

Assignment 1

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Factors influencing second language acquisition have been an issue for human beings. Presently, factors such as intelligence, aptitude, motivation, personality, learner preferences, and age are most frequently discussed.

Intelligence and aptitude

intelligence

Intelligence is related to a Second Language Acquisition(SLA) as well as the studying of other subjects at school, while aptitude exclusively means the ability of special cognitive qualities necessary for SLA. As McDonough (2019, p.110) said that intelligence refers to the capacity rather than the contents of the mind. For many years, it was found that higher IQ scores mean successful SLA achievement. Cummins (1979, pp. 197-205) classified language abilities into two categories: The first is cognitive/academic language ability(CALP), such as reading, grammar, and vocabulary, which is strongly related to intelligence. The second is basic interpersonal communication skills(BICS), for instance speaking. BICS can develop naturally.

Aptitude

To investigate aptitude, there are two commonly used tests: Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) and the Pimsleur Language Aptitude

Battery (PLAB). In both tests, aptitude is composed of the abilities to memorize new words and new sounds, and understanding functions of certain special vocabulary as well as grammar rules.

The components of aptitude can be divided into two groups: analytical abilities and memories. In a Canadian language program, Majorie Wesche (2000, p.3) assigned students with high analytical abilities into classes more focusing on grammatical rules, while others with good memory were put into the classroom with more activities concerning functional use, such as speaking activities. The study found that if students were put into a compatibly matched classroom, they will achieve satisfactory learning achievement.

In real classrooms, it is very hard to separate students based on their aptitude, but the finding offers teachers choices of various classroom activities to accommodate the different needs of students.

Personality

Several personal characteristics, such as extroversion, social skills, and inhibition, have been investigated and they were found to have some

effect on SLA, but not clearly defined.

One hypothesis about extroverted personality on successful and rapid second language learning has been appealing. Krashen(2019, p.120) , holds the idea that being outgoing may contribute to the acquisition, that is to say, extroverted individuals, gain more opportunity of input because they find it easier to talk with other users. What's more, formal classroom second language learners may also benefit from their extroverted personalities because they participate more in-class activities. However, the research findings of Naiman et al.(2019, p.120, Swain and Burnaby (1976, p.90) did not prove that talkativeness contributes to second language proficiency. Nevertheless, Rossier (2019, p.120) did show that speaking proficiency was considerably correlated with the learner's outgoing personality.

To sum up, present studies do not show clearly the relationship between personality and SLA. Strong (1983, p.58) classified studies into two categories concerning “Presentation communicative language” and “linguistic task language”. Personality traits are seen constantly related to the former, but only occasionally to the latter.

Motivation and attitudes

Many researchers have been interested in the influence of motivation on SLA. Gardner (2000, p.4) found that positive attitude plays an important role in SLA, while Peter Skehan (2000, p.4) doubted whether high motivation leads to successful learning or successful learning triggers high motivation.

Integrative motivation is coined by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (2000, p.4) defining the motivation of SLA as personal development and cultural enrichment. This kind of motivation will probably lead to successful language learning.

The power relationship between the mother tongue and the second language also affects motivation. Lightbown, P.M. and Spada, N (2000, p.4) and Rod Ellis (2019, p.319) share a similar opinion in this field, by stating that the attitudes that learners have about certain L2 learning reveal the complex feeling about their own ethnic identity and those about the target-language culture. For example, in China, learning English is seen as trendy and sophisticated because of the cultural value it

Is attached to.



Classroom Motivation

Motivation is a frequently discussed topic, especially by teachers who hope to see their students active in class, interested in the topics, and spend a lot of time on learning. On the other hand, students also hope that teachers can make the classroom a joyful place with challenging but manageable goals, and a friendly atmosphere. Graham Crookes and Richard Schmidt (2012, P. 4) proposed that instructors should have an attractive opening, to offer students a variety of activities, tasks, and appropriate materials, to use cooperative rather than competitive goals. However, sometimes competitive goals can also be motivating and lead to desirable results.



Learner preferences and Learner beliefs

There are different perceptually based learning styles, including visual, aural, and kinesthetic. In contrast, there is also a cognitive learning style, including field-dependent learners who adopt a holistic approach and field-independent learners who separate details from the general background. Another type of learning style is decided by the individual's personality.



