

~table of contents~

[Linguistics](#), [Language Acquisition](#)



~Table of Contents~	No.	Content	Page(s)	1.	Article
background/Bibliographic information	3	2.	Introduction	4 — 6	3.
Summary	7 - 8	4.	Critique	9 - 12	5.
References	16 - 17	Article Background	Author: Andy Schouten	Title of the article: The Critical Period Hypothesis: Support, Challenge and	
Reconceptualization	Name of journal: The Critical Period Hypothesis				
Date/year of publication: 2009	General introduction of the article	What is the article about?	It is generally agreed that learning a language is easier for younger than older people, where the measure of success is ultimate achievement. This created the mystery of whether or not there is some type of critical or sensitive period for language learning. Casual observers and scholars noticed that children have advantage over adult in acquiring language before reaching a certain age which believed to be around puberty. According to Lenneberg(1967), he rely that there's a structural reorganization within the brain during puberty and unlearned language will remain undeveloped. Lenneberg even hypothesized that language learned outside this critical period would be abnormal or insufficient. It's hard to confirm whether the hypothesis is working everyone are exposed to enough stimuli during childhood, which allow the development of the first language. Many learners failed to acquire proficiency in learning their second language after puberty, with this, many people believe that an adult learner is destined to incomplete mastery. In some exceptional case, several researches have hypothesized that, although rare, nativelike proficiency in a second language is in fact possible for adult learners , which lead to the weak version of Critical Period Hypothesis(Krashen, 1975). This hypothesis		

suggested that late learner can compensate their early linguistic exposure by increasing the exposure to the language at a later stage in life. Krashen believe that it is possible for late learner to achieve native like proficiency. Research on both supporting and challenging the CPH have reconceptualized their views regarding a possible critical period for language learning, claiming that in combination with age of exposure, sociological, psychological and physiological factors must also be considered when determining the factors that facilitate and debilitate language acquisition. In this research article, Andy Schouten will further discuss about the division of opinion vis-à-vis the CPH in three stages. Firstly, he will provide a review of the literature which supports the notion that a critical period exists for second language acquisition. Next, he will review studies that put forward a variety of data which challenge the validity of the CPH. And last but not least, he will discuss various studies which have provided a basis for reconceptualization of the CPH so as to address some of its perceived weaknesses. Is information contained in the article relevant? Yes, it is applicable because through this journal, it brings out the main points that occur in CPH which can lead us in getting better insight on the critical period hypothesis. Moreover, the topics that discussed in this journal are related and contiguous to the main topic, CPH. In this research article, researchers try their best to restructure the experiments by changing their parameters whether to prove that native like post-pubertal secondary language is highly possible or not. In the last section, reconceptualization of the CPH, rather than proving CPH is wrong, scholars reconceptualising how CPH is defined, which means post-pubertal second language acquisition is possible with

conditions. This is due to the existence of grey area in some cases.

Background information The Critical Period Hypothesis was first proposed by Montreal neurologist Wilder Penfield and co-author Lamar Roberts in a 1959 paper *Speech and Brain Mechanisms*, and was popularized by Eric Lenneberg in 1967 with *Biological Foundations of Language*. Linguist Eric Lenneberg stated that the crucial period of language acquisition ends sometime around puberty. He claimed that if no language is learned before then, it could never be learned in a normal and fully functional sense. This was called the "critical period hypothesis." An interesting example of this is the case of Genie, also known as "The Wild Child". A thirteen-year-old victim of lifelong child abuse, Genie was discovered in her home on November 4th, 1970, strapped to a potty chair and wearing diapers. She appeared to be entirely without language. Her father had judged her retarded at birth and had chosen to isolate her, and so she had remained until her discovery. It was an ideal (albeit horrifying) opportunity to test the theory that a nurturing environment could somehow make up for a total lack of language past the age of 12. She was unable to acquire language completely, although the degree to which she acquired language is disputed. Critics of the "Critical Period Hypothesis" point out that in this example and others like, the child is hardly growing up in a nurturing environment, and that the lack of language acquisition in later life may be due to the results of a generally abusive environment rather than being specifically due to a lack of exposure to language. A more up-to-date view of the Critical Period Hypothesis is represented by the University of Maryland, College Park instructor Robert DeKeyser. DeKeyser argues that although it is true that there is a critical

