

Adult Learners' Experiences in Learning English: A Case Study of Two University Students in Indonesia

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Abstract

As a modified replication of Bellingham's (2004) investigation, this case study primarily explores experiences of 30s Indonesian university students in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at English Language Education Study Program, Masyarakat University Indonesia (ED-DU). The study specifically investigates cases of two ED-DU students who shared their experiences in learning EFL in their age. I recalled their experiences using an open-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. I continued to collate and summarize the data into themes. Eventually, the present findings reveal six learning patterns of the students, confirm the existence of L2 acquisition for adult learners stated by Bellingham's investigation, and provide some evidence that EFL learning acquisition is not limited by age.

Keywords: adult learners, learning patterns, EFL

1. INTRODUCTION

“Limiting our view of teaching and learning relationships primarily to the teacher's perspective provides only a partial view of classroom life and thus limited understanding of teaching and learning processes in classroom. Attention must be given to student experience if we are to more fully understand these relationships and processes among teachers and students” (Prentiss, 1995, p.27).

I had a chance to teach a second language acquisition (SLA) class at English Language Education Program, Masyarakat University Indonesia (ED-DU) in the beginning of 2016. After some meetings, I met Vino, one of the students in the class, and found out that he was in his thirties. This fact was interesting since all the students in the class were in their twenties, much younger than he was. Before entering ED-DU, he had finished his mechanical engineering study and worked for some years in a school in Kalimantan, an island in Indonesia. I shared this research interest to some of my colleagues who soon informed me to contact Vina, another student who also possessed similar characteristics to those of Vino. She was also a student who learned English in his thirties. She had completed her secretary business program before studying at ED-DU. Both Vino and Vina's story did influence me to delve further their experiences in learning English in their thirties.

The essence of age factor in second language learning is well documented in the literature (Nunan & Benson, 2004) as it is “one of the most commonly cited determinant factors of success and failure in second or foreign language” (Shumin, 2002, p.205). There is also some interest to explain experiences and the nature of adult learners in learning a new language. In the present study, I define adult learners as those who learn English in their thirties. Harmer (2007) implicitly states that adult learners can engage with abstract thoughts, have patterns of learning and a whole range of life experiences to draw on, understand why they are learning and what they want to achieve in their learning. Besides, they can use their experiences as a resource that they may share to others (Malone, 2014) and relate new

knowledge and information to their prior experiences (Zhao, 2004), which can be an asset and liability for their learning (Canadian Literacy and Learning Network, 2016). They can quickly pick up a new language's vocabulary for they can map the new words to their pre-existing knowledge (Constandi, 2014) and learn conceptual aspects of language better than children do (Hammond, 2014).

Nevertheless, some believe that adult learners can find challenges in their learning process. Besides learning, they have life responsibilities that may occupy their minds, such as demands or a job, running a home, and raising a family. These responsibilities can limit their time to plan, read, and study (Malone, 2014). Similarly, adult learners are different from traditional college students because most of them have families and jobs responsibilities that can affect their learning process (Cercone, 2008). Another challenge is stated by a biological hypothesis that, "Adults who become language learners have less possibility of achieving native mastery" (Zhao, 2004, p.10). They are less likely to possess good pronunciation and accent (Constandi, 2014). Besides, lack of mastery of the language frequently embarrasses older learners who are often in situations that require much more sophisticated language use (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

Some international studies also describe experiences and natures of adult learners in learning English. For instance, Wang (1999) interviews thirty voluntary participants who were female Mandarin-speaking immigrants learning English as a Second Language (ESL) in the Canadian context. The study reveals that adults' second language (L2) acquisition is a complex phenomenon as it involves learners' internal factors and social contexts in which the L2 is learned.

Lightbown and Spada (1999) details a research conducted by Catherine Snow and Marian Hoefnagel-Hohle in Holland. This research investigated the progress made by a group of English speakers who were learning Dutch. Young (aged 3 to 10 years), adolescent (aged 12 to 15 years, adult (aged 18 to 60 years) learners of the language participated in the study. One of the interesting findings is that adults and adolescents show a rapid progress in learning the target language in contexts where they use the language on their daily basis, particularly in social, personal, or academic interaction.

