

# Experiment on 3 Different Age Bilingual Learners

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## Abstract

This article investigates the language proficiency of three bilingual students representing different age groups, with a focus on assessing their overall language levels, as well as identifying their specific strengths and weaknesses across various language skills. Through a comprehensive analysis, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the individual learning processes and developmental trajectories of bilingual learners. Additionally, the study incorporates the researcher's personal beliefs and expectations concerning bilingual education, highlighting the pedagogical implications of supporting bilingual students effectively. The findings reveal a range of challenges and advantages experienced by bilingual learners, underscoring the necessity for differentiated and context-sensitive instructional strategies to foster their linguistic and academic growth. This research contributes to the broader discourse on bilingualism by emphasizing the complexity of bilingual language development and the critical role of tailored educational interventions.

**Keywords:** Bilingual students, Language proficiency, Age groups, Strengths and weaknesses, Individual learning processes, Bilingual education, Pedagogical strategies, Learner diversity, Educational support, Personal beliefs and expectations, Language acquisition, Academic growth.

## Introduction

### Language Learners Profiles

#### Leyla

Leyla was born and grew up in Tashkent. She started to learn English at the age of 14. Now, she is 15 years old studies at ninth grade and her level is intermediate. As her family members speak in Uzbek at home, her usage of L2 is limited at this environment. Although Leyla goes to the private school specialised English in Tashkent, she struggles with mostly pronouncing letters namely vowels. Because in her L1 every vowel is pronounced and read as it is written but in English it is the opposite of it. For example: in Uzbek, residents read the words as they are written

like muallim, sanoat etc while the words like 2 vowels come together are read differently such as essential, pour in English. Even there is a consonant in English which Uzbeks do not exist such as “W” and a sound “TH” that most Uzbeks read it like “Z”. Since I am her English teacher at this school, she always complains about her hesitations while pronouncing such kind of words.

## Amir

Amir is a Russian guy was born and rose in Russia whose age and class are the same with Leyla. He came to Tashkent when he was 14 years old with his mother. Since his father is from Uzbekistan and came back to his hometown, then he was given to private school specialised English. Amir knows Uzbek language as well except Russian because his father is Uzbek and he speaks in his native language at home a lot. Although Amir does not comprehend the rules and grammar of Uzbek, he is able to understand the language and communicate with it. However, when his parents want Amir to learn English as a second language, he started to struggle with an affixes that Russian language has but English does not exist. For example, in English there is no any affixes that gives the meaning of “y” (Моя мама хочет книгу) in Russian for male genre words. Although, there is no need to add any suffixes to the words, he always adds them to the end of English words. As there are some rules for expressing the suffix “y” in Russian.

## Age differences

Learning a new language is a process that age indicates its power on the benefits as well as the challenges. A foreign language can be learned in different ages namely, early FL learning in CHILDHOOD which pupils start to learn it very early, second is foreign language Learning in Mid- and Late in ADULTHOOD which adults learn it from 18 till 40 and the last but not least is Old FL learning in OLD AGE which learners’ ages are over 40. According to Munoz.C (2011) research on age effects in additional language acquisition continues actively exploring the processes and outcomes of leaners in different conditions and implications of the new research findings are enriching this vast area.

My previous learners were teenagers whose ages were 15 years old and the group of learners I am going to compare are mature learners whose ages are 50. There are some drawbacks and advantages of learning a new language in both ages. For example, in childhood pupils learn a new language more quickly as opposed to adults and old people because of the brain’s plasticity. More preciously, children just accept any new information without comparing to their L1 or/and even without asking the reason why it happens. Brain loses its plasticity when it is the end of the childhood. “The perspective was based on the reported observation that there was a greater likelihood of language functions being transferred from an injured to a healthy part of the brain in children than in adults.” Dechert, H.W. (1995 p,70). As my previous learners were teenagers, it was a bit challenging to work with them because of some grammar topics that cannot be compared to their L1 and the existence of several pronunciation rules at the same time but their brains are still fresh and ready to accept new rules and exceptions. When it comes to the old adulthood whose ages are 50, there are more disadvantages of learning a FL compared to its advantages. Declines, related to age indicates many reasons such as lack of attention, poor memory when learning new words and the most essential one is variations in oral speech at this age namely, struggling with pronouncing new words. “Such age-related cognitive decline has been reported to be preceded by

