

The Effects of Age of Arrival on the Ultimate Attainment of English as a Second Language

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1. INTRODUCTION

The age factor in second language acquisition has aroused a wide range of discussion especially since researchers have tried to explain maturational constraints in acquiring a new language by the gradual loss of brain plasticity (Lenneberg, 1967). This is called the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), the notion which states language is best learned during the early years of childhood and that after puberty (around age 12) acquisition of a new language becomes progressively more difficult.

Although Lenneberg's main focus seemed to be the development of first language (L1) in the maturation of a normal or brain-damaged child, his claim has been cited frequently by second language (L2) researchers in order to test the existence of age effect in L2 acquisition.

This study examines whether or not there is any age factor existing for L2 acquisition which have effects on the ultimate attainment of both phonology and morphosyntax of the target language as in the acquisition of L1.

2. BACKGROUND STUDIES

2.1 DISTINCTION OF ULTIMATE ATTAINMENT

The general conclusion when we talk about L2 acquisition in terms of its quality difference seems to have been settled in the statement of Krashen, Long, & Scarcella (1979) that makes a distinction between the rate of acquisition (short-term attainment) and the ultimate attainment (long-term attainment) (Long, 1990; Singleton 1989,1995; Scovel, 1988).

- (1) Adults proceed through early stages of syntactic and morphological development faster than children (where time and exposure are held constant).
- (2) Older children acquire faster than younger children in early stages of syntactic and morphological development (where time and exposure are held constant).
- (3) Acquirers who begin natural exposure to second languages during childhood generally achieve higher second language proficiency than those beginning as adults. (Krashen, Long, Scarcella, 1979)

Researchers tried to limit the rate of acquisition advantage of adults and older L2 learners over children in syntax and morphology in generalization (1) and (2), and they only refer to the ultimate attainment advantage of children as 'higher L2 proficiency' in generalization (3). Hence, they were lacking a

sufficient explanation of the quality of children's superiority for L2 ultimate attainment. Questions like how long this "childhood" stage lasts or whether or not this superiority is evident in the morphosyntactic as well as the phonological domain are hard to determine from these vague generalization.

It may be true that older learners initially outperform younger learners in their rate of L2 acquisition. However, younger learners soon catch up and will do better than older learners in the long run. Thus ultimate attainment might be a better criterion than the rate of acquisition for discussing the existence of age effect in L2 acquisition. The amount of time needed for children to overtake adults vary from study to study: Snow (1978) found approximately one year is needed for phonology; Fathman (1975) said from one to three years for phonology.

2.2 AGE AND PHONOLOGY

In a naturalistic L2 acquisition study of immigrants to the United States, Oyama (1982) found an extremely strong case for the age of arrival (AA) effect for paragraph pronunciation. Younger arrivals, before the age of 12, mostly performed in the range of native speaker, whereas those arriving after 12 did not. Accents were also evident in some who arrived earlier than twelve. There was a linear decline in native speaker pronunciation ability with age.

Tahta et. al. (1981) asked 109 immigrants in Great Britain with their AAs ranging between six and 15 years, to read an English text. The ratings for those who came at the age of six were consistently judged to speak with no foreign accent. And there was a strong relation found between AAs and degrees of foreign accent if they came later than age seven (Asher and Garcia, 1969).

After a thorough examination of research findings, Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991:158) conclude that second language phonological attainment is strongly conditioned by learner age. The two main findings are that (a) attainment is inversely related to AA, and (b) a native-like accent is impossible unless the first exposure is quite early, probably around age six.

Bongaerts et al. (1995), having also reviewed recent immigrant studies in naturalistic settings by Thompson (1991) and Flege and Fletcher (1992), suggests:

"A learner appears to have a very good chance of attaining a native accent only if s/he starts learning before the age of six. Between age six and puberty the chances of learning to speak another language without a foreign accent appear to become progressively smaller. After puberty, so the results of the studies surveyed suggest, a native accent seems to be no longer attainable" (Bongaerts et al. 1995:32).

