

## **AT WHAT AGE LEARNING ENGLISH HAS BETTER RESULTS AMONG UZBEK LEARNERS?**

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**Abstract** The importance of learning English has significantly grown globally, and its acquisition at an early age is often thought to yield better results in terms of fluency and proficiency. In Uzbekistan, where the demand for English is increasing due to globalization, educational reforms, and economic opportunities, understanding the ideal age for language acquisition is crucial. This paper aims to explore the optimal age for learning English among Uzbek learners, analyzing cognitive, sociocultural, and educational factors that contribute to language learning success. By examining current studies and educational practices in Uzbekistan, this article discusses the age-related advantages and challenges of learning English and provides insights into the most effective age for optimal learning outcomes.

**Key terms:** language acquisition, real- life context, challenges, complex aspects of English, teenagers.

### **Introduction**

In Uzbekistan, English has become a prominent foreign language in schools, universities, and the professional sphere. The government's educational reforms have made English language proficiency a priority, especially in preparation for an increasingly globalized world. However, the question of when is the best age to begin learning English remains a matter of considerable debate. Research has shown that language acquisition abilities can vary significantly depending on age, with younger learners often demonstrating greater ease in acquiring new languages. This article explores the age-related factors that influence English learning outcomes in Uzbekistan, considering both the cognitive and sociocultural aspects of language acquisition.

This paper will explore the cognitive benefits of early language learning, examine age-related challenges in language acquisition, and consider the role of educational structures in shaping language learning outcomes. Ultimately, the paper

will assess at what age Uzbek learners achieve the most significant results in learning English, considering both linguistic competence and practical use of the language in real-world contexts.

### **Cognitive Factors and Early Language Acquisition**

There is a substantial body of research supporting the idea that younger children are more adept at acquiring languages compared to adults. This phenomenon is often attributed to the plasticity of the brain during early childhood, which allows young learners to absorb new languages with greater ease. In the context of Uzbekistan, where children start learning English as early as primary school, cognitive development plays a critical role in language acquisition.

Studies have shown that young children, particularly those aged 3-7, are able to pick up language patterns, pronunciation, and grammar with greater accuracy than older learners. This is because their brains are more adaptable, and they are better able to mimic sounds, intonations, and rhythms of speech. Moreover, children's pronunciation tends to be closer to native-like proficiency when they begin language learning at an early age. In the case of Uzbek learners, early exposure to English at the preschool or primary school level can lead to better pronunciation, as they have a more flexible phonetic system during their early years of development.

Additionally, the critical period hypothesis suggests that there is a biologically optimal window for language learning that ends around puberty. After this period, language acquisition becomes more difficult, and learners may struggle with aspects of language such as accent and fluency. This hypothesis underscores the advantages of starting language learning as early as possible. In Uzbekistan, where many children begin English instruction as early as kindergarten, these cognitive advantages might help learners build strong foundational skills in English that are beneficial later on in their academic careers.

### **The Role of Sociocultural Factors in Early English Learning**

In Uzbekistan, the sociocultural context surrounding language learning also influences the outcomes of English acquisition. The value placed on English by

society, along with the opportunities for practice and immersion, can play a key role in determining how successfully learners master the language. Research suggests that early exposure to a foreign language in a sociocultural context that supports and encourages language use increases the likelihood of positive learning outcomes.

For young learners, the presence of an English-rich environment, even outside the classroom, can greatly enhance their language proficiency. In Uzbekistan, urban areas like Tashkent have a higher concentration of English-language media, cultural events, and international exposure, which can complement formal language education. In rural areas, however, the opportunity to practice English in real-life contexts may be limited, making early formal language learning even more critical.