Bellingham (2004) conducts a case study to explore experiences of five Asian mature people who learn English in their late thirties and mid-fifties. The study concludes that there is language acquisition after 40 and regards the nature of teacher input, of learning environments, of the resources, learning strategies and approaches as main influences to the Asian learners in learning the language. In harmony with this finding, Todd, Marshall, and Snow (2000) argue:

"Age does influence language learning, but primarily because it is associated with social, psychological, educational, and other factors that can affect L2 proficiency, not because of any critical period that limits the possibility of language learning by adults" (p.28).

In a more recent year, Wu, Wu, Le (2014) survey fifty Chinese adult English as a Second Language (ESL) learners to discover their learning challenges and problems as well as the solutions to overcome them. The study reveals that a majority of the participants find it difficult to obtain a native-like accent and view that a family factor plays a negative role in their learning. To overcome these problems, the study suggests the learners be confident in their learning, coordinate their family relationship, and manage their working and learning

times well. In essence, the study states that adult education is essential to promote Chinese citizen's attainments and to develop the country.

As a modified replication of Bellingham's (2004) investigation, this study explores experiences of 30s Indonesian university students in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at ED-DU regarding a view that research on adult learners is relatively a new phenomenon (Hegarty, 2011). The study is also interested to find out whether the students qualitatively have similar learning experiences to those of the Asian learners as described by Bellingham's study. Besides, the current study aims to find out whether the students follow similar learning patterns to other adult learners as explained in the previous related literature without questioning, "the extent to which older individuals can successfully acquire a foreign language (Nunan & Benson, 2004, p.153)." The present study is expected to contribute a better understanding to teach adults as learners of English particularly in contexts of Indonesian higher education. The study also hopes to provide insights to adults who wish to pursue their study in their thirties so that they can have better ideas about what to do and what to consider during their learning process.

2. METHOD

This study was to explore the students' experiences in learning EFL in their thirties. It was clear that I needed to collect personal responses from research participants that indicated my limited control over the exploration (Malilang, 2013). Therefore, I conducted a qualitative study that aims to see real-world situations as they are (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009) and to hear silenced voices about particular issues (Creswell, 2007) so that the study could help me to understand social phenomena as perceived by human participants who were involved in the study (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). In particular, I carried out a case study that is particularly essential when a researcher has little control over an event (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995 as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morison, 2007) and investigates a phenomenon in its natural context (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). A case study is also a qualitative approach in which a researcher explores a bounded system (a case) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell, p.73).

The approach was adapted from Bellingham's (2004) investigation of groups of learners studying English in their late thirties to mid-fifties. I specifically conducted an intrinsic case study focusing its analysis on a particular case itself for the case presents a unique phenomenon in some ways (Creswell, 2007), but the study did not generalize its findings to broader populations (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The unique phenomenon was how the only two students in their thirties studied EFL at ED-DU. Further, the case was a bounded system (Creswell) specifically by the time in which I spent a month to collect the data and by the place in which I carried out the study at ED-DU. The Study Program was the place where the participants took a four-year undergraduate study that prepared them to become a future English language teacher. The place also showed a foreign language situation in which they "have very limited exposure to the language and typically have non-native teachers and no communicative need to use the foreign language outside the classroom" (Cenoz, 2003, p.78).

The study investigated cases of two ED-DU students, Vina and Vino (pseudonyms). They participated in this study to share their experiences in learning EFL in their age. Their experiences were recalled firstly from an open-ended questionnaire and subsequently from a semi-structured interview, which allows a researcher to "ask follow-up questions designed to probe more deeply issues of interests to interviewees" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p.40). The questionnaire was initially used for I assumed that participants could have some time to

reflect their learning experiences in a less anxious way (Mambu, 2014) before they did the interview. The questionnaire consisted of biographical information and open-ended guiding questions adapted from Bellingham's study (2004, p.58-59):

- Could you explain your understanding of how adults learn English?
- What advantages do older adults have in learning English?
- What disadvantages do they have?
- Are there any strategies that you like to use in learning English?
- What advice would you give to a person over 30 starting to learn English?

The students might answer these questions in their first language, *Bahasa Indonesia* (L1), to ensure that they could provide deeper responses to each question. Then, I read their responses and circled some ideas that they needed to clarify further in the interview session that was done in the participants' L1. Wang (1999) believes that interview can be a useful methodology to explore issues of adults' learning experiences. However, for some reasons, Vito decided not to participate in the interview. After all data had been collected, I collated and summarized them (Bellingham, 2004) into five major themes: [1] how the adults learn a new language, [2] advantages and [3] disadvantages perceived by the adult learners in learning English, [4] learning strategies done by the adult learners, and [5] advice to the adult learners.

