



# The Influence of Self-Esteem and Self-Image In Teenage Learners Sla

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**Abstract:** Is age important in teaching second language acquisition? Many scholars try to answer this question and Spanky (1989a) suggests that educational systems usually arrive first at a decision of optimal learning age on political or economic grounds and then seek justification for their decision. From teachers' point of view, it is crucial to develop a particular method of teaching for a particular age group. This research paper discusses how self-esteem and self-image can influence teen learners, and how teachers can motivate and help them to succeed in learning language.

**Keywords:** Age, Young Learner, Teenager, Adult Learner, Second Language Acquisition, Self-Esteem, Self-Image, Motivation

## Introduction

Is age important in teaching second language acquisition? Many scholars try to answer this question and Spanky (1989a) suggests that educational systems usually arrive first at a decision of optimal learning age on political or economic grounds and then seek justification for their decision (Olubukola, 2020). From teachers' point of view, it is crucial to develop a particular method of teaching for a particular age group. Cook (2016, p. 149) states that teenagers may dislike any technique that exposes them in public with different activities like role-playing and simulation conflict with their adolescent anxieties. He thinks that adults can feel that they are not learning properly in play-like situations and prefer a conventional, formal style of teaching, and he also states that age is by no means crucial to L2 learning itself (Bober et al., 2021). Here is the theory of critical period hypothesis that explains the issue, some scholars think that all versions of the critical period hypothesis are the assumption learner differences in ultimate attainment which happens due to changes in the neuronal structure of the brain as one gets older (Bogaerts, 2005). We can divide age of acquisition into three main groups (Coffey & Warren, 2020):

1) child,

- 2) teenager,
- 3) adult learners.

One of the difficult ages is considered teen age which includes age from twelve to eighteen. At this age teenagers face with many difficulties because at this age they cease to be a child and, however, do not reach to the age of maturity (Brown, 2001, p. 91). Brown (2001, p. 92) calls this age as a “terrible age”, and he states that this age is an age of transition, confusion, self-consciousness, growing and changing bodies and minds (Rosi et al., 2019). He says that for teachers it is a challenge to teach teens, since they must produce special methods and consideration. And he gives some suggestions for teachers who must work with teenage learners (Perez-Fuentes et al., 2019). He states that some sophisticated intellectual processing is increasingly possible and complex problems can be solved with logical thinking. Here teachers should “hook” learners' attention to the task, to prevent them from attending their thoughts to appearance, to being accepted, to sexual thoughts, to weekend party, or whatever that, the intellectual task can suffer at hand. Here we can make a conclusion that at teen age learners pay more attention to self-esteem and self-image rather than to education. To take into consideration the difficulties of teaching teens, in this paper I decided to find the answer to how self-esteem and self-image can influence teen learners, and how teachers can motivate and help them to succeed in learning language (López et al., 2021).

## Methodology

Lightbown and Spada (1993, p. 67) suggests that the relationship between age and success in second language acquisition is hardly less complex or controversial. The research done by these scholars show that second language speakers who had begun learning English before the age of fifteen success in learning was inevitable (Acosta-Gonzaga, 2023). However, by contrast, most learners who start learning SLA at the age of teen show a great deal of variety, because some people did extremely well, while others did poorly, and the others were in the middle. Zafar and Meenakshi (2012, p. 643) found that learners' success in language learning is associated with one of the important types of personality called self-esteem. Coopersmith (1967, pp. 265-266) gives the definition to the word self-esteem as a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the aptitudes that the individual holds towards himself/herself (Kärchner et al., 2021). According to Carver et al. (1994) self-esteem is the evaluative quality of the self-image or self-concept, and global self-esteem refers to “individuals' overall evaluation or appraisal of themselves, if they approve or disapprove of themselves, like or dislike themselves” (Higgins, 1996, p. 1073). Baumeister (1999) asserts that the concept of self-esteem regards as an underlining deep-seated, trait-like disposition. He also states that high self-esteem is associated with greater persistence in the face of