period, this does not mean that adults cannot learn a second language perfectly, at least on the syntactic level. DeKeyser talks about the role of language aptitude as opposed to the critical period. Summary It is acknowledged that children at a young age are more capable to master their native language as well as other languages. Learning language at ages below the critical period can possibly enable the learner to achieve native-like proficiency in the respective language they learned. After this period has ended, the mechanisms that provide the children this advantage simply vanished. Some research indicated that adult learners have a very hard time to master second language due to their age. In the supporting details of critical period hypothesis, it is mentioned that the human brain is presumably maturing throughout the critical period between infancy and puberty. It is because of the brain has complete the process of maturation; therefore learners could not master the second language after puberty. Data was accumulated to show that different age of people speaks differently. It was as well mentioned that learners will be noticeably foreign in their second language phonological production because they do not acquire structure of the second language which are different from the native language they speak. Only one in a million could master the second language after the learner's puberty. Questions were remained about the critical period hypothesis, although John and Newport (1989) and Thompson (1991) gave strong evidence that was produced in their studies. Experiments were taken to test speakers of English as a second language by using grammatical task, question formation task and an interview task. It was learn that the second language learners first expose to it despite their age, were to achieve near-

native levels of competence, in terms of their accuracy and speed, it was far better than the native speakers. It is because of the result that learners are able to achieve second language after puberty; doubts were raised to Johnson and Newport's (1989) results. Many native-like subjects among the native Spanish speakers were found by Birdsong and Molis whereas Johnson and Newport's study found none among their Chinese and Korean speakers, therefore Johnson and Newport's data is not a strong support for the existence of a critical period. Dekeyser (2000) on the other hand disagrees that human beings have both language-specific mechanisms of implicit learning as well as explicit learning. If it is the loss of implicit that made a success in acquiring a language as an adult, a general mechanism of learning must be the compensating of it. He argues that only learners with high verbal ability will only master a second language. Moyer (1999) challenges conventional thinking by suggesting that it is overly simplistic and insufficient by using age effects as an explanation for the ultimate in a second language but it should be considered in combining the non-biological difference that arise as learner matures. Eubank and Gregg's (1999) reconceptualization of the critical period hypothesis are the means and methods which are used to measure ultimate attainment and not the critical period hypothesis itself must be reevaluated. They also contend that the mild discrepancies between behavioral and neurophysiologic data support the notion that an adult learner may be able to attain competence that is indistinguishable from a native speaker. It is agreed to many that adult learner's exposure to second language is a failure to attain native-like competence. Between the function of age and maturation, it is much more to

debate on as there are no precise answers to it. Critique There are a few positive and negative points that were identified in this article. For the negative points first, some areas of his article were hard to understand due to the sentence structure or usage of words. The sentence structure that he used was very long. It seems that the longer the sentence it is, the harder it is for people to understand his work. In the article's introduction, it appears that most of his sentence structures are 3 to 4 lines long. By having such long sentences, it is very hard for readers to read, understand and remember every word that he wrote. Readers might in the end forget what the author highlighted in that particular sentence. " Using different types of evidence including data from recovered aphasics, the development of language in the mentally disabled, and the effects of sudden deafness on people of different ages he surmised that due to the structural reorganizations that occur within the brain during puberty, any language skills which were not learned before this restructuring occurs would remain permanently underdeveloped, " (Schouten, 2009). Readers will read till the end of the sentence and highlight the word " permanently underdeveloped". Readers will think what is it that is " permanently underdeveloped"? Hence, readers will need to reread the sentence to understand what the author is trying to let them know. By reading through the Support of Critical Period Hypothesis, it clearly mentioned about how John and Newport (1989) supports the Critical Period Hypothesis but having a sentence too long might confuse the readers. " In fact, although Thompson's study examined several other variables to determine their influence on mastery of native-like pronunciation (e. g., sex, education in English, use of English at home and

with friends, pro-American orientation, among several others), she concluded that because of the extremely strong correlation between age of arrival and a subject's ultimate attainment in pronunciation, relatively little could be drawn from an analysis of the other independent variables, " (Schouten, 2009). The author should not have mentioned about what Thompson had examined, should instead just mention straight to the point. Moving on to the Challenges to the Critical Period Hypothesis, the author mentioned about the results of White and Genesee's (1996) study. " Not only did several subjects demonstrate an ability to achieve near-native levels of competence despite their age of first exposure taking place after the purported critical period, but White and Genesee also found that ' the performance of [these] near-native subjects on the grammaticality judgment task, both in terms of their accuracy and their speed, was indistinguishable from that of the native speakers, as was their performance on the written production task' (p. 258), " (Schouten, 2009). The author should have given out a table of what did the several subjects demonstrate their ability. Other than that, the author should not use complex word such as " indistinguishable" but instead " unidentified". The usage of words that the author used is highly technical. For example the word " plausible" on the second page of the article means reasonable. It is not a word we use to see or hear on our daily reading and conversation. " Surmises" is used in the Support for the Critical Period Hypothesis on page number four which means " suppose". The author used the word " surmises" clearly states it is a stronger word compares to suppose. In Reconceptualization of the Critical Period Hypothesis part, we found words such as " high verbal aptitude" hard to understand. It means