This suggestion that age six is critical for phonology is also supported by research in other areas. Findings as to the completion of the lateralization in the human brain turned out to be much earlier than puberty which was the

initial claim made by Lenneberg. From the studies of dichotic listening tests, it was asserted that lateralization occurred between ages of nine and 11 (Porter and Berlin, 1975), but from reanalysis of aphasia data it was suggested before age five (Krashen, 1973), and even from the age of two was hypothesized (Clark and Clark, 1977). In the studies of phonological acquisition of a second dialect, Payne (1980) found the critical age to be also six to successfully master a second dialect phonology.

One of few studies that proposes counter-argument to the existence of a critical age for L2 phonology is that of Neufeld (1979). Though it was a laboratory study, not naturalistic as were the ones mentioned earlier, it has often been referred to by the critics of L2 age conditioned notion (Ellis, 1985).

But Neufeld's studies underwent heavy criticism (Singleton, 1989; Long 1990) because there were some serious methodological flaws and subjective interpretation of data. Scovel (1988:158) simply regards this study as "a rote repetition task", falling too short of arguing an effect of age in L2 acquisition.

2.3 AGE AND MORPHOSYNTAX

Only a few researchers refer to the existence of age effect for L2 ultimate morphosyntax attainment. Patkowski (1980) claimed that the lexical and syntactic accuracy of the subjects' English was determined by whether or not age of onset (AO) was earlier than the age of 15.

Coppieters (1987) concluded that non-native speakers who started to acquire French only after early childhood could not possess the intuitive competence of French syntax and usage that native speakers of French had acquired.

Thus we assume that there might be an age effect for second language morphosyntax that when learners start to acquire a second language early enough, they will come to have native accuracy and intuitions for morphosyntax of the target language. Johnson and Newport (1989) also suggest that an age advantage is observable for L2 morphosyntax and it should occur before puberty.

Studies evaluating L2 syntax and morphology proficiency often compare younger and older learner's performances directly without considering how they are different from performances of native speakers of the same age (Asher and Price, 1969; Olson and Samuels, 1973; Fathman, 1975; Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978). In order to evaluate the age effect on different language achievements among L2 learners, researchers must compare performance protocols of L2 subjects to that of native speakers of the same age. Without this contrastive analysis, the observed differences tend to be due to quality differences caused by the learners age, regardless of whether it is L1 or L2.

There are also some implications as to the existence of age effect for L2 morphosyntax possibly hypothesized either in the study of Universal Grammar (UG) and bilingualism. Borer and Wexler (1987) claim that all the principles and parameters of UG do not necessary come into being at the same time; a

biologically predetermined program allows them to appear. This development of growth UG model is one of the explanations of a relation between age and bilingual competence. Meisel (1990) refers to the syntactic system of bilingual children and asserts that the children eventually have the one syntactic system consists of L1 and L2 resembling that of monolingual children.

3. THE STUDY

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the literature review in the previous section, this research addresses the following questions:

- (1) Phonological ultimate attainment of L2 learners compared to that of native speakers is inversely related with their age of arrival (AA) of L2.
- (2) If one starts to acquire L2 young enough (before around age 6 his/her pronunciation of the target language becomes accent-free.
- (3) Morphosyntactic ultimate attainment of L2 learners compared to that of native speakers is affected by their age of arrival (AA) of L2.

3.2 SUBJECTS

This study limited its subjects to Japanese returnee (expatriate) students who started to learn English as L2 at relatively early ages in the United States. Subjects consisted of 20 Japanese tenth grade high school students (16 females, 4 males shown in Table 1). All of them had lived in the U.S. from three to 13 years and had learned English as a second language at local schools in the U.S. (see Table 2). All of the subjects returned to Japan within two years of data collection. After coming back to Japan, they entered a high school for returnee students in Osaka where the English curriculum is designed to maintain their language skills. In this school, some subjects and most of the activities took place with other non-Japanese students in the international school in the same building. No graduates from a Japanese school in the U.S. were included as a subject in this study. The places where they had lived and had been educated were diverse, more than ten different states in the U.S., the most common being New York with five subjects. The subjects' age of arrival (AA) in the United States varies from zero-years old to twelve-years old (see Table 2). Since these subjects had entered ESL soon after they had moved to the U.S., age of arrival (AA) coincides with age of onset (AO) which some researchers prefer to use.