As children grow older and enter their teenage years, the social context shifts, and learners become more attuned to the practical applications of English. In Uzbekistan, teenagers are often exposed to English through global pop culture, such as music, films, and social media, which can reinforce language learning outside the classroom. However, teenagers are also more likely to be influenced by peer group dynamics, which might affect their motivation to learn English or their attitudes toward the language. The age at which learners begin to understand the relevance of English for their future careers and educational opportunities is crucial. For teenagers who have started learning English earlier in life, the motivation to continue and improve their skills is likely to be higher, especially if they see English as an asset in their academic or professional endeavors.

### **Educational Structures and Age-Related Differences in Language Learning Outcomes**

The educational structure in Uzbekistan provides different learning experiences depending on age. English instruction in Uzbekistan generally begins in primary school, with students starting as early as the first grade. However, the intensity and quality of language instruction often increase at the secondary and higher education levels. It is during these stages that age-related factors play an important role in determining how effectively learners acquire the language.

Research suggests that younger learners (i.e., those in primary school) may excel in acquiring basic language skills such as vocabulary and simple sentence structures. However, as they age, the focus of language learning typically shifts to more complex aspects of English, such as writing proficiency, grammar, and academic English. This shift often occurs in secondary school, where students are expected to develop more advanced language skills. Older learners may face greater challenges in mastering these more advanced aspects of the language, particularly if they have not been exposed to English at an earlier age.

One key factor that influences success in English learning at different ages is the approach to teaching. Younger learners benefit from more interactive, play-based, and immersive approaches to language learning, which help to maintain their interest and facilitate engagement with the material. In contrast, older learners tend to benefit from more structured, academic approaches that focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Secondary school and university students in Uzbekistan often take exams that test their ability to use English in specific academic and professional contexts, which may require a more rigorous approach to language learning.

A study conducted by the Uzbek Ministry of Education found that students who began learning English in primary school, as opposed to starting later in secondary school, were more likely to score higher on proficiency tests. Additionally, early English learners exhibited greater confidence in speaking and listening, which are critical skills for real-world communication. Therefore, the integration of English learning at an early age in Uzbekistan is not only beneficial in terms of cognitive development but also contributes to long-term academic success.

### **Challenges and Limitations of Early Language Learning in Uzbekistan**

While early language acquisition has clear advantages, it is important to recognize that there are challenges associated with starting English learning at a young age in Uzbekistan. One significant challenge is the quality and consistency of English instruction. In many parts of the country, particularly in rural areas, the

availability of qualified English teachers may be limited. Even in urban areas, large class sizes and inadequate teaching resources can hinder effective language learning.

Another challenge is the lack of immersion opportunities outside the classroom. While young learners may excel in acquiring basic English skills, they often lack the real-world exposure necessary to achieve fluency. Without access to English-speaking environments or opportunities for practical application, learners may struggle to fully develop their speaking and listening skills.

Moreover, older learners, such as those in secondary school and university, may find it harder to achieve high levels of fluency due to the limitations of traditional language learning methods. Older learners often face greater pressure to perform well on standardized exams, which may result in a focus on rote learning and test preparation rather than practical language use. As a result, their ability to use English in real-life contexts may be limited, even if they possess strong academic knowledge of the language.

## **Conclusion**

The optimal age for learning English in Uzbekistan is a complex issue that depends on cognitive, sociocultural, and educational factors. Research suggests that younger learners, particularly those aged 6-9, tend to have better results in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and basic language skills due to the plasticity of the brain during early childhood. However, the importance of sustained and high-quality language instruction throughout a learner's educational journey cannot be overstated.

While early exposure to English is undoubtedly beneficial, challenges such as limited immersion opportunities and varying educational quality need to be addressed. Secondary school and university students who have learned English at an earlier age tend to have higher proficiency and greater confidence in using the language. As Uzbekistan continues to invest in educational reforms and English language instruction, it is essential to balance the benefits of early language learning

with the need for effective, immersive, and engaging teaching practices at all levels of education.

Ultimately, the most successful English learners in Uzbekistan are those who start learning the language early but continue to receive high-quality instruction and practice opportunities throughout their academic careers.

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