

THE BEST AGE STAGE TO LEARN ENGLISH FOR NON-NATIVE PEOPLE

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Abstract. *Age stages are really essential to learn English for non-native people. If non-native people have enough knowledge and information about age stages, they will study English perfectly. Because every age stage has benefits to learn English pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary. The aim of this article is to explore various age groups and which age stage is the best to learn English for non-native individuals. Also, we will discuss the benefits of early learning of English for non-native people. In the following paragraphs, we will share our knowledge and collected research studies about this topic.*

Keywords: *age stages, childhood, youth, maturity, old age, early English education, benefits of early English education.*

INTRODUCTION.

In this article, we divide English learning into four different age periods: Childhood (below 15 years), Youth (15–25 years), Maturity (25–45 years), and Old age (over 45 years). Advantages of every age stage during learning English as a second language will be examined. Non-native people learn English differently according to their age. Especially, kids can learn English easily and quickly compared to other age groups.

Childhood (below 15 years)

Many Uzbek students come across pronunciation problems because they start learning English late. Therefore, they cannot pronounce like native speakers even after long years of study. It is better if non-native people start learning English early. According to Soatova G.K.:

“Perfect pronunciation. Young children have an amazing ability to learn foreign languages without an accent. This ability usually declines with age, especially after 10–12 years of age. Children are more likely to pick up the same accent as foreign native speakers. Children learn by observing other people, so they quickly begin to imitate those around them, including the way they speak.” (Soatova G.K., 2023) Also, Ghasemi and Hashemi said:

“Young children can acquire native-like fluency as easily as they learned to walk. Where adults have to work through an established first-language system, studying explicit grammar rules and practicing rote drills, the young kids learn naturally, absorbing the sounds, structures, intonation patterns and rules of a foreign language intuitively, as they did their mother tongue. The young brain is inherently flexible, uniquely hard-wired to acquire language naturally.” (Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011, p. 875)

Youth (15–25 years)

Youth can understand English rules easily and learn English in comparison to their native language. Carmen Muñoz said: “The best age is younger adulthood if the learning conditions capitalize on young adults’ superior cognitive maturity and they can use the strategies they will have previously acquired as (language) learners. This age group may be the most efficient group in instructed settings, achieving comparable levels of proficiency to younger learners in a much shorter time. They may outperform younger groups in learning autonomy and self-regulation and may search and benefit from out-of-class learning opportunities to a higher

degree. The main challenge for young adults lies in achieving near-native pronunciation and intonation, if this is seen as a desirable goal, because of the stronger entrenchment of their first language.” (Carmen Muñoz, 2016, p.1)

Maturity (25–45 years)

During maturity, individuals can use their previous experiences to learn English or other foreign languages. For example: “In fact, older adults have some advantages over children in studying and learning a foreign language. According to the International Center for Language Studies, ‘With many learning experiences under their belts, older adults have usually developed a good understanding of how they learn best and can put this knowledge at the service of their language learning experience.’” (Meadow Ridge, 2025)

Old Age (over 45 years)

“For older adults, learning a language may bring benefits in terms of delayed cognitive declines and it may be a fulfilling lifelong-learning experience.” (Carmen Muñoz, 2016, p.1) The best benefit is time. Elderly people have more time compared to other age groups. “The best age is older adulthood if learners have a lot of time and a positive predisposition to engage in individual work and in seeking opportunities for practice.” (Carmen Muñoz, 2016, p.1)

New research is disproving the myth that learning a new language in old age is extremely difficult or impossible. Learning a new language can stimulate cognitive activity, helping slow down age-related brain changes.

Fact: A study from the University of Edinburgh found that people who began learning a second language after age 60 showed improvements in a range of cognitive functions compared to their monolingual peers.

Although age periods help ease learning, it depends on the person. Every individual can learn fast or well not only in youth but also later in life if they work hard. Age periods are one factor that can accelerate learning. Learning foreign languages is easier for kids, so it is better to start teaching a second language from birth, i.e., parents can start teaching a second language in addition to the mother tongue.

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