Table 1. Gender distribution of non-native subjects by AA

AA (years old)	0	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	12	Total
Male	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	4
Female	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	5	2	16

Table 2. Summary of non-native subjects' AA and LS

Variable name	Cases	Mean	Std. Dev.
AA (age of arrival)	20	7.65	2.98
LR(length of residence)	20	5.90	2.86

The subjects' length of residence (LR) ranges from three years to 13 years.

Five, 10th-grade American-born native English speaking students provided reference data for this study.

3.3 TEST OF PHONOLOGY

3.31 TEXT AND METHODOLOGY SELECTION

Texts, to be used as the stimuli, were drawn from examples of the ESL textbook, "Whaddaya say?" (Weinstein, 1982) which mainly focuses on teaching the reduced, informal speech of American English (Appendix 1). Suprasegmental phonemes are identified rather than segmental information (e.g., word repetition task, word mimic task) to gain more precise judgment of foreign accent identification (Hatch, 1983).

When relaxed, even if a written text is provided, conversational speech provides not only the speaker's psycho-affective information (e.g., the state of the mind of the speaker), to some extent, but also some socio-cultural background about him/her. For example, information on where speakers were from or the formality they thought the situation needed. Such information can be sorted out carefully and identified by judges based on the pitch, stress, intonation, and tone the subjects use.

3.32 PROCEDURE OF PHONOLOGY TEST

The test data were collected by tape recording students as they read aloud the conversational speech unit which contains a role play of two speakers in a question and answer format. Twenty-five, including native English speakers, subjects were tested individually, in a relaxed atmosphere. Each test lasted from three to five minutes. Subjects were told the aim of this test and allowed to try as many times as they wished until they felt satisfied. As subjects were asked to pronounce this dialog in the way they thought they usually did, some tried to speak slowly and carefully, others did it in quick and relaxed English.

After making this tape of 20 non-native subjects and five native English speaking subjects, then randomly mixing the order, these recordings were rated by two experienced American English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. The results were scored by answering the question, "Is this subject an American-born native?" with 'Yes' or 'No', and in the case of 'No', the degree of foreign accent should be specified on a three-point scale (1 = with slight foreign accent; 2 = with a noticeable foreign accent; 3 = with a strong foreign

accent), agreeing that the scale zero (0) meant no foreign accent, in other words, full native performance and the scale one (1) meant acceptable native-like performance. The judgments consisted of these four levels.

These two judges agreed on the majority of their judgments of accent. The inter-rater reliability between their judgments was .92. They gave each subject one final score after they discussed the subjects' ability.

3.4 TEST OF MORPHOSYNTAX

3.4.1 METHODOLOGY AND TEXT SELECTION

The methodology for the test of morphosyntax was derived from Connor's (1984) study of recall of text. In Connor's analysis of the subject's written protocol with the hierarchical content-structure devices, Connor found the native subjects consistently outperformed the L2 subjects in terms of total recall but found that there was no significant difference between these two groups in the recall of the higher-level ideas, such as "topic" (Meyer, 1975). In order to recall the given text, subjects have to first understand the rhetorical structure of the text as correctly as possible from the morphosyntactic cues, including sentence structure, tense, verb, auxiliary, prepositional phrase direct/indirect object, agentive, plural, prefix and suffix. This ability is sustained by their lexical knowledge. And in order to write down what is being read, again the subjects have to make the most of their knowledge of lexis with morphosyntactic rules to paraphrase effectively so that the written outcome looks explicit and consistent. Since lexicon has been claimed to interact with morpheme and syntax (Cook, 1992, 1995; Singleton, 1995), this test method seems to be one of the most effective ways to know learners' morphosyntactic underlying competence.

As the written protocols are judged in terms of the linguistic performance, the protocols should not contain any kind of subjects' socio-cultural information as is often seen in many storytelling task type of syntax analysis. Under such circumstances, the rating may be affected by variables other than a pure linguistic competency (e.g., judge's personal evaluation on relative L2 proficiency of a subject for his and her linguistic background). Thus Connor's methodology has a lot of implication for the evaluation of morphosyntactic performance which might lead to the detection of "foreign accent" in L2 learner's writings.

