## O'ZBEKISTON RESPUBLIKASI FANLAR AKADEMIYASI MINTAQAVIY BO'LIMI XORAZM MA'MUN AKADEMIYASI

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- Recommendations derived from the analysis include:
- Implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives to address social inequalities.
- Enhancing faculty training programs to promote culturally responsive teaching practices.
- Improving communication channels and stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes.

*Implications for Practice and Policy:* 

- The analysis and results provide valuable insights for HEI administrators, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to enhance the quality and equity of higher education. By prioritizing sociopedagogical considerations and fostering collaborative leadership, institutions can create more inclusive and effective learning environments.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, the analysis and results contribute to a deeper understanding of the socio-pedagogical dimensions of higher education quality and highlight actionable strategies for improvement. Solving the quality of education and the management system of higher education institutions as socio-pedagogical tasks is important for promoting academic excellence, and social development and creating equal opportunities for all students. By prioritizing these aspects, educational institutions can better fulfill their mission of preparing students to meet the demands of a dynamic and rapidly changing world are integral components of the ecosystem. Understanding and solving this socio-pedagogical problem is necessary to ensure that higher education institutions adapt, develop, and continue to provide high-quality education that meets the needs of students and society in the 21st century.

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# CORRELATIONS BETWEEN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING APTITUDE AND LEARNERS' AGE: A FOCUS ON ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola yosh va ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganish qobiliyati o'rtasidagi bog'liqlikni o'rganadi va uchta alohida yosh guruhiga qaratiladi: yosh o'quvchilar (5-12 yosh), o'smir o'quvchilar (13-18 yosh) va kattalar o'quvchilari (18 yosh). va yuqorida). Kognitiv rivojlanish, motivatsiya, o'rganish strategiyalari va har bir guruhga xos bo'lgan muammolarni o'rganib chiqib, maqola yoshning tilni o'zlashtirishga qanday ta'sir qilishini har tomonlama tahlil qiladi. Yosh o'quvchilar yuqori kognitiv moslashuvchanlik va tabiiy talaffuz qobiliyatlaridan foydalanadilar, o'smirlar esa rivojlangan tanqidiy fikrlash va ijtimoiy motivatsiyadan foydalanadilar. Voyaga etgan o'quvchilar, miya plastikligi va tashqi mas'uliyatning pasayishiga qaramay, ichki motivatsiya va samarali o'rganish strategiyalari orqali yuqori malakaga erishishlari mumkin. Qiyosiy grafik yosh guruhlari bo'yicha til o'rganish qobiliyatining umumiy tendentsiyasini ko'rsatadi. Natijalar tilni o'qitish natijalarini optimallashtirish uchun har bir yosh guruhining kognitiv va emotsional ehtiyojlariga moslashish muhimligini ta'kidlaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: tilni o'zlashtirish, chet tilini o'rganish, yosh va o'rganish, kognitiv rivojlanish, yosh o'quvchilar, o'smirlar, kattalar o'quvchilari, tilga moyillik, o'rganish strategiyalari.

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Аннотация. В этой статье исследуется взаимосвязь между возрастом и способностями к изучению английского языка как иностранного с акцентом на три отдельные возрастные группы: молодые ученики (5–12 лет), подростки (13–18 лет) и взрослые ученики (18 лет). и выше). Изучая когнитивное развитие, мотивацию, стратегии обучения и проблемы, уникальные для каждой группы, статья предоставляет всесторонний анализ того, как возраст влияет на овладение языком. Юные учащиеся получают выгоду от высокой когнитивной гибкости и естественных способностей к произношению, а подростки используют улучшенное критическое мышление и социальную мотивацию. Взрослые учащиеся, несмотря на снижение пластичности мозга и внешние обязанности, могут достичь высокого уровня знаний благодаря внутренней мотивации и эффективным стратегиям обучения. Сравнительный график иллюстрирует общую тенденцию способности к изучению языка в разных возрастных группах. Результаты подчеркивают важность адаптации языкового обучения к когнитивным и эмоциональным потребностям каждой возрастной группы для оптимизации результатов языкового образования.

**Ключевые слова:** овладение языком, изучение иностранного языка, возраст и обучение, когнитивное развитие, учащиеся младшего возраста, учащиеся-подростки, взрослые учащиеся, языковые способности, стратегии обучения

Abstract. This article explores the correlation between age and aptitude for learning English as a foreign language, focusing on three distinct age groups: young learners (ages 5-12), adolescent learners (ages 13-18), and adult learners (ages 18 and above). By examining cognitive development, motivation, learning strategies, and challenges unique to each group, the article provides a comprehensive analysis of how age impacts language acquisition. Young learners benefit from high cognitive flexibility and natural pronunciation abilities, while adolescents leverage enhanced critical thinking and social motivation. Adult learners, despite facing reduced brain plasticity and external responsibilities, can achieve high proficiency through intrinsic motivation and effective learning strategies. A comparative graph illustrates the general trend of language learning aptitude across age groups. The findings underscore the importance of tailoring language instruction to the cognitive and emotional needs of each age group to optimize language education outcomes.