the high tendency to naturally acquire verbal skills. The entire article was also not justified. Neatness could provide better reading for the readers. It could be seen that the article was leaning slightly to challenging and reconceptualising the Critical Period Hypothesis, rather than supporting it. After reading the article, the information provided in supporting the theory did not seem concrete enough as most of the data was survey results and studies on age groups. The "Challenge" and "Reconceptualization" section of the article however, had more information and stronger citations from various researchers. With citations from Johnson and Newport (1967), Oyama and Patkowski (1980) Scovel (1988), Thompson (1991), Long (1990), White and Genesee (1996), Birdsong and Molis (2001), Bongaerts, van Summeren, Planken, and Schils (1997) and DeKeyser (2000), the author has obtained a rich amount of data to conduct the two sections. Each reference provides strong points to fortify their stand on the relationship between age of maturity and the ultimate attainment of a second language to the extent of native-like speech. For example, we learn that there are many other factors that could affect second language acquisition in relation to the Critical Period Hypothesis, like the relation of implicit and explicit ability in learning a second language as explained by DeKeyser (2000). Sociopsychological variables could also affect the individual to reach native-like proficiency. Moyer (1999) explains that "nonbiological factors such as learner motivation, cultural empathy, desire to sound like a native speaker, and type or amount of input are crucial factors" also affects an individual and not just age. The article could have been better read if there were graphs and charts to show the various data that has been collected from studying and

surveying the various age groups from different countries. Reading the data sometimes could not provide a clear image and it makes the article too lengthy. Hence, reader will find it hard to understand the data that was written in the article. The author also had another point which is Reconceptualization of the Critical Period Hypothesis. " Speech samples were elicited both from these subjects as well as from native speakers of British English, and their samples were subsequently judged by two groups of judges (' experienced judges' who had been either English as a Foreign Language teachers or phoneticians, and ' inexperienced judges' who had not received any training in linguistics or language instruction) on a scale of 1 (definitely nonnative) to 5 (definitely native), " (Schouten, 2009) is the example of having a long sentence in one of the author's points. The sentence could have been shortened by providing a table for the data instead of explaining it in words. On a positive note, the references were cited in APA formatting, along with proper in-text citations. References were clearly shown. The article that we chose does have an abstract included and what we understood from it is that learners can only acquire native-like proficiency at a certain age group but other researchers who did the same study came out with different result. They debated that age itself does not justify that the learner could or could not master a second language. Therefore, they decided to remodel their views about the critical period hypothesis and stress on the fact that there are other factors that could affect the learner in learning and mastering a second language with a native-like proficiency. It is now therefore, pinpointed the main-points about the article and provided a very clear image for the readers. Not only that, the

language used was concrete and concise. The author had a strong understanding of his research and gave a handful of information. The information he provided was one that not many would consider searching for. The author also added footnotes for further explanation and information about the topic which really gives a strong point to the article. It shows credibility as well as reliability in his work and citations. What could be further included would be his personal opinion on the topic of the relationship between maturation of age and the ability to acquire and master a second language. In his conclusion, he ended with a sentence saying that the "importance of age effects on language learning" will be continued to be debated, it does not really show his own point of view on the topic, but more of a general conclusion. Throughout the entire research, we have seen the different point of views of other researchers, be it supporting, challenging or re-conceptualizing. It would give a better impact on the article if the author gave his two cents worth on the title.

Conclusion Summary of article review

After reading this research article, we learned about the role of age and maturation of human being in the acquisition of a second language and how Critical Period Hypothesis is relevant to second language learning. This article is mainly talking about the supports, challenges and reconceptualization of the Critical Period Hypothesis of second language learning. From the research presented, it is generally agreed that learning a language is easier for younger than older people, where the measure of success is ultimate achievement. There are many studies that have tried to explain about this phenomenon. Lenneberg's early studies had aimed at establishing a link between individual's age when they are first exposed to a