A 273-word English text from *The Daily Yomiuri* (Staff, 1992) was used (Appendix 2) which discusses the current success of the United Nations, a highly political idea. This article introduces the recent good reputation of the U.N. as a general 'topic' after the end of the Cold War as 'setting and location' which is followed by three 'evidence' and three quotations as 'examples'. There is no 'problem' and 'solution' contained as are often seen in organized content-structured passages. So, even native English speaking subjects need to read the content very carefully and pay as much attention as possible to

reproduce given information correctly. Another reason why this text was chosen is that the content is free from both Japanese and American cultural reference.

3.42 PROCEDURE FOR MORPHOSYNTACTIC TEST

In the recall task, the subjects were asked to read the text for comprehension and immediately following, write a paraphrase of their own process of information. They were asked to do this task at the same time in the same classroom, except for several subjects who were inconvenienced at that appointed time. The writing protocols were rated by the same two ESL judges with subjects' names masked. Judges, each getting the copies of the protocols, were first asked to check syntactically, morphologically incorrect parts and count up the numbers of mistakes in different markers on the pre-score sheet. Both of the judges had sufficient experience in checking syntactical and morphological errors of not only ESL learners but also English native students. According to the amount of the numbers and the gravity of these errors, the protocols were finally scored. Other criteria included style, length, knowledge of lexis, lexical usage, organization and consistency. The final score could better represent not only grammatical accuracy but also "nativeness" in writing protocols. Scoring was done on a four-point scale, slightly different criteria from the test of phonology was used:

- 0=with (almost) no error, an excellent product for a native 10th grader.
- 1=with acceptable amount of errors for a native 10th grader
- 2=with noticeable amount of errors for a native 10th grader
- 3=with excessive amount of errors for a native 10th grader.

The judges reported the two scores as the final total for each subjects. The judges required more time to reach agreement than in the case of their phonological judgment but their inter-rater reliability this time was .86.

4. RESULTS

Table 3 shows the summary of test results for non-native English speaking subjects. Mean scores for the degree of foreign accent (FA) and morphosyntactic error (MSE) are 0.80 and 1.65 respectively. FA ranges from 0.0 through 2.0. MSE ranges from 0.0 through 3.0. Valid number of cases are 20.

Table 3. Summary of test scores(non-natives)

Variable name	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	Cases
FA scores	.80	.83	0.0	2.0	20
MSE scores	1.65	1.04	0.0	3.0	20

Table 4 shows the summary of test results for native subjects. FA and MSE are both 0.45. Only one subject was rated as FA 1.0 and also only one

was found to be MSE 1.0. These two “non-zero” subjects are not the same subject. The number of valid cases is five.

Table 4. Summary of test scores(natives)

Variable name	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	Cases
FA scores	.20	.45	0.0	1.0	5
MSE scores	.20	.45	0.0	1.0	5

Table 5 gives the outcome of Correlation Coefficients (Pearson Product Moment). FA was found to be significantly correlated with AA and LR, both at $p<.01$ level. But MSE was found not to correlate with AA but correlate with LR at $p<.05$ level. FA and MSE was found to correlate at $p<.01$ level, suggesting that these two variables are strongly interactive.

Table 5. Correlation Coefficients

	FA	AA	LR	MSE
FA	1.0000	.7547**	-.8247**	.7043**
AA	.7547**	1.0000	-.9546**	.3662
LR	-.8247**	-.9546**	1.0000	-.4719*
MSE	.7043**	.3662	-.4719*	1.0000

*-Signif. LE.05

** -Signif. LE.01(2-tailed)

The result for the phonological test is presented in Figure 1. From AA 1.0 through AA 6.0, the mean score of each AA group on foreign accent (hence, mFA) is consistently mFA 0.0. At both AA 7.0 and AA 8.0, the scores stay at mFA 0.5, just between “no foreign accent” and “with slight foreign accent” meaning these two mixed. But at AA 9.0, the score jumps up to mFA 1.5 and continues to increase a little bit up to mFA 1.7 at AA 10, reaching more closely to “noticeable” foreign accent level but generally stays in the same level from AA 9.0 through AA 12.0. (Table 5).