failure, while people with low self-esteem are more vulnerable to the psychological impact of everyday events, more malleable, and strongly affected by persuasion and influence, moreover, they want success and approval and skeptical about their chances of achieving it (as cited in Brown, 2001, p. 182). According to Brockey and Shore (1976), and Gardner and Lamber (1979) self-esteem is one of key factors in second language acquisition (as cited in Zafar & Meenakshi, 2012, p. 643). "Self-esteem generates by high involvement of teachers let to better results in second language acquisition" (Heyde, 1979, p. 643). Mackney, Dorney, Clement, and Noels (1998) study the role of self confidence in their model of "willingness to communicate" in a foreign language. They suggest that many factors like motivation, personality, intergroup climate, and two levels of self-confidence lead to willingness to communicate, and they include that two levels of self-confident are "state communicative self-confidence" and "L2 self-confidence" (Rouault et al., 2022). Brown (2007, p. 92) states that self-esteem as the evaluative quality of self-concept, and contrast to the specific self-esteem perspective, and broader notion should be investigated. In resent social studies more stress has been given to slow self-esteem, and positive self-esteem has been identified as a primary goal in the concept of teachers and school administrations due to the hope that improvement of self-esteem can enhance students' learning of knowledge and concept (Harman, 1979, p. 3). Beede (1973) and Curtis (1977, p. 217) state that slow learning relates to low self-esteem, and they suggest that both curricula and incorporating strategies in existing social studies should be developed. According to a variety of studies having done indicate that during the period from late childhood to adolescence self-esteem is stable trait and fits with a central organizing force in everyone's personality (Engel, 1959, Carlson, 1965, Bixler, 1966). Curtis and Shaver (1981) recommend that one of the methods which could affect to change in self-esteem is that challenging students' academic abilities (as cited in Curtis & Shaver, 1981, p. 217).

### **Participant profile.**

In this small-scale research five school pupils took part in who study at the grade of 9 and 10 from Uzbek L1, who study at Russian school, in Chust district of Namangan, Uzbekistan. Their names are Gulnoza, Sanjar, Abror, Afruz, and Nilufar. All participants experience mix culture environment, where the Western culture influence Asian culture which means housing and schooling environment contradict each other and teens must deal with both culture impact along with their academic performance. Learners were selected randomly with a different language level, but who have English classes more than four-year span and learnt English language in different methods (Bayani & Baghery, 2020). Three of them have been taught by using CLL (Communicative Language Learning), in which learners in a classroom were regarded not as a "class" but as a "group", where social dynamics are in primary importance, and where group members first needed to interact in

interpersonal relationship in which students and teacher joined together to facilitate learning in a context of valuing each individual in the group (Brown, 2001, p. 25). The learners took benefits in CLL due to the teacher's support and motivation. When it comes to drawbacks of CLL, there are some theoretical and practical problems such as teacher can become too nondirective, however, learners need direction especially at the beginning stage, reliance on the inductive strategy of learning, and reliance on teacher's translation at early stages. Another two pupils have been taught in GTM (Grammar Translational Methods), as Prator and Celce-Murca (1979, p. 3) listed the major characteristics of this method; 1) classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language, 2) much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words, 3) long, elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given, 4) grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words, 5) more attention is given to reading complicated texts, 6) little attention is given on content of the text, 7) more tasks are based on translation of disconnected sentences, and the last one there is no or little attention is given on pronunciation (as cited in Brown, 2007, pp. 18-19). I gave them a few questions related to their age, their interest, and why they learn English. Their ages are between 15 and 16, they are interested to common things like watching TV, playing football, and they are learning English for educational purposes, which means to take an IELTS certificate, and to enter the University (Ouyang et al., 2020).

