

# **DEDICATION**

To the memory of my mother who never learned to read or write

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

If this study made any point that is because the researcher managed to balance on shoulders of many individuals. To mention only a few, I'm immeasurably indebted to Dr. Salahedin Eldouma, my supervisor, who generously gave of his time at moments that were more to my convenience than his and, without whose help and advice this study would have been impossible. My thankfulness goes also to my viva-voce panel: Dr. Mohammed Al-Tayeb, Dr. Mahmood Ahmed, and more specifically Dr. Taj A. Bashoum who went through the thesis word by word, picking up holes and flaws both in the study content and design that would have, otherwise, gone unnoticed had it not been of his clarity of vision and his depth of understanding. One can't think find any possible way to do justice to such efforts other than feeling at the bottom of one's heart. Ustaz Tarig D. Doleeb was so generous as to make himself available throughout data collection process, to whom I owe a huge debt of gratitude. Nazar H. Basheer's contribution has added true value to this study by providing me with a copy of SPSS package. And, in a rather different sense of acknowledgement, I'm gratefully indebted to my wife, Shaza, for her help in doing the statistics and for her putting up with my all sorts of mood and chaos I brought home when looking for or doing something in this study.

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between the age of onset of learning English and the ultimate attainment in that language. To this end, it tests the lexical and morphosyntactic competence of intermediate school students ( $n=62$ ), who have different points of onset. They have to do a grammaticality judgment test and a vocabulary test, each of which consists of 50 questions. Using the methods of descriptive statistics, the result shows that late starters have outperformed early starters in all aspects of the language, except in the fact that early starters have shown conspicuous individual differences. Furthermore, the result of the study has also indicated that there is a relatively weak correlation between the age of headstart and the ultimate attainment in both levels of language tested. The correlations between the age of exposure and vocabulary attainment is ( $r = 0.2$ ), whereas it is ( $r = 0.18$ ) between age of exposure and morphosyntactic knowledge. It is also found in this study that there's a strong positive correlation between Early starters (ESs) and Late Starters (LSs) grammar and vocabulary ( $r = 0.75$ ).

## مستخلص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة لفهم العلاقة بين عمر الدارس حين يبدأ تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية و التحصيل النهائي في تلك اللغة. فتدقيقاً لهذه الغاية، قد قامت هذه الدراسة باختبار (62) طالباً من طلاب المرحلة المتوسطة الذين بدأوا تعلم اللغة الانجليزية في أعمار مختلفة في حياتهم. كان علي هؤلاء الدارسين أن يؤدوا اختباراً في القواعد واختباراً آخر في المفردات اللغوية، حيث اشتمل الاختباران على (100) سؤالاً؛ 50 سؤالاً علي كلٍ. باستخدام الباحث مناهج الإحصاء الوصفي تبين له أن الطلاب الذين بدأوا تعلم اللغة الانجليزية في فترة متأخرة قد تجاوزوا الطلاب الذين بدأوا تعلم اللغة الانجليزية في مرحلة مبكرة، في كل جوانب اللغة، ما عدا الفروقات الفردية التي بدت أكثر اتساعاً و تنوعاً في المجموعة الأولى مما هي في المجموعة الأخيرة. كما أظهرت هذه الدراسة أيضاً وجود ارتباط ايجابي ضعيف نسبياً بين عمر الدارس وتحصيله في قواعد ومفردات اللغة الانجليزية (20). بين المفردات و العمر، 0.18 بين القواعد و العمر). أما الارتباط بين التحصيل في المفردات و القواعد فهو قوي جداً بمقدار (0.75).

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