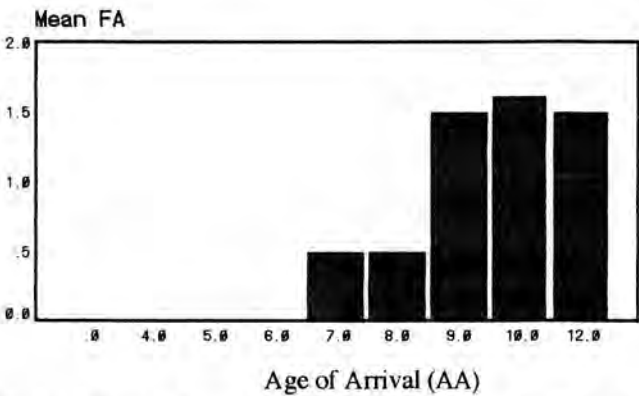


FIGURE 1 Foreign accent score over AA (non-natives)

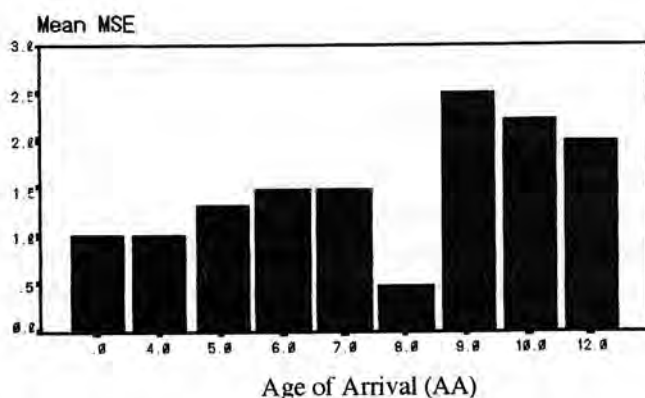


FIGURE 2 Morphosyntactic error score over AA (non-natives)

Figure 2 displays the result of the morphosyntax test. At AA 0.0, the mean scores on morphosyntax (hence, mMSE) starts at mMSE 1.0 (acceptable amount of errors for native) and stays in the same level at AA 4.0. The score increases up to mMSE 1.3 at AA 5.0 and again only slightly to mMSE 1.5 at AA 6.0 through AA7.0, showing a mixed picture of “acceptable” and “noticeable” error levels at AA 6, at which age some researchers claim that the lateralization of the brain has already completed (Krashen, 1975). The figure suggests that early AA group consistently stayed in “acceptable” native range but late AA groups, especially after AA 9.0, have a lower level of morphosyntactic acquisition. However, statistical analysis didn’t find any significant co-relation between these two variables (see Table 5).

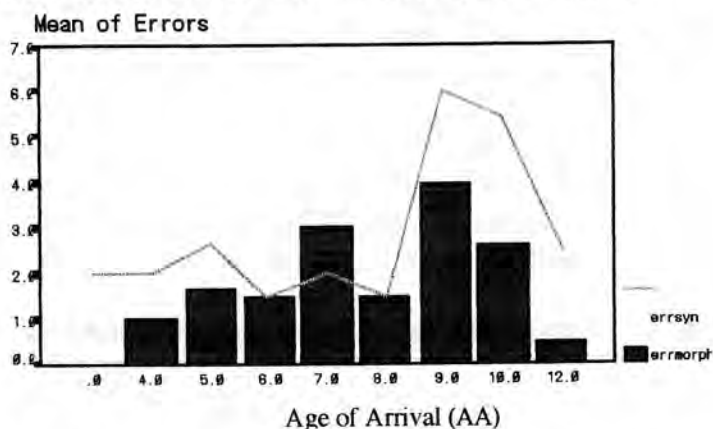


FIGURE 3 Errors in syntax and in morpheme over AA (non-natives)

Figure 3 represents raw scores of errors in syntax and errors in morphology respectively from judges’ original scoring sheet. Average number of syntactic errors for each AA group is presented by a line and morpheme errors by bars. These raw scores were counted up separately for syntactic error as well as for morphological error by each judge and then averaged for every AA

group. These raw scores were used as a vital source when raters finally made their overall ratings for subjects' morphosyntactic scoring for their protocols.

