Ease of learning a foreign language diminishes with age. Between birth and adolescence the brain is hard-wired to acquire language naturally. As child approaches puberty, the nature of language learning and storage changes, becoming less flexible.

Why *do* children learn languages well, when even adults who want to learn them have trouble with them? Innate abilities aside, children have a number of powerful advantages:

- They can devote almost their full time to it. Adults consider half an hour's study a day to be onerous.
- Their motivation is intense. Adults rarely have to spend much of their time in the company of people they need to talk to but can't; children can get very little of what they want without learning language(s).

If adults could be placed in a similar situation, they might well learn languages as readily (I don't say 'easily!') as children. The closest such situation I can think of is cross- cultural marriage. And indeed, this works quite well. My wife, for instance, a native Spanish speaker who came here in her late 20s, has learned exceptional English, since we speak it at home. By contrast, some of her Spanish-speaking friends of the same age, married to other Spanish speakers, speak English haltingly and with a strong accent

## 2. Conclusion

English language should be more than one course and it can be used as a scientific language and other training courses. For example, science courses, history, social or biology should be taught in English. In this way, power and speed of learning the language significantly increases. Primary school and children is the best course to learn the language. Because learning the language with native language in the first decade of life provides for disabled students to independently and directs language without translation, interpretation and changes its meaning from Persian to learn English in your mind. This means that the person will be able to speak like native language without including Persian to English in your mind. Early childhood is the best time for language acquisition. Ease of learning a foreign language diminishes with age. Between birth and adolescence the brain is hard-wired to acquire language naturally. As child approaches puberty, the nature of language learning and storage changes, becoming less flexible. Many experts believe that learning the language before the age of ten years allow children to speak correct and fluent as an indigenous person. Therefore, whatever the earlier children become familiar with foreign language, he have better chance to speak proficiency. On the other hand language learning, except native language, can provide develop a lifelong ability to more communicate with others.

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