**Keywords:** language acquisition, foreign language learning, age and learning, cognitive development, young learners, adolescent learners, adult learners, language aptitude, learning strategies.

#### Introduction

Learning a foreign language, especially English, is undeniably critical to anyone who wants to become successful in present-day world. The proficiency in English opens doors to numerous educational and professional opportunities. However, the aptitude for learning English as a foreign language (EFL) can vary significantly depending on the age of the learners. This article explores the correlation between foreign language learning aptitude and learners' age, specifically focusing on three distinct age groups: young learners, adolescent learners, and adult learners. Through an in-depth analysis, we aim to understand how age impacts the ability to acquire a new language and the unique advantages and challenges each age group faces.

#### 1. Young Learners

Quite unique and remarkable in their learning profiles and cognitive features, young learners of foreign languages share a number of peculiarities and need certain strategies on the part of the teacher, which are explained below.

#### Cognitive Flexibility and Language Acquisition

Young learners, typically defined as children between the ages of 5 and 12, exhibit remarkable cognitive flexibility, which plays a crucial role in language acquisition. This period, often referred to as the "critical period", is characterized by a heightened sensitivity to linguistic input and a natural propensity for absorbing new languages. According to Lenneberg's critical period hypothesis, the ability to acquire language naturally diminishes after puberty. Young learners benefit from a brain that is highly plastic, meaning they can form and reinforce new neural connections more easily than older individuals.

#### Pronunciation and Accent

One of the most significant advantages young learners have is their ability to achieve nearnative pronunciation and accent. Studies have shown that children are more adept at mimicking sounds and intonation patterns of a foreign language, which can lead to more native-like speech. This capability is attributed to their still-developing phonological systems, which are more adaptable than those of older learners. For instance, a young Uzbek learner of English is likely to be more successful in mastering consonant clusters – a phonetic feature not typical of Uzbek – than a learner of an older age.

#### Recommended Learning Environment and Methods

In addition to cognitive advantages, the learning environment and methods employed for young learners are often more conducive to language acquisition. Play-based learning, songs, stories, and interactive activities are commonly used to engage children in the language learning process. These methods align with their natural learning style and make the process enjoyable, which can enhance motivation and retention. Thus, a teacher needs to create an environment in which learning would be integrated into the environment familiar to and enjoyed by children to create better conditions for their foreign-language acquisition.

#### **Challenges**

Despite the aforementioned advantages, young learners face certain challenges. Their cognitive abilities are still developing, which means they may struggle with abstract concepts and complex grammar rules. Additionally, the lack of immediate practical application for the language can result in lower motivation over time if not properly addressed. Educators suggest careful "chunking" of study time to ensure maximum learner concentration and allowing more hands-on experience to deal with abstract and complex ideas.

#### 2. Adolescent Learners

The learners who are on the transition stage from childhood to adulthood have noticeably evolved in their mental development and motivation. This requires a different action plan for their foreign language teachers.

#### Cognitive Development and Critical Thinking

Adolescents, typically between the ages of 13 and 18, occupy a unique position in the language learning spectrum. During this stage, individuals experience significant cognitive development, characterized by enhanced critical thinking and analytical abilities. These cognitive changes can be advantageous for learning a foreign language, particularly in understanding and applying complex grammatical structures and vocabulary. A foreign language teacher needs to address this specific feature by carefully selecting the input as it is likely to be absorbed and remembered quite quickly and may form faulty concepts in case of being inappropriate and under- or overemphasized.

#### Motivation and Social Factors

Motivation plays a crucial role in language learning for adolescents. At this age, learners often have clearer goals and motivations for acquiring a foreign language, such as academic achievement, social integration, or future career prospects. Social factors, including peer influence and the desire for social acceptance, can also drive adolescents to achieve proficiency in English. However, it should be noted that immediate rewards are also quite influential on keeping a high level of motivation and therefore shouldn't be neglected by the teachers.

#### Learning Strategies

Adolescent learners tend to employ more sophisticated learning strategies compared to younger children. They can benefit from explicit instruction, grammar drills, and structured learning environments. Additionally, they are capable of abstract thinking, which allows them to grasp idiomatic expressions, cultural nuances, and advanced linguistic concepts more effectively. They are also more capable of self-study, which suggests that the teacher can give them a greater load of homework and expect its completion with quite high learning outcomes.