### **Research design.**

Randomly selected learners were exposed to pre and post-test and as instruments were selected Self-Esteem Inventory test (Coopersmith, 1967, pp. 265-266). I had chosen this test which consists of 25 items, 12 positive and 13 negative items, to identify their opinion about themselves. SEI test is commonly used for children/teens in the intermediate level, moreover, it has been used in special education programs to measure self-esteem (Richmond & Dalton, 1973), and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965, pp. 443-451), which consists of 10 items, to know their opinion about school and their relationship with peers and family, and CEFR (University of Cambridge ESOL Examination) test B1 level, which includes all essential sections of language acquisition such as speaking, writing, grammar, vocabulary check, listening, and reading (Rubio, 2021).

### **Result**

In order to identify participants' challenges I conducted the pre-test, and I had chosen the SEI, CEFR test B1. According to the prior test, the first three learners showed that they have high self-esteem, they have a good opinion about themselves, they are confident in their academic achievement, and they do not have problem with their

family, as well as with their peers. However, the CEFR test B1 showed that they are good at speaking, and they have challenges with academic vocabulary and with writing skill. They showed an exceptionally low score of 5 to 7 out of 14, which contradicted their speaking skill. The second two participants in SEI test showed low self-esteem, which means they have some problems in their family and their relationship with their peers is also vulnerable, which means they have a limited number of friends. Hence, according to the CEFR test B1 level they made satisfactory performance in all sections 12 to 13 out of 14, except speaking, which meant that they were not able to express their opinion in English language (Marigold et al., 2020).

For two weeks span I conducted 7 classes per week, and in this small-scale teaching program I combined all my participants into one class, where I used mixed method of teaching, Direct Method which is also called “naturalistic” as some scholars suggest that the second language should be like the first, where a lot of oral interaction, spontaneous use of language, no translation, and a little analysis of grammar. I also selected visual materials such as audio and video to improve their listening and speaking skills, as Rodgers and Webb (2016, p. 166) state that a variety of visual cues help learners to gain more information in listening. I tried to provide with feedback after each class to every participant telling them their weak points and advised them to use some tips for improving their academic performance, such as using “verbal and nonverbal communicative strategies” (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30). In my first class I noticed the learners’ “personality type” (Saiphoo et al., 2020). According to MacIntyre, Clement, and Noels (2002, p. 288) personality emphasizes the uniqueness of each individual created by various modes of interaction between generic endowment and learning experience, and which flows the consistency of thoughts, feeling, and behaviors, and it can be a mask that we wear in social situations. Three learners tried to show their dominance over other participants in discussions, which tell that they have extraverted personality type. They tend to choose more social environment, as cited in MacIntyre, Clement, and Noels (2002, p. 290), and they might demonstrate better progress when learning in groups (Cheek & Buss, 1981), however, I paid more attention to their grammar and reading performance, which were their weak point, and I graded them according to those criteria. When it comes to the other two participants, they have introverted personalities, who prefer quite environment to study, I involved them to group discussions and marked them according to their speaking ability (Colmsee et al., 2021).

### **Data collection and findings.**

The data were collected by using two tests SEI and CEFR, the process was divided into pre- and post-test design. As I mentioned in research design, in pre test three learners had difficulties in their grammar, even they had fluency in speaking, but they did not have accuracy due to lack of grammar practice. By asking simple