Some excerpts of the students' responses to the questionnaire and the interview were presented to support the discussions in each theme. I showed the excerpts as they were without editing their responses (e.g., in terms of grammaticality) to maintain their truth-value (Sawir, 2005). However, I translated excerpts of responses to the questionnaire and interview expressed in L1 to ensure the clarity of the information for international readers. I put the findings of the current study in a Table and compared them with those revealed by Bellingham's investigation to find out whether Indonesian older EFL learners have the similar learning patterns to those by other older EFL learners in Asia. The findings were also compared to experiences of the adult learners as discussed in the literature to address a common learning pattern of the learners.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the current study, I did a triangulation technique, in which I used multiple sources of data (Ary, et al., 2010), the responses to the questionnaire and interview, to shed light on a particular perspective (Creswell, 2007). Further, Creswell also suggests, "checking for any possible misinformation that stems from distortions introduced by a researcher and an informant" (p.207). In this case, I showed the interview transcript to Vito, let her read and add necessary information to her responses. It was done to ensure if the transcription was what she intended to say.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the results of the questionnaire and interview data analysis to describe experiences of the students in learning English at ED-DU. Then, I use some tables to compare the findings of the current study to those by Bellingham's (2004) investigation. Eventually, I relate the findings to those of the previous related studies to explain the learning patterns of the adult learners.

3.1 How the adults learn a new language

Asked how adults learn a new language, Vino sees that learning is more than just memorizing words as what young learners do. Rather, adults will use their logical thinking when they learn the target language as what Vino details on the questionnaire:

“Orang dewasa mempunyai cara berbeda dalam mempelajari bahasa dibandingkan anak kecil. Orang dewasa telah mempunyai latar belakang (pengetahuan awal) tentang bahasa, jadi mereka mempunyai kemampuan logika, dengan mengaitkan kata demi kata berdasarkan pada kaidah penggunaan bahasa yang benar. Dengan kata lain, pembelajarannya di lakukan bukan hanya sekedar menghafal kata.” (Vino/QS/ALL)

“Compared to young students, adults learn a language differently because they have background knowledge of the language. This background knowledge helps them to have a logical ability to which they relate one word to another word based on correct language principles. In other words, learning is not a matter of memorizing words.” (translated by the researcher)

Meanwhile, Vina shares an optimistic belief that adults can learn whenever they want because they use various learning materials and learning strategies that suit their learning style. Vina describes her responses on the questionnaire:

“It’s never late to study; that is what I keep in my mind. I think it is not impossible for an adult to learn a new language. An adult can learn through any kinds of materials and methods. They can also adjust their strategies of learning based on their style.” (Vina/QS.ALL)

Table 1 shows the comparison of how adults learn a new language.

Table 1 How Adults Learn a New Language

Theme	The Current Study	Bellingham’s Study
How adults learn a new language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They use logical thinking more in learning the target language. They can use various learning materials and strategies to support their learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They sometimes have difficulties in memory and pronunciation. They also need a teacher who guides and provides them pressure to learn.

Though adult learners have trouble in their memory and pronunciation (Bellingham, 2004), the present study shows that they can think logically and use various learning materials and strategies in learning the target language.

3.2 Advantages perceived by the adult learners in learning English

Asked about the benefits, Vino is keen on stating that that his previous working experiences as an English language teacher in Kalimantan can broaden his knowledge, which helps his learning process at ED-DU.

“Pengalaman mengajar saya menjadi guru Bahasa Inggris di Kalimantan membuat wawasan saya menjadi lebih luas ketika saya belajar di FBS.” (Vino/QS/ADV)

“My English language teaching experiences in Kalimantan increase my knowledge when I study at ED-DU.” (translated by the researcher)

Vina also sees a similar advantage in a way that her life experiences can support her language learning process. Other benefits that she feels are related to vocabulary, learning motivation, and confidence as what she details on the questionnaire:

“Adults have wide range of vocabularies. They can associate language with their life experiences. They have more motivation to learn a new language, so they will study harder. Adult learners are more confident.” (Vina/QS/ADV)

In the interview, Vina clarifies how her learning motivation is built from her working experiences as a teacher. Further, she explains how the experiences enable her to learn a lot of things. Her previous working experiences make her feel confident specifically when is a group discussion as she can have many things in mind to share with her classmates.