#### Challenges

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Given all the positive features above, teaching adolescents can sometimes be not an easy task to do. The onset of puberty can bring about emotional and psychological changes that may affect their learning process. Adolescents might experience increased self-consciousness, which can inhibit speaking practice and lead to anxiety about making mistakes. Moreover, they are often juggling multiple academic and social responsibilities, which can limit the time and energy they can dedicate to language learning. To address these challenges, a teacher needs to take individual approach and consider the individual cases of the learners of this age group.

#### 3. Adult Learners

Of the three groups examined in this article, adult learners manifest the highest preference of meaningful, logical and consistent explanation; the ability to deal with complex concepts and need to be intellectually challenged in the course of learning a foreign language. They also possess a high degree of motivation. These features are elaborated on below.

#### **Experience and Cognitive Resources**

Adult learners, those over the age of 18, bring a wealth of life experience and cognitive resources to the language learning process. Their advanced cognitive abilities allow for efficient use of learning strategies, such as mnemonic devices, metacognitive strategies, and contextual learning. Adults are often more adept at self-regulation and can set realistic goals and monitor their progress effectively.

#### **Intrinsic Motivation**

One of the key strengths of adult learners is their intrinsic motivation. Adults often learn a foreign language for specific, practical reasons, such as career advancement, travel, or personal fulfillment. This clear sense of purpose can drive persistent and dedicated effort, leading to successful language acquisition. It is quite remarkable that, oftentimes, adult learners of English as a foreign language are ready to struggle with very challenging, and seemingly demotivating, tasks given by the teacher quite willingly. This is explained by their interest in English for its own sake and has the teacher invest less effort in making every minute of the lesson interesting.

#### Challenges

Despite these advantages, adult learners face significant challenges. The most notable is the decreased plasticity of the brain, which makes it harder to acquire new phonological systems and achieve native-like pronunciation. Additionally, adults may have ingrained language habits and cognitive patterns that can interfere with learning a new language. The complexity of adult life, with work, family, and other responsibilities, can also limit the time available for consistent language practice.

To mitigate these challenges, adult learners can benefit from tailored instructional methods that leverage their cognitive strengths. Immersive experiences, practical application, and the use of technology (e.g., language learning apps) can enhance their learning process. Furthermore, recognizing and addressing affective factors, such as anxiety and lack of confidence, is crucial for adult language learners. In such context, creating a non-threatening learning atmosphere becomes an important factor in achieving success when teaching English to adult learners.

#### 4. Comparative Analysis and Graphical Representation

To better understand the correlation between age and language learning aptitude, we can visualize the aptitude levels across different age groups with a graph. This graph will illustrate the general trend of how language learning aptitude changes with age. The aptitude range is presented on a conventional 1-100 scale.

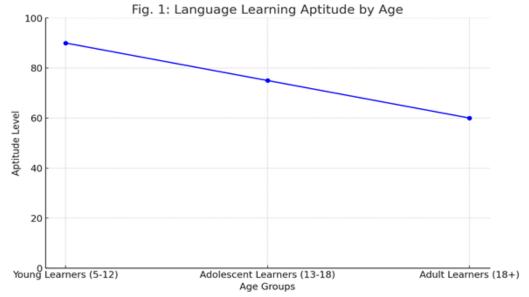


Figure 1 demonstrates a high aptitude for young learners, with a peak during early childhood. As learners transition into adolescence, the aptitude slightly decreases but remains relatively high due to cognitive development and social factors. For adult learners, the aptitude further decreases, reflecting the challenges associated with reduced brain plasticity and external responsibilities. However, the graph also highlights the potential for high aptitude in adults who possess strong intrinsic motivation and effective learning strategies.

Obviously, the graph is not precise as it is not based on specific numerical calculations. However, it reflects the author's personal experience of teaching English to the representatives of the three age groups.

#### Conclusion

The aptitude for learning English as a foreign language varies significantly across different age groups, each with its unique advantages and challenges. Young learners benefit from cognitive flexibility and natural pronunciation skills, making early childhood an optimal period for language acquisition. Adolescents leverage their cognitive development and social motivations, which facilitate the learning process despite emotional and psychological challenges. Adult learners, while facing the most significant challenges due to decreased brain plasticity and external responsibilities, can still achieve high proficiency through intrinsic motivation and effective learning strategies.

The aptitude for learning English as a foreign language varies significantly across different age groups, each with its unique advantages and challenges. Young learners benefit from cognitive flexibility and natural pronunciation skills, making early childhood an optimal period for language acquisition. Adolescents leverage their cognitive development and social motivations, which facilitate the learning process despite emotional and psychological challenges. Adult learners, while facing the most significant challenges due to decreased brain plasticity and external responsibilities, can still achieve high proficiency through intrinsic motivation and effective learning strategies.

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