

**TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES FOR PRIMARY EDUCATORS :  
WHY DO WE TEACH ENGLISH AT PRIMARY LEVEL?**

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**Annotation:** This article explains the importance of teaching foreign languages to preschool and primary school-aged children, which is the key link in continuous education. Moreover, the importance of language teaching has been proved by several facts and theories. This article emphasizes that first few years of life is the crucial time for LA after that time the individual cannot achieve high results in learning language especially in pronunciation system due to neuroplasticity. As hypothesis claims “younger = better in the long run”.

**Key words:** Primary level, puberty, pronunciation system, neuroplasticity, critical period hypotheses, foreign language, brain plasticity, critical age, importance of foreign language, enhancing knowledge, language acquisition.

Over past 10 years, the demand for learning foreign languages, especially English, has boosted significantly. Nowadays the definition of EFL/ESL teacher status have changed. Being an English teacher means not only having perfect knowledge of English grammar or vocabulary but also being aware of the culture of people who speak that language. Only teachers who have good methodical skills can help students to enhance their knowledge awareness in learning sphere. After observing multiple language classes in different primary schools, I noticed that process of teaching English was the same in all classes: lessons were well-organized but they were teacher-centered; students' role in the classes was passive. During the class teacher utilized direct and GTM simultaneously by explaining the topic in the target language and translating the whole passage word by word. Especially in primary educational system responsibility for language teaching and learning is somehow lower than expected.

**Introduction**

*Why we need to English for primary school pupils?*

There are different types of theories and ideas on the second language acquisition from different studies. As it can be seen from resources, learning second language is long lasting and complex process, which is related to the critical period hypotheses and the utilization of different methods. During teaching process, I notice some problems with them related to their ages, as identifying these problems I try to find solution by using distinct methods and skills that can improve the knowledge of students.

This research is dedicated to acquiring second language according to Critical Period Hypothesis theory, which was improved by Lenneberg. Other two scientists

Wilder Penfield and Lamar Roberts claimed that it would be better for learners if they began acquiring new language before puberty because after critical period language acquisition can be hard and somehow ineffectively. Moreover, Lenneberg also provided that learners cannot achieve like a native speaker pronunciation after critical period as their brain plasticity is fully developed till puberty. I totally agree with this hypothesis, I think first few years of life is the crucial time for LA after that time the individual cannot achieve high results in learning language especially in pronunciation system due to neuroplasticity. As hypothesis claims “younger = better in the long run”.

While doing extensive research on this theme I thought this theory needs to be paid more attention. As it holds the idea, that language input should occur till the puberty (around age thirteen). However, after critical age period learning process becomes much more difficult and effortful because of several factors such as educational, social as well as biological factors related to the age of individual. Nevertheless, among these factors biological factor’s role is the most important in the learning language. (Andy Shouten, 2009). In fact according to the top neurologist Wilder Penfield and his co-author researches neurological mechanisms are responsible for maturational change in language learning abilities.

For many years, a group of linguistic scholars did a lot of different experiments on CPH but their viewpoints about the role of age factor in the language learning are different from one another. It is still in a long-standing debate, one group of researchers believed existence of critical period in language learning and they claimed it effects significantly to LA, while others proved that the role of age in language learning is not so important if individual is eager to learn language his age will not be problem for him in learning process, it depends on learner’s mental ability as well as the helpful atmosphere around him. Nevertheless, So till today this theory is still in a long-standing debate among scholars. But there is the third group of scholars who supported that both group of researchers’ ideas.

Looking into this theory was introduced by two neurologists Wilder Pefield and his co-author Lamar Roberts I their book “Speech And Brain Mechanisms” and was popularized by Eric Lenneberg in 1967, as he strongly hypothesized that the acquisition of the language can only be performed during critical period, which includes itself the period from early infancy till puberty in L2 motivation with his book “Biological Foundations of Language” ( Eric Lenneberg 2000). He stated that there are maturational constraints on the time while acquiring second language. Native language acquisition relies on neuroplasticity. If language acquisition does not happen in CP, learner can achieve some good results in a few aspects of language such as in grammar but he cannot achieve full mastery after puberty. In his book about Critical Period Hypothesis, he claimed that desired language acquisition can occur only within the childhood, as during this period both hemispheres of child are active and he argued that there is a mechanism of maturational change in people’s learning abilities (Johnson

and Newport, 1989). After Lenneberg's finding came out, there were several tests conducting by scholars on real and among these cases the survey of Genie and Isabelle were the most successful. Genie (1970) was found by social workers at the age of 13, it means at the age of puberty, she was severely neglected, abused and isolated from society by her parents, which lead to non-development in her speech as well as behavior, as she not only could not speak, but also could not walk and eat. Nevertheless, after being taught in children's hospital for seven years by some experts, she could only use some words but she could not acquire the language properly because it was too late to learn even the first language after the puberty (Curtiss, 1977).

In the case of Isabelle (1930) as she was found at the age of seven, it means before puberty, after having some lessons of teaching the language to her, the results of training her were more successful, as she had not reached the critical age period yet and she had some time to improve her abilities in language learning. Although there was a strong proof of CPH according to conducted researches, some skeptical ideas about the existence of CPH still remain, as a number of studies provided by language scientists proved that along with age factor, it is significant to mention that sociological, psychological and physiological factors are also pivotal in SLA (Andy Shouten ).

### ***Conclusion and further implications***

According to collection of data, I believed that, the hypothesis of Lenneberg and Newport and Johnson about the existence of CPH can be supported and proved by the individuals. As it can really be very difficult to learner to acquire a new language after puberty, as Lenneberg claims according to some neurobiological changes, only one hemisphere will be responsible for language acquisition during this period. However, after the research I understood that CPH is not the only barrier to acquire new language successfully. The learner who began learning the SL after puberty maybe could not achieve good results in pronunciation, but best results in gaining the knowledge in grammar of SLA due to their critical thinking ability.

Overall, I understood that, learning a foreign language before puberty is more beneficial for the learners who is eager to learn new languages. However, after critical age it can be only successful in some branches of language such as in grammar, even in this case it cannot always be in a high level.

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