structural changes, such as a loss of functional brain connectivity or the decline of white matter integrity” (Damoiseaux et al., 2008; Salat et al., 2004; Sowell et al., 2003). On the other hand, old people are responsible and active doing their tasks at their mature period. In addition, their critical thinking ability is already developed and they have lots of clear ideas on any topics because of their life experiences. I tried to compare children (Leyla and Amir are 15 years old) to the mature age group people (Sevara is 45 years old woman)!

## Phonetics-

Pronunciation

Leyla and Amir- middle school guys -15 years old

## My expectation

As both Leyla and Amir have similar pronunciation problems, my purpose is teaching how to pronounce English words correctly and where to put the stress. My expectation in phonetics is sounding their speeches as native as much as possible. School guys prefer to watch fantastic movies like Harry Potter, Cinderella, that is why I chose several movies the words exist which they have difficulties with them a lot. Because when the words are pronounced by native people they can manage to produce them easier.

## Challenges

Since every language exists its rules and exceptions in phonetics, English also has different ways of pronouncing consonants and vowels than they are written. Admittedly, English phonetics differs from other many languages with its uncomparable sounds and words. More preciously, sometimes one vowel or consonant is pronounced differently at the same time. For example, my former learner Leyla whose L1 was Uzbek had problems with pronunciation of 2 vowels when they come together such as sheep, pour, poor while Russian guy Amir had the same problem, but with consonants namely, a consonant is pronounced considerably different such as oCean-sh, City-s, Cat-k. This confuses them when they are producing the language and it causes to loose the fluency as well as confidence and increases pauses in speech. As a result, they forget about the word stress and where to put intonation pattern in a sentence.

## Benefits

Undoubtly, without knowing the phonetics and phonology of a foreign language, it is tough to seem like native or to be a good learner. As they are teenagers and have no any family responsibilities or problems, their brains are fresh to accept the rules and exceptions by explanations and practising. Especially phonology helps students to develop their writing as well as speaking skills at the same time. Because, we can observe cases of reading some words that are considerably different from the way they are written such as **beef** is written but **bif** is read. If they realize this aspect is able to make them better learner, they benefit more than they think.

Sevara is 50 years old woman

Although there can be observed many ages rated declines, old people are experienced and have at least a little theoretical knowledge on a specific field. In addition, they are responsible and set a certain goal of learning a FL. I believe everything depends on the person's purpose and opportunities that they have but I can strongly support that if late adults have great passion and a purpose, they do not need any pressure to urge them to do the homework as children need. For

example, Sevara is 50 years old and wants to travel around the world and he needs a language which she can communicate with it any part of the world. She is a teacher herself and can comprehend my ideas easily. She knows Uzbek and Russian. When she does not understand anything, she compares to Uzbek or Russian, even there is something uncomparable she just accepts as it is. She does not ask repeatedly by saying “why” because she knows every language has uncomparable parts. Since there are many drawbacks and advantages of learning a FL at both ages, I am able to compare them for hours.

#### My expectation

Admittedly, mature people have a lot of changes in speech even they are not able to pronounce some words as they must be but my expectation does not require to pronounce words like native but making accurate pronounced vowels and consonants as much as possible they can.

#### Challenges

According to the recent research, it is believed to reveal that human cognitive capacities decline across the lifespan, reflected in a slowing of processing speed (e.g. Salthouse, 2000), reduced working memory capacity (Engle & Kane, 2004), reduced learning and recall of new information (Lindenberger, 2014). Moreover, they cannot pronounce some vowels when 2 or 3 come together because of their limited tongue actions and there is not such kind of rule in Uzbek or in Russian. Neurolinguistics have noted that the migration of nerve vessels of mature people is already damaged and they cannot be restored. And this cause them not to retain new information for a long time and causes many problems with memory. As a result, it leads to forget the rules of pronunciation while learning new vocabulary.

