

Age and Second Language Acquisition

The Critical Period Hypothesis (Eric Lenneberg (1967))

Lenneberg stated that:

L2 is best learned between age 2 and puberty

Ability to learn language is negatively affected by the completion of process of lateralization

Age and Second Language Acquisition

- Critical Period Hypothesis
 - Lateralization is when each side of the brain develops its own specialized functions
 - Young learners use the same part of the brain for learning both languages
 - Older learners use different parts of the brain

Age and Second Language Acquisition

- Lenneberg stated that
 - Lateralization is completed by puberty
 - Therefore, an L2 should be learned between age 2 and puberty (according to Lenneberg)
- More recent research has indicated that lateralization actually is completed by age 5

Age and Second Language Acquisition

Therefore, young learners (before age 5) are actually native speakers of both languages

They learn both L1 and L2 the way a native speaker does

J. Lessow-Hurley. (2005). The foundations of dual language instruction.

Age and Second Language Acquisition

- Advantages to being a younger learner
 - More likely to develop a native-like accent
 - Less to learn to be considered proficient
 - More likely to receive comprehensible input

Age and Second Language Acquisition

- Advantages to being an older learner
 - Can consciously use strategies to aid learning
 - Has knowledge from L1 to draw from
 - Has greater control over input