Learner beliefs refer to learners' ideas about how their classes should be taught. Both learner preference and learner belief affect their learning strategies. Language teachers can develop more approaches to learning and also help students with expanded learning strategies.

The second part of this essay reviews and studies **age factors**.

Age

Larsen-Freeman and Long (2019, p. 32) stated that the age issue is a crucial one for the establishment of theory in SLA studies, for making SLA policies in different parts of the world, and for pedagogy. Language researchers are to decide whether learners should start from adolescence or childhood. Language instructors are also concerned about the methods and activities they will use for learners of different ages. Therefore, it arises ongoing and increasing attention.

“Younger is better!” is often considered as the lay belief in SLA, but Krashen, Long, and Scarcella (2019, p. 19) studied some earliest experiments and drew some conclusions, which do not entirely accord with it. The conclusions are: Children develop more slowly syntactically and morphologically than adults in early stages; If time and exposure are constant, older children learn faster in the early stages than younger

children; those who are exposed to a second language during childhood become more proficient learners than those starting after puberty. The first two conclusions are mainly about the fact that in early stages older learners outperform younger ones, especially in grammar. It is also significant to distinguish the influence that the starting age has on the speed of learning and the final achievement. In the following paragraphs, three issues related to age will be studied: age influences on the speed of learning a second language, age influences on ultimate attainment, and whether there is a critical period for language learning.

The influences of age factors on the speed of learning a second language

There are several studies concerning age factors. The study of Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle(2019, p20.) is often quoted supporting Krashen et al's conclusions mentioned above. Three groups of people were involved in the study: adults, 8-to -10 -year old English-speaking children, and 12-to -15 -year-old adolescents. The subjects were to learn Dutch in 10 months through naturalistic acquisition. Their proficiency was to be tested after three months, six months, and ten months. Adolescents did best, adults worse, with the children worst in terms of morphology and syntax. It was seen that the three groups did similarly well in pronunciation. Later children started to catch up in grammar.

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In the Barcelona Age Factor Project, however, second language learning in an instructed setting was investigated. Subjects who began learning English at the age of 8, 11, and 14 were involved. Tests were taken after 200 hours, 416 hours, and also 726 hours. The main finding was that older learners improved faster, but the young learners did not catch up as was shown in Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle's research. It may be because the time in instructed setting was too limited. Similarly, with Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle's finding, grammar was the strongest for older learners while for speaking and listening abilities there were no statistically significant differences.

Olsen and Samuels' findings show that adults and adolescents outperformed children after ten 15-25 minute German Pronunciation sessions. The experiment indicates that adults did better than children in the short term.

Another two experiments conducted by Cochrane (1980, P.60) investigated learners' phonology. They showed that although in the most advantageous field, pronunciation, children outperform adults in naturalistic exposure, they still benefit less than adults in the teaching of

phonemic in a formal classroom setting.

Briefly, the studies above are in support of Krashen's conclusion that adolescent and adult starters have an advantage over child starters. However, older learners have an advantage in explicit learning because of their more developed cognition. Whereas, they do not outperform early-starters in implicit learning over a long term.

Key issues

The influences of age factors on ultimate attainment

A number of studies have engaged in the research of whether being exposed to enough implicit knowledge, children starters can have a long-term advantage.

Singleton(2019, p.22.) claimed that formal schooling does not offer enough amount of exposure for the age advantage of young learners to appear. Researchers can provide them with immersion classes, that is, students are taught a series of subjects in the second language. In this way, they are much more exposed to the second language than is the case in traditional language courses. Harley(2019, p.22.)compared the acquisition of the French verb system in Canada by using immersion instruction after both early and late starters being immersed in it for 1000 hours. The testing forms were interviews, story retelling, and

translation. Neither group attain full control of the verb system. Older starters showed better control within the 1000 hours, but the younger ones performed their tasks better at the end of the schooling. This may be the result of an additional number of years of immersion, but not the advantage of age advantage.

