

“Age” effects on second language acquisition

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A consistent finding of L2 research is that early learners (age of arrival: 2-10 years) demonstrate greater L2 proficiency than late learners (AOA 15-23 years). Such effects might arise from neural maturation, cognitive changes, differences how L1-L2 systems interact, or input differences. No one hypothesis can account for all the data, suggesting that age effects arise from multiple factors that co-vary with age in ways not yet understood. Until potential causal variables are examined directly and confounded variables have been controlled, we can only speculate about the true bases for age-related differences in L2 proficiency.