Both at AA 0.0 and AA 4.0, syntactic errors (errsyn) and morphological errors (errmorph) (errsyn 2.0, errmorph 0.0 at AA 0.0; errsyn 2.0, errmorph 1.0 at AA 4.0 respectively) are almost the same as the scores obtained by five native subjects (errsyn 1.80, errmorph 1.0; refer to Tables 6 and 7). And until AA 8.0, the numbers for syntax as well as morpheme errors neither increased nor decreased drastically. But at AA 9.0 these errors suddenly rise and make a noticeable difference, especially for syntax. Then, these morpheme errors level off at AA 10.0. Interestingly, at AA 12.0, the numbers of errors drop again (errsyn 2.5, errmorph 0.5) and look as if they are within the native speaker range.

Table 6. Summary of subcategories of MSE for non-native subjects

	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	Cases
Errors in Morpheme	2.00	1.65	0.00	6.00	20
Errors in Syntax	3.30	2.60	0.00	9.00	20
MSE	1.65	1.04	0.00	3.00	20

Tables 6 and 7 shows the summary of individual raw scores for syntactic errors and morphological errors which are not averaged for respective AA groups. Errors in morpheme (EM) ranges from 0.00 to 6.00. The standard deviation for EM is 1.65, which can account for the wide variety of the L2 proficiency of non-native subjects. Noun plural markers were most often seen, accounting for 72.8% of the total EM followed by agentive errors (12.2%). Errors in Syntax (ES) varies more diversely from 0.00 to 9.00. The mean score for ES is higher than for EM, suggesting that syntactic error was more frequently observed in protocols of non-native subjects. The most common type of error was tense (52.0%) followed by verb aspects (22.5%). The reliability coefficient between those two variables EM and ES is .78, between MSE and ES it is .86, and between MSE and EM it is .67, respectively.

Table 7. Summary of subcategories of MSE for native subjects

	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	Cases
Errors in Morpheme	1.00	0.71	0.00	2.00	5
Errors in Syntax	1.80	0.84	1.00	3.00	5
MSE	0.20	0.45	0.00	1.00	5

In the case of native subjects, EM ranges from 0.00 to 2.00. The standard deviation for EM is 0.71, which implies there is only a slight difference among the subjects' competence in the target language. Only plural mistakes were found as MS. ES varies from 0.00 to 3.00. The mean score for ES is again

bigger than the one for EM, here also syntactic errors are more frequent than morphological errors. The most common type of error was tense (55.6%) followed by auxiliary (22.2%).

5. DISCUSSION

In the present study, the effect of age of arrival (AA) on L2 phonological development were observed in two ways; (1) L2 phonological ultimate attainment was found to be inversely related AA, and (2) if the L2 learner starts to acquire the target language early enough, around age six, their pronunciation of that language becomes accent-free. But no statistical significance was observed as to the L2 morphosyntactic development with relation to AA. In addition to AAs, the length of residence (LR) was also found to be significantly co-related with phonology ($p < .01$) and with morphosyntax ($p < .05$). This LR effect is consistent with previous studies (Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle 1978; Cummins, 1981). But we should remember that the earlier learning started the longer it had been continuing, so that any advantage that might be attributed to an age factor is equally attributable to a length of exposure, henceforth the length of residence factor.

However, as was shown in Figure. 1, the degree of foreign accent suddenly increased at AA 9.0, from mFA 0.5 to mFA 1.5 which implies that there might be between AA 8.0 and AA 9.0 the existence of "native-like" performance attainable period after the ending of "native" performance attainable period somewhere between AA 6.0 and AA 7.0. After AA 9.0, foreign accent became more evident, showing at least mFA 1.5. This suggestion implies a possible existence of a semi-critical period for phonology after the age of six, during which period learners might still have a chance to gain native speaker perfection. But in most cases, learners might end up falling somewhere short of attaining native level performance.