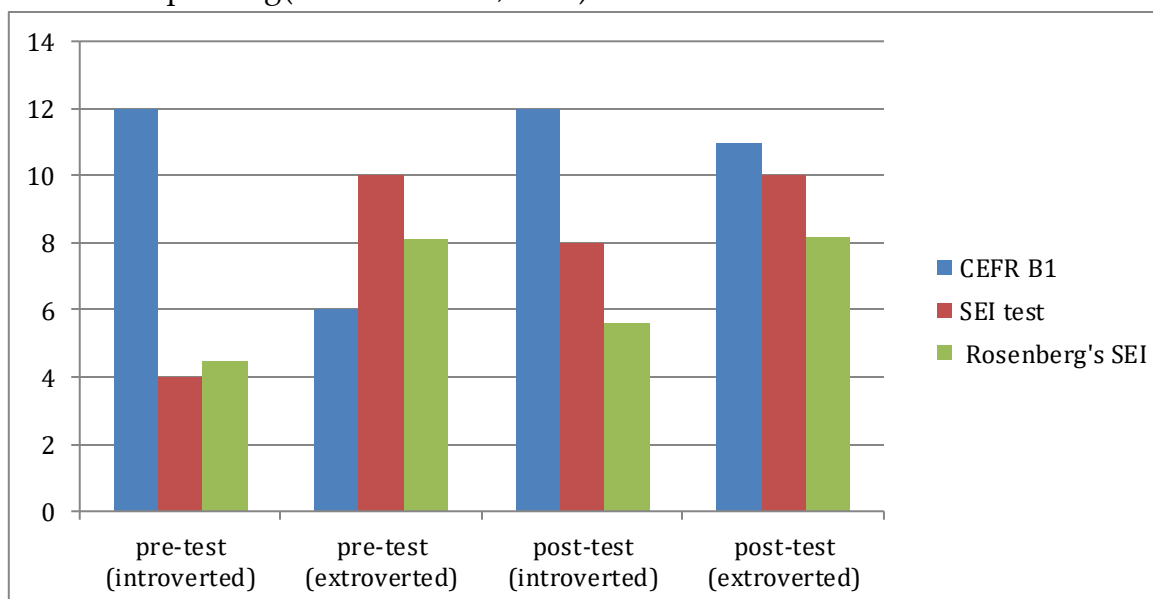
questions about their interests, learning difficulties as results I found that Gulnoza, Sanjar, and Abror have extroverted personality (Moksnes & Reidunsdatter, 2019). When it comes two other participants Nilufar and Afruz have introverted personality types, which mean they are not able to talk in front of the class, who shy and quiet, and do not enjoy being with other people, but they were good at in other skills such as grammar, writing, and listening, 12 to 13 out of 14 questions in CEFR B1 test (Sa et al., 2019). According to pre-test design I made a conclusion that introverted learners were ignored at classroom activities, and they did not have opportunity to show their ability. In order to improve their speaking skill, I used a familiar, simple and easy topics such as "Family," "Education," "Future career," "Study in a country and abroad." And the other participants had speaking skills with poor grammar and other abilities like; writing, grammar, reading, the CEFR B1 result shows 5 to 7 out of 14. However, they have extraverted personalities, who enjoy spending time with other people. In order to improve learners' grammar I used "A practical English Grammar" book written by Thomson and Martinet (1986), which I have been using for many years on, I can say this book is very essential for all levels from the beginners to advanced learners (Krause et al., 2021), but students cannot use it individually because of complicated vocabulary, and CEFR (University of Cambridge ESOL Examination) test B1 level was also helpful for me due to free additional online resources have been provided. Moreover, there are some sources not only for teachers but also for parents as well as for English learners (Wood et al., 2024).

## Discussion

According to the post-test results, in which I used the same instruments for data collection such as SEI test, CEFR B1 test, the first three pupils in SEI test showed the small variety of changes in their confidence and self-esteem (Gosal et al., 2021), I noticed during discussions that introverted learners developed confidence in their speaking as a result of opportunities to interact with their peers who are able to communicate in second language. They developed language confidence, motivation to speak through familial topics. And the other participants started to pay attention to their other skills like writing, grammar, reading and vocabulary. I observed that learners with high self-esteem improved their grammar performance and vocabulary. The combination of different individuals and a variety of methods were a great help for both introverted and extroverted learners, it was clearly observed in their speaking as well, they tried to use complex structures, and CEFR test shows a high result 11 to 12 out of 14. Other two case study participants' results in two SEI tests were quite different they showed normal self-esteem, according to Rosenberg's Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965, pp. 443-451), and out of class time I have noticed that



they increased the number of acquaintances, and CEFR test showed no changes in their test results but speaking (Cameron et al., 2023).