“Saya pernah kerja, di dunia kerja itu kan enggak bisa yang asal-asalan, yang semau kita sendiri, karena ada tim, ada target, ada stakeholder yang punya kepentingan, jadi mau ga mau ya harus mengikuti ritme nya, jadi kalo ada target ya mau enggak mau harus mengikuti target itu, bagaimana caranya kalo tugas tugasnya banyak kita harus punya time management, stress management, itu bagian yang mempengaruhi. kalo kita less motivated kita ga bisa capai target, semua akan terbengkalai. Adult learners juga sudah punya banyak exposure dengan berbagai hal yang ada. Lebih PD nya mungkin kita waktu diskusi, mereka bisa punya banyak hal yang dishare.” (Vina/IW/ADV)

“I have worked. In the working world, we cannot do whatever we want. We work in a team. There are a target we have to achieve and a stakeholder with its plans. Therefore, we have to follow the working rhythm and achieve the set target. We have to manage our time and stress well, so we can complete any tasks we get. If we are less motivated, we cannot finish all the tasks. Besides, adult learners have many exposures to their surroundings. They are more confident when they do a group discussion. They have many things to share.” (translated by the researcher)

Table 2 displays the comparison of advantages perceived by the adult learners in learning English.

Table 2 Advantages Perceived by the Adult Learners

Theme	The Current Study	Bellingham's Study
The advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have rich vocabulary knowledge. They can relate their learning to their life experiences. They are more confident and have better motivation to learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have general world knowledge, previous language knowledge, self-discipline, and time.

The finding as described in Table 2 shows a similarity to that of Bellingham's study in a way that the adult learners have life-world experiences that they can relate to and, therefore, support their learning. The finding corroborates the views that adult learners have a whole range of life experiences to draw on (Harmer, 2007) and can relate new knowledge they learn to their past experiences (Zhao, 2004), which is as an advantage for their learning (Canadian Literacy and Learning Network, 2016). The current study also shows how the adult learners

can have more confidence and better motivation to learn. The underlying reason for their confidence and motivation is perhaps that they do understand why they are learning and what they want to achieve in their learning (Harmer).

3.3 Disadvantages perceived by the adult learners in learning English

Vino feels that adults have had a different priority in their life. Studying is no longer their primary goal. Rather, they want to work and collect money as what he explains on the questionnaire:

“Menghabiskan banyak waktu. Bila orang dewasa ditanya apakah yang akan dilakukan ke depan, jawabannya adalah ingin mencari pekerjaan. Maka waktu untuk belajar Bahasa menjadi mubazir. Pertimbangannya lebih baik waktu tersebut digunakan untuk bekerja dan mengumpulkan uang.” (Vino/QS/DIS)

The learning process is time-consuming. When asked what they will do in the future, adults will look for a job. Therefore, the time to learn the language will be out-of-date. They prefer to work and collect money.” (translated by the researcher)

Meanwhile, asked about the disadvantages, Vina concerns that adult learners are less confident to use technology that can support their learning. Unlike young learners who still have high exploratory sides, adult learners are sometimes afraid if they can cause problems to a computer they use:

“Kalo yang masih muda-muda, sisi eksplorasinya masih tinggi, coba sana-sini lebih tinggi antusiasnya. Yang sudah tua ini kadang takut salah, takut ada apa-apa, file nya hilang, komputer rusak. Walaupun saya suka dengan teknologi, saya masih kurang percaya diri saja.” (Vina/IW/DIS)

“Young learners have high exploratory sides. They try new things enthusiastically. However, adult learners are sometimes afraid if something happens to the computer. We are anxious if some files in the computer will disappear. Though I like technology, I am still less confident in utilizing it.” (translated by the researcher)

Adult learners may also be afraid to make mistakes and have many things to do outside their academic life. As a result, they sometimes find it difficult to focus on their study:

“Adult learners may be afraid to make mistakes. Some of them are less confident to use technology to help them developing their English skills. Adult learners have many things in mind, so they sometimes they are distracted with other business and do not focus on what they learn.” (Vina/QS/DIS)

In the interview, Vina clarifies that her focus is often distracted by her family matters, such as attending family related events and taking care of his family:

“Karena saya sudah berkeluarga, jadi ada banyak hal keluarga yang bisa mengganggu. Saya mencoba mengatur supaya semua bisa seimbang tetapi tidak bisa jadi ya lebih banyak waktunya buat keluarga. Hal sosial juga, karena suami saya berasal dari suku tertentu, mereka sering banyak acara adat yang harus juga saya ikuti”. (Vina/IW/DIS)

“I have a family so that there are many family things that can distract my focus to study. I try to manage my time so that I can balance my study and family times. I fail to do so. I spend more time with my family. It is also related to social matters. My husband is from a particular race that often holds customary events I have to attend.” (translated by the researcher)

Table 3 shows the comparison of disadvantages perceived by the adult learners in learning English.