Children learners who are exposed to naturalistic settings outperform adolescents and adults in a native-like accent. Oyama's (2019, p.22.) study proved that "age of arrival" in a second language speaking country is much more important than "the number of years" staying in it. There are also a number of studies that posit that the "younger is better". Substantial evidence suggests that people's ultimate pronunciation achievement declines as a result of a learner's starting age. This can be explained by the affective states of them. Brown (2019, p.109)proposed that children are less culture-bound than adults and they accept acculturation more quickly. They are much more willing to be members of their peer group. Therefore, they are much more motivated to have a native-like accent.

In addition, younger starters also attain better grammar proficiency than

older ones. Patkowski's(2019, p.22.)study involved 67 educated immigrants and found that those who entered the USA before 15 were much more syntactically proficient than those who entered after 15.

The studies above propose that young starters have an advantage in ultimate achievement. I would rather argue that these studies are done in a naturalistic acquisition environment, but it might not be the case with learners who are never or seldom exposed to the naturalistic learning environment. Singleton summarized "Concerning the hypothesis that those who begin learning a second language in childhood in the long run generally achieve higher levels of proficiency than those who begin in later life, one can say there is some good supportive evidence and that there is no actual counter-evidence." In China, there are some counterarguments against his claim. Every year, many prestigious universities enroll students at about 18 to 19 years old to study French, German, or other minor foreign languages, and many of these students finally turn out to be outstanding language users with some of them becoming ambassadors. Although there is no comparison between these learners and learners who study these languages at a very young age, their achievement itself proves that age is not an important factor since their literacy skills, cognitive abilities are much better developed than

those young learners.

The Critical Period Hypothesis

Pronunciation is often focused by many researchers and it is argued that early starters have very clear advantage. However, early learners' advantage in syntax and morphology is also shown in Mark Patkowski's (2000, p. 6) experiment. The subjects' interviews were recorded and transcribed so that they won't be misjudged because of their accent. The results showed that early starters have advantage both in syntax and morphology. This experiment shows that younger starters outperform older ones not only in accent but also in speaking ability as a whole.

Jacqueline Johnson and Elissa Newport conducted a research of 46 Chinese and Korean students who started to learn English at different ages. They were tested on grammaticality task and finally attained the result that early learners did much better. This confirms the Critical Period Hypothesis.

However, later researches also proposed that even after critical period, some become excellent second language learners, and also some may say that this period varies depending on the aspect of the language.

Briefly, the main findings of the age effect are as follows:

1. Adult learners generally learn faster in grammar, especially in formal classroom settings. Child starters will catch up if there is enough naturalistic exposure, but this is less likely to happen in an instructional setting.
2. Under a naturalistic environment, early starters have an absolute advantage as far as native-like accent is concerned. This is explained by affection factors as present studies indicate. However, I would also argue that probably there is some difference in sound sensitivity for children and adults. Being offered a naturalistic environment, children starters even achieve better ultimately in grammar.

Reference

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Assignment 1

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

58/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

Some identification of key issues. You demonstrate reading of relevant literature from a variety of sources. This is fairly well presented, but there are problems with expression and coherence in some parts. you need to proof-read carefully.

It is a satisfactory answer but the argument needs further development.

There is some thought given to selection of material, but the EFL research reading could be extended much further.

Overall a good effort which you can build upon in your next assignment. The style does need to be more academic and we need application of theory.

1. Read more around the subject.
 2. Check your syntax and grammar carefully.
 3. Try to elaborate on key EFL Theory
 4. The references are fairly limited for this level of study
-



Comment 1

You need not introduce the research chapter.



Comment 2

Good reference to theory. You also need to relate theory to teaching.



Comment 3

Why ? Giver further details.



Presentation

Well presented.



Comment 4

Can you elaborate further?



Comment 5

Harvard referencing.



Comment 6

Repetition?



Comment 7

Refer to CPH theory.



Comment 8

Interesting findings but you need not refer to the EFL and SLA theory to illustrate your ideas.



Comment 9

Elaborate further.

PAGE 8



Comment 10

Good understanding.

PAGE 9



Key issues

Clear identification of key issues

PAGE 10



Comment 11

Good.

PAGE 11



Comment 12

Refer to theory to illustrate this point.

PAGE 12



Comment 13

Refer to EFL theory here.

PAGE 13



Comment 14

Clearly defined conclusion.

PAGE 14



Comment 15

date for references.

PAGE 15