Having done research by me had been analyzed by calculating results from CEFR test and two SEI tests, and in the interview, I collected learners point of interest and asked their opinion about conducted case study, their opinion and suggestions were different. The first three learners with high self-esteem said that they had started to pay attention to improving their grammar, and they said that the combination of all skills and methods are developing, while the second two learners who had low self-esteem said that they developed self-confidence, and they made an addition that the familiarity topics, given opportunity to speak were the keys to their improvement in speaking, which they did not have in their previous classes and the answers of both high and low self-esteem learners were proved in CEFR test results (Grover, 2021).

## Appendix.

Self-Esteem Inventory test (Coopersmith, 1967, pp. 265-266).

items	agree	disagree
I am proud of my academic performance.		
I have a very satisfactory home atmosphere.		
Most people are better liked than I am.		
If I have something to say, I usually say it.		
I find it very difficult to talk in front of the class.		
I can usually take care of myself.		
I have a good opinion of myself.		

When in a group of people, I often have trouble thinking about the right things to talk about.		
I often feel that my life is not very useful.		
My parents understand me well.		
I do not have much to be proud of.		
I often feel ashamed of myself.		
I prefer to do thing that are novel and difficult.		
I am fully confident of my abilities.		
I find it hard to talk when I meet new people.		
Things are all mixed up in my life.		
I can make up my mind and stick to it.		
I often wish I were someone else.		
I am not doing as well in the class as I would like to.		
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.		
I get upset easily at home.		
I am never shy.		
I often get discouraged in the class.		
There are many times when I would like to leave home.		
I am able to do things as well as most other people.		

The results can be calculated according to the answers and easy to notice as to whether the learners have chosen positive or negative items.

**Rosenberg's Self-Esteem scale to describe feeling that you may have about yourself (Rosenberg, 1965, pp. 443-451).**

## Conclusion

To conclude pre- and post-test results from CEFR test and SEI questionnaire, I can say that self-esteem is primary importance for teens, which can affect to their academic performance. I think teachers who work with teens should provide their lessons by using different methods and burden their students with intellectual tasks, and instead of using a particular method they should pay attention to learners' weaknesses and create their own teaching style for teenage learners. A theory by Purkey (1970, p. 50) have



been proved on my research that “high degree of challenges” will have “positive and beneficial effect” on self-esteem and self-image of teens, where Labenne and Greene (1969, p. 29) add that teachers’ motivation and beliefs on students’ ability can raise their self-esteem and self-image. And Brown’s (2001, p. 92) suggestions on teaching teens are useful in term of grappling teens attention on intellectual tasks, using a variety of sensory input, and keeping self-esteem high by avoiding embarrassment of learners at all cost, affirming each person’s talent and strengths, de-emphasizing competition between classmates, and encouraging small-group work, and dwelling on a grammatical point or vocabulary item to help for teens to avoid from destructions that can prevent them from academic success. Moreover, teachers while conducting lessons they should take into consideration self-esteem and individual differences in teens that might remain a primary pedagogic concept in L2 studies, due to the fact that it can lead to effective learning even learners have suffered with problems related to their appearance (Brown, 2001, p. 185). I think, in teaching English language teachers should take tests that can help to identify learners’ personality along with tests, that can give a picture about learners’ background knowledge in order to know what methods to implement for effective teaching. Unfortunately, many private and school teachers do not take physiological tests at the beginning stages of teaching English language, and they work with extroverted learners, and introverted learners stay aside with their low self-esteem, because they do not have opportunity to identify their hidden ability, as a result they can further give up learning English. If teachers try to identify individuals’ ability and personality type introverted learners can make better result due to their ability to complete their assignments on their own, without social interaction, as cited in MacIntyre, Clement, and Noels (Wilson & Lynn, 1990).

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