#### Benefits

When they know how to pronounce vowels differently as well as consonants, their speeches become comprehensible to the listener. Moreover, making accurate speech with chunks encourages them to practice and work on themselves a lot.

#### Grammar

Leyla and Amir- middle school guys -15 years old

#### My expectation

Scholars emphasize that grammar is just as important as memorizing vocabulary when learning a language. Leyla and Amir have the problem with incomparable grammar such as affixes or the places that affixes are not needed. I expect them to use affixes accurately and in a correct place without hesitations.

#### Challenges

There can be found some grammar topics which are complex or the ones that do not exist in my learners L1. When a person gets information about a language by comparing it with their L1, it is easy to use them in daily life. However, as some grammar parts of English do not look like with other languages, I must create situations and events. They can comprehend patterns but have a lot of difficulties in being able to use independently. Despite the fact that the nervous system in their brain is still healthy and undamaged, they are hungry for discussion and see some topics that should be taken for granted as a bigger problem. Sometimes, when I clearly explain the rules for using the perfect tenses and the difference between the simple and the simple tenses, when using them, they mixed it and use past simple. This is the result of their haste and lack of judgment.

#### Benefits

Neuroscientists say that due to the plasticity of the children's brain, they can transfer any new information, even information that they have not heard or seen before, into active language speech through more practice. Just as grammar is important for any language, 4 skills namely listening, writing, speaking and reading show your language ability equally in English. Especially speaking and writing are skills that clearly show how you produce language. The stronger your grammatical base is, the more easily you can produce language without hesitation in these two skills. Young learners tend to communicate with their peers on various topics. If communication is carried out in L2, it will ensure full communication and reduce feelings of fear and hesitation during communication. When they continue this communication in writing, that is, through messages or letters, they can develop two skills at once.

Sevara is 50 years old woman

My expectation

They have to use tenses correctly as well as conditions. Moreover, they mix prepositions to each other especially ones that come with words such as afraid of, belong to, interested in.

Challenges

It is very common for them to confuse or forget the formulas that are the basis of grammar due to poor memory. Confusion of word groups is often observed for example, noun, adjective, verb, object, subject.

Benefits

When older people are able to form correct sentences and develop them verbally and in writing, they achieve fewer pauses in their speech, as well as fluency and error-free writing. Unlike young people, mature people do not use grammar as well as natives, but they can use tenses prepositions and conditions correctly.

Teaching Philosophy Statement

Language learning is a progress that requires great effort as well as patience from the students. In this arduous path, teachers are people who can provide guidance and knowledge. The teaching is not only a rewarding but also a very responsible profession. In this field, it is very important for me to create an environment where students can freely express their opinion and create a friendly relationship. To be more specific, I should not forget to give them positive feedback on their mistakes and motivation to guide them on the right path. According to De Costa (2016) motivation is an important affective factor for a class to be successful, so I employ various motivational strategies in my classes. I believe that every teacher should have their own teaching methods and unique aspects or goals. I know that how interesting the subject depends a lot on the teacher. Costa (2014) emphasized that teachers with our own teaching philosophies, personal experiences, and professional goals, our interpretations of research are influenced by these same experiences that make us unique. It should be recognized that each student has a different world and perspective in the lesson. Their different opinions give the lesson a special interest. It is precisely because they are able to express their thoughts freely that asking them through questions about various topics related to their lives or problematic situations helps to get to know them better. "By focusing on these pivotal moments, teachers can create affordances for students that will not only benefit their classroom language learning but also contribute to their success outside of the classroom" (De Costa 2014, p 9). On the other hand, not only knowledge, but also the environment in the room plays a crucial role in learning. For example, it should be convenient to move desks, which ensures

making small circles around one desk in group workings and it provides a small groups and best way of demonstrating group working as well as feelings of inclusion for the classroom community which fosters motivation and respect for each other.

Many teachers try to use everything in “English only” policies. However, if teachers give an opportunity students to use linguistic funds of knowledge help facilitate their English language learning. In other words, the best ways giving an opportunity to become experts in a class. As a teacher, we have to take an account the students’ desire and perspectives about the lesson. As a teacher, my goal is to find out where my students are struggling and solve the problem to increase their interest and enthusiasm for the language.

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