

## DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES TO YOUNG LEARNERS.

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### Introduction

In recent decades, early foreign language education has gained increasing global attention. Many educators and policymakers advocate for introducing foreign languages at the primary school level, arguing that younger learners have a natural ability to acquire new languages more effectively than adolescents or adults (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Indeed, children possess greater neural plasticity and imitate sounds more accurately, which makes them ideal candidates for early language instruction (Lenneberg, 1967). However, despite these advantages, teaching foreign languages to young learners presents a number of complex challenges that are often overlooked.

Traditional methods of language instruction, such as grammar-based drills, translation exercises, and vocabulary memorization, are largely designed for cognitively mature learners. These methods do not align well with the developmental characteristics of young children, who learn best through play, exploration, and social interaction (Pinter, 2011). Furthermore, children typically lack the cultural awareness necessary to understand the broader social and contextual meanings of a foreign language. As a result, they may learn isolated words or phrases without truly internalizing their use or meaning.

Thus, although young learners possess a strong natural ability to acquire languages, their underdeveloped logical thinking, lack of cultural context, and need for play-based learning make traditional foreign language teaching methods largely ineffective. This essay explores these difficulties in depth and suggests alternative strategies that are more suited to young learners' developmental needs.

### References

1. Lenneberg, E. H. (1967). *Biological Foundations of Language*. New York: Wiley.
2. Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2013). *How Languages are Learned* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
3. Pinter, A. (2011). *Children Learning Second Languages*.