

THE CRITICAL PERIOD HYPOTHESIS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Annotation. This article discusses about critical period hypothesis in second language acquisition. The factor of age and Critical Period Hypothesis have long been disputable issues in language teaching and linguistics. The first language acquisition is obtained during the certain period after birth until one reaches puberty.

Key words: approach, technique, method, teaching skills, audience, elements of language teaching, critical period hypothesis, objectives, syllabus, criteria, linguistic and subject matter, separate methods, definable methods, discrete methods, pre-programmed materials, methodology.

When we connect the theory with the second language acquisition, it becomes even more arguable. It was believed that language acquisition can be more difficult and rarely perfect after the certain age, while later researches do not opine to this idea, but defines that hypothesis is related to only for one's mother tongue. Learning trajectories of younger and older learners are different. Older learners learn the language explicitly; therefore, their learning is faster than younger ones' acquisition. However, older learners meets with the fossilization, which hinders them to develop. It is vitally important to compare and contrast the meaning and form of the phrases such as "language learning" and "language acquisition", "critical period" and "non-critical period", "second language" and "foreign language" in order to investigate the issue and find appropriate evidences. The study on this issue began in 1967, when Lenneberg conducted research on the child's developmental language learning by connecting this process with developmental biology. As "the father" of the Critical Period Hypothesis was Lenneberg, it is apparent to begin the review with his ideas. Lenneberg defined

human being as “biological species” and focused on six main characteristics of language to connect these two issues. Those qualities include presence of language behavior in all cultures, its connection to the age, unique acquisition system for every child, having permanent operating system. The scholar’s main concern was child’s developmental stages of language acquisition by focusing mostly on biological aspects. Language development of a child is relatively more connected with motor milestones than age. As soon as the child achieves motor development, language milestones start to appear. The nature of the language is an important tool to analyze child’s acquisition. Many of the well-known scholars argue that the absence of speech in animal world is only due to their anatomical structure. However, Lenneberg connects this issue with discourse understanding of human being, as he noted, “understanding involves seeing the basis on which objects are categorized, thus enabling a child to name an object correctly that has never seen before”. Since Lenneberg linked language acquisition with biological aspects, he defined critical period for language acquisition focusing on this issue. The left part of the brain takes the dominant role for operating language functions. If this part is disturbed in early childhood, the other part of the brain becomes capable for the language. However, if this disturbance happens after critical age, language processing is lost. According to the research, there are some changes in the adolescence period in neurological system of the brain, which influence on natural tendency to acquire language. As a result, the mature brain causes termination of regulations, which makes language acquisition more complicated process.

Reference

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