

Re: Do children learn language more easily?

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- *From:* "Danny" <dragon@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 6 Dec 2006 05:20:42 -0800
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Aidan Kehoe wrote:

Ar an ceathrú lá de mí na Nollaig, scríobh John Atkinson:

- > > The multiple-explanation theory of critical period effects is not
- > > necessarily incorrect, but it's certainly not very Occam-friendly.
- >
- > It appears that it's not a matter of a single switch being switched off all
- > at once at age 5, or 10, or whatever. The language-learning device requires
- > input of the right kind right from the start, and starts gradually
- > switching off even before age 1 if it doesn't get it.

It would be interesting in that context to see if people who are constantly learning new languages by immersion from childhood, beyond the age of 10 or so, are as successful in their language learning as children are.

Excuse me butting in (I've been lurking on this group since the Arabic text discussion). Just a quick thought that has occurred to me reading this thread: no one seems to have made any distinction between learning grammar and learning vocabulary, and yet that seems pretty fundamental to the argument at hand: Nathan is talking about the fact that by age 5, children have mastered the grammar, phonology etc of their language, while Aidan is countering by talking about his superior vocabulary and breadth of knowledge (to put it in a nutshell). As far as I can see, they're both right in their own way.

Anyone know of any studies comparing *vocabulary* acquisition at different ages, as opposed to general language skills? Certainly vocabulary was always my stumbling block in learning languages. I wonder, for example, whether the grammar skill starts to switch off around 5, while the vocabulary skill lasts longer.

Just a layman speaking. Withhold yo