The fact that morphosyntactic error suddenly marked mMSE around 2.5 at AA 9.0 (see Figure 2) and then went on decreasing as AA became larger was unexpected. Since errors gradually increased from AA 0.0 through AA 7.0, it was expected that from AA 9.0 on there would have been a steady increase continuing, even though AA 8.0 happened to be an excellent collection of subjects. In fact, these nine to 12-year-old arrivals have another disadvantage. The mean length of residence for them are respectively, 4.0 years for AA 9.0, 3.2 years for AA 10.0, 3.0 years for AA 12.0 respectively, while LR is 5.9 years for entire population and 7.0 years for AA 8.0. And as Slavoff & Johnson (1995) state, if a change in the learning mechanism takes at least three years, these 10 to 12-year-old arrivals are likely to fail to achieve better performance only because they were still in the midst of learning English as their second language when this was interrupted to come back to Japan.

There are several likely reasons why these 10 to 12-year-old arrivals were more successful in morphosyntax acquisition. Piagetians claimed that children

come to attain Piaget formal operations stage around puberty and this enables them to access to metalinguistic skills. And also, children are equipped with general problem-solving (GPS) abilities around that age (Felix, 1985). Employing more cognitive strategies and skills than younger learners might help them to acquire the target language more effectively as far as the morphosyntax is concerned. There might be other facilitators which derive from socio-psychological norms, such as attitude, motivation, self-esteem, empathy, and peer-pressure.

This paper's findings did not clearly provide any consistent explanation for the quality-oriented age findings of L2 morphosyntax proficiency among early AAs over late AAs. But, here is another more speculative implication of this research. As we can find in Figure 3, morphological as well as syntactic error continue to decrease from AA 9.0 until AA12.0. At AA 12.0 morphological error score is lower than the score of native speaker subjects (see Tables 6 and 7). This research provides more support to the claim that writing is more difficult to discern as a non-native product than is pronunciation (Ioup 1984; Scovel 1988).

6 CONCLUSION

The results of this study support the existence of the age effect in the area of acquiring L2 phonology. But nonetheless, the results do not simply signify that older or adult learners cannot achieve native-like pronunciation. The results show that younger learners have a propensity to gain accentless speech. It is sometimes dangerous for those who spent their early life in English speaking country and therefore could achieve English native or native-like pronunciation skill to consider themselves as masters of English. We should keep in our mind that when we re-examine the scope of L2, pronunciation is a part of one's entire linguistic ability. Since there is no evidence with regard to L2 acquisition any more than with L1 acquisition that the capacity to acquire new vocabulary ceases at any particular maturation point, morphosyntactic development seems to continue well into adulthood. Although the results fail to support the existence of the age effect in the area of acquiring L2 morphosyntactic skills, learners at 12.0 AA show the fewest morphological errors (Figure 3). This might be explained by their advantage of greater cognitive skills and this advantage of older learners is worth further detailed examination.

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APPENDIX 1 The dialog used in the test of phonology

"What are you going to do after you finish it?"

"I want to go to Los Angeles."

"And then?"

"And then I'm going to try to go to San Diego."

From "Whaddaya say?" by Weinstein (1982)

APPENDIX 2 The text used in the test of morphosyntax

New world euphoria:

At the end of the Cold War, many members of the international community believed that a new, promising prospect was at last carved out for building a new world order in an age freed from ideological showdowns. The United Nations was to be the axis around which nations would join together to accomplish this ideal. When the Gulf Crisis was overcome thanks to the cooperation of a united front of major powers under the authority of the world body, that prospect seemed realistic.

Symbolic of the surge in those days in euphoria of the international community were rosy lines of discussion in a meeting of top leaders of the U.N. Security Council member countries, the first ever in the U.N. history, that was held in January 1992, immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Chairing the meeting, British Prime Minister John Major urged the participants to get united in working for the cause of world peace and security. Then U.S. President George Bush, who said the collapse of "imperialistic communism" and the end of the Cold War were inspiring the United Nations with a new vigor, pledged the United States would extend full support for the task of reinvigorating the world body.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin, for his part, told the meeting he believed Russia should consider the United States and its allies as "allies" of his country, stressing the Russian desire to join the rank of the world's democracies.

Three years on, U.N. Secretary General Butros Butros-Ghali has presented, in his Jan. 5 first report of the year to the UNSC, a follow-up to his June 1992 report, "Agenda for Peace." (May 14, 1992 *Daily Yomiuri*)