second language and their final attainment of the language. From all these studies, some researchers have concluded that to attain native level of proficiency in a second language is virtually impossible after the critical period has closed. Later researches on the same studies with narrower parameters such as non-biological factors, have shown that native like proficiency in a second language is still achievable, even after the effects of maturation has ended. It can be said that although the hypothesis of Critical Period is quite important for human in learning a second language, there are challenges against this notion. Some studies have shown that adults can achieve near native proficiency or achieve native like level even if they are exposed to a second language at their adult stage. The point is that for an adult learner in a second language to overcome the disadvantages of the late exposure and achieve a native-like accent, the essential notion of what can be considered native like performance in a language must first be resolved. In this article, as we have noted, the author has done a rich source of literature reviews to complete this research. However, after finishing the article review, there are some positive and negative points contained in the article that are critical in the understanding of the research findings. For instance, one of the weaknesses in this article is that the sentence structures are too long and readers would forget the main point of what the author is trying to highlight in the end. For a research writing of this highly technical nature, sentence structure should be short and brief. It should be straight to the point and use simple languages so that all readers can understand what the essential messages of the whole article are. Some research studies cited in the author's article are using long sentences, so the readers have to read

until the end of the sentence or reread the sentences again and again to catch the meaning of what the author is trying to say. Other than avoiding the use of long sentences in his article, author could have also avoided the use of complex words that might cause confusion in readers. Whenever necessary, simple words should be used instead to enable readers to understand a highly technical article such as this. The vocabularies used in this article are too complicated. There are some good examples of such complicated words mentioned in this article review. All these are not the daily words that we use or hear on our daily life in the course of reading and conversation. To make it easier for readers to understand, the author could have used these words in simple terms. In addition, the author could have provided more neatness in the article, thereby providing better reading for the readers as well. Furthermore, it was clear that the author was leaning more to the views of challenging and reconceptualising the Critical Period Hypothesis as against supporting it. Not surprisingly, therefore, we found that the information provided in supporting this theory did not seem convincing. It must also be noted that readers would understand better if the author had provided some graphs and tables to present the data collected from studying and surveying the various age groups. Should others read this article? In our point of view, this article is basically legible and people are encourage to read it despite the fact that there are some shortcomings in the writing, for example the used of complex words and the usage of long sentence structures in the author's research. This author inserted a rich amount of references in the literature review so that the readers are able to gain more information from different researchers. Besides, there are also

many additional information and explanation provided throughout the whole research which has given many concrete points and supporting details to the article. The content of this article is readable because before reading through this article, most of the people would only have superficially understanding about the Critical Period Hypothesis. People are generally agreed that learning a second language is easier for younger people than the adults. However, the author has proposed some challenges from many other researches that adults too can learn a foreign language well even though the critical period has passed. For example, students in University are generally about the age of 18 and above and yet they still have to attend foreign language classes and most of them are still capable to master a foreign language well. Many studies have proved that adults are proficient of achieving near native proficiency and some are even able to achieve native like level although they are exposed to a second language after the critical period. All these studies have provided an in-depth understanding of both the learning of a second language or the teaching of a foreign language. Thus, this article has undoubtedly given great contribution in the field of education and therefore should be read by all the people. References Abello, C. (2008). Age and the Critical Period Hypothesis. *ELT Journal*, 170-172. Birdsong, D. (1999). Confused Age: Linguistic and Cognitive Factors in Age Differences for Second Language Acquisition. *Second Language Acquisition and the Critical Period Hypothesis*, 161-179. Chiswick, B. R. (2001). A Test of the Critical Period Hypothesis For Language Learning. *Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 16-26. Cunningham, C. (2007). A Close Investigation of the Critical Period Hypothesis: Other Variables that effect

SLA. The Critical Period Hypothesis, 2-26. Gul, P. (2009). Critical Period Hypothesis for Second Language Acquisition: A Review of the Literature. Critical Period Hypothesis for Second Language Acquisition, 32-45.

Hoefnagel-Hohle, C. E. (1978). The Critical Period for language acquisition: Evidence for second language learning. Research in child development, Vol 49 No 4 1114-1128.

Hurford, J. R. (1991). The evolution of the critical period of language acquisition. The evolution of the critical period of language acquisition, 159-201.

Johnson, J. &. (1989). Critical Period effects in Second Language Learning: The influence of maturational state on the acquisition of english as a second language. Cognitive Psychology, Vol 21, 60-99.

Lenneberg, E. H. (1967). Biological Foundation of language. New York: Wiley, 55-63.

Redmond, S. M. (1992-1993). The Critical Period Hypothesis for language acquisition and its implications for the management of communication disorders. National Student Speech Language Hearing Association , Vol 20, 25-31.

Schouten, A. (2009). Support, Challenge and Reconceptualization. The Critical Period Hypothesis, Vol. 9, No 1.

Steinhauer, A. D. (2001). Evidence challeging the Critical Period Hypothesis. Brain Signatures of Artificial Language Processing, Vol 99, No 1 529-534.

White, L. &. (1996). How native is near-native? The issue of ultimate attainment in adult second language acquisition. Second Language Research, 12, 233-265.