

Re: Why can't daddy?

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Ruud Harmsen wrote:

Wed, 10 May 2006 15:14:55 +0800: Lee Sau Dan
<danlee@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>: in sci.lang:

Based on these guesstimations, a child learning a language over 3 years spends 50% more time than an adult taking an intensive course for 10 years.

I believe any adult taking an intensive course of a second language X for 10 years will be more fluent in a language than any 3 year-old child who speaks language X natively. In addition, the adult should be literate by that time, whereas the 3-year-old still needs to learn to read.

But still, there are differences. Two examples, in the Netherlands: Ayaan Hirsi Ali (from Somalia) and Afshin Ellian (from Iran). Both speak Dutch very very well, choice of words, syntax, pronunciation, it's all near perfect, you can see they made a tremendous amount of effort to perfectionate it. Yet you immediately hear they weren't born here, and after listening long enough you'll hear them make slight errors that no native speaker would ever made.

Another example: Martin Simek (hacek on the S): he knows the language so well he made it his main occupation to do one-hour weekly talk shows on the radio (earlier on also TV), partly unprepared. But he doesn't get the Dutch /y/ and /2/ quite right (rounded but too front), and sometimes still has trouble with the articles (because his native language Czech doesn't have them).

There is also a Dutch writer who is from China, I forgot her name. Here too: her command is perfect, but it still is not native.

My own experience with it is, that there are people with very good perception of sound(?) able to learn also not natively known sounds and language "melodies" as adults (e.g. artists earning money with speaking or

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singing like famous known people – see the example of the actress whose success depends on language given below).

In my own case it turned out, that I haven't got the time to get my second language pronunciation perfect and it would even not make much sense to try it, as there is no advantage worth the effort and no language course where the course instructor is really capable of teaching adults the right pronunciation and language "melody".

The difference between the adult and the child learning the first language(s) is probably same as in learning to become a champion in a discipline of sport – it is much easier to learn a total new pattern of motion/movement/behavior than change or adopt an already existing and deep "burned in" one.

Claudio

OTOH, we have an actress here, Viktoria Koblenko, who arrived from Ukraine at age 12, never spoke any Dutch before that, and she now (in her early twenties) has NO trace of an accent or any other kind of non-nativeness at all. So the sensible period can extend until that age?

So, aren't adults learning languages more efficiently than infants?

Differently.