Table 3 Disadvantages Perceived by the Adult Learners

Theme	The Current Study	Bellingham's Study
The disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are less confident in utilizing technology. They also have non-academic related matters to deal with, such as taking care of their family, attending family-related events, and collecting money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They have other demands on their time. For instance, they need to earn a living, maintain a family with its various needs, and spend their time to do their job. Therefore, they lack of time to study.

The current study reaffirms Bellingham's investigation in a way that non-academic related matters do affect the learning process of the adult learners. This finding can also corroborate how family matters (Wu, et al., 2014) and job responsibilities (Cercone, 2008) can affect adults' learning, such as to limit their time to plan, read, and study (Malone, 2014). In essence, the current study also reveals a new idea that utilizing technology to support learning becomes a challenge that the adult learners experience.

3.4 Learning strategies done by the adult learners

Learning strategies refers to particular actions or techniques that students utilize to enhance their learning (Oxford & Ehrman, 1998, p.8 as cited in Brown, 2007) and techniques that students adopt in their effort when they learn a second language (Troike, 2006). Vito mentions two main learning strategies that adults can use when they learn English in their thirties. The strategies are reading as many English books as possible and interacting with native speakers of English:

“Cara belajar terbaik menurut saya dalam belajar Bahasa adalah dengan membaca buku Bahasa Inggris sebanyak-banyaknya. Cara yang kedua adalah dengan cara belajar bersama dengan banyak interaksi dengan native speaker supaya bila ada kesalahan berbahasa yang dibuat akan langsung mendapat evaluasi dari lawan bicara.” (Vito/QS/STR)

“In my opinion, the best way to learn the language is by reading as many English books as possible. The second way is by frequently interacting with native speakers of English. Our interlocutor can correct any mistakes we make during the interaction.” (translated by the researcher)

Similar to Vito's learning strategies, Vito also feels that reading books can be a strategy that adults can use. Besides, she visits VOA (learningenglish.voanews.com/), a website that provides its users with abundant recordings for listening practice, and utilizes the internet to find out supporting information for her learning. Other strategies include watching movies and reading her materials before she enters her class:

“My strategies are reading books, listening to VOA, always reading materials before the class, reading, again and again to get a better understanding, searching on the internet if I get some problems in learning, doing exercises, watching movies especially children movies.” (Vina/QS/STR)

Table 4 shows the comparison of learning strategies done by the adult language learners.

Table 4 Learning Strategies Done by the Adult learners

Theme	The Current Study	Bellingham's Study
The strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They read many English books. They visit some educational websites to provide them with listening materials. They also interact with native speakers, watch movies, and read their materials before class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They listen to songs, talk on phone, watch television news three times in one evening to recycle the topics, find opportunities to speak with local people.

The present finding is in harmony with that of Bellingham's investigation in a way that adult learners should find opportunities to interact with native speakers of English when they learn the target language. The present finding can corroborate a view that adults can make considerable progress in mastering a second language in particular contexts where they can use the language on a daily basis in social and personal interaction (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Therefore, it is clear that the opportunity to interact with native speakers both within and outside of the classroom is a significant advantage (Paul, 2016). Also, the finding appears to show that the students can be regarded as communicative learners who “liked to learn by observing and listening to native speakers, talking to friends in English, and learning by conversations” (as cited in Richards, 2001, p.224). Another similar learning pattern can also be seen from the use of movies and television news that they watch as strategies they implement in learning the target language. These findings would seem to indicate the learners can also be categorized as concrete learners who “preferred learning by films and videos, talking in pairs, and learning through the use of cassettes” (as cited by Richards, p.224). The current study also highlights the use of educational websites that can provide free-downloaded audio files for the learners to practice their listening skills. Some websites that the learners may visit are:

- www.eslfast.com;
- www.breakingnewsenglish.com;
- www.famouspeoplelessons.com/.

3.5 Advice to the adult learners

Vino advises the adult learners to be confident to interacting with native speakers and to trying even if they have made mistakes. The other advice deals with reading as many English books as possible:

“Lebih percaya diri untuk berinteraksi dengan native speaker atau orang lain dengan bahasa yang akan dipelajari. Harus percaya diri dan tidak mundur bila melakukan kesalahan. Cara yang lebih efektif adalah dengan membaca buku sebanyak-banyaknya.” (Vino/QS/AVC)

Adults need to be more confident to interact with native speakers or other people using the target language. They should keep confident when they make mistakes.

A more effective way is by reading as many books as possible.” (translated by the researcher).

Asked about the advice, Vina sees the importance of self-motivation in a way that adult learners actively should ask something they want to know more during their learning process. Besides, they must have the desire to study the target language. Vina clarifies her responses on the questionnaire.

“If we want to learn a new language, we must have the desire, self-motivation to study and persistence. As we get older, the memory and attention will decrease, so we must spend more time to study. Never be afraid to ask anything we do not understand. Make use the technology to help us.” (Vina/QS/AVC)

In the interview, Vina supports her responses on how adult learners should have self-motivation, passion, and clear purposes when they decide to study in their thirties.

“Kalo menurut saya, harus punya desire untuk belajar, passion kita akan mengejar apa yang diinginkan. Jangan less motivated, karena kita tidak akan mencapai yang terbaik dari apa yang kita bisa. Kalo kita self-motivation, saya punya purpose yang jelas, saya akan lakukan apapun untuk mencapai tujuan saya” (Vina/IW/AVC).

“Adult learners should have the passion for achieving what they want. We should not be less-motivated. Otherwise, we will never reach our goal. If I have self-motivation and clear purposes, I will do anything to achieve my aim.” (translated by the researcher)

Table 5 details the comparison of advice given to English language learners in their thirties.

Table 5 Advice to the Adult Learners

Theme	The Current Study	Bellingham's Study
The advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They need to be confident in interacting with native speakers. They should have motivation and desire to learn the target language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They need to be confident and to commit large amounts of time on both a daily basis and long term to learn the target language.

The current study shows a similar finding to that of Bellingham's study in a way that adult learners should possess their self-confidence when they start to learn the target language. Besides, Bellingham's study helps to illustrate the self-motivation and desire to learn the language as revealed by the current study. In that case, the adult learners have to be committed to spending their time to learn the target language, which also helps to corroborate the internal factors involved in adults' L2 acquisition (Wang, 1999). Further, it is essential for the adult learners to possess their learning motivation as it has been pervasively acknowledged as an essential determinant of students' language learning achievement (McDonough, 1983; Ellis, 1994; Kimura, Nakata, & Okumura, 2000; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Alsayed, 2003; Lifrieri, 2005; Khamkhien, 2010). In essence, Thoms (2001, p.7-8) suggests some practical strategies to help motivate adult learners:

[a] explaining why certain assignments are made and their relevance to the overall course; [b] providing plenty of documentation for them such as in the form of hands-on experience and paper documentation; [c] creating a climate of exploration; [d] letting them to work in groups; [e] ensuring that they are equipped

with enough knowledge and skill to complete the assignment, rather than setting the person up for failure

4. CONCLUSION

A possible conclusion would be that the adult learners involved in this study [1] can be categorized into concrete and communicative learners (as cited in Richards, 2001), [2] have past life-world experiences that support their learning, [3] and that increase their learning motivation and self-confidence. Besides, they can [4] implement various learning strategies to learn the target language. However, their learning [5] can be distracted by their non-academic related matters and [6] anxiety to utilize technology to support their learning. The current study confirms the existence of L2 acquisition for adult learners as revealed by Bellingham's (2004) investigation and confirms Contesse's (2009) view that:

“In terms of language pedagogy, it can therefore be concluded that there is no single ‘magic’ age for L2 learning, both older and younger learners are able to achieve advanced levels of proficiency in an L2, and the general and specific characteristics of the learning environment are also likely to be variables of equal or greater importance” (p.171).

The current study also provides some evidence that language-learning acquisition is not limited by age and endorses a view that “age does influence language learning, but primarily because it is associated with social, psychological, educational, and other factors that can affect L2 proficiency, not because of any critical period that limits the possibility of language learning by adults” (Todd, Marshall, & Snow, 2000, p.28). The thing to consider is the fact that the adult learners have more things to consider and manage in addition to their academic life compared to younger learners. It is more about motivation and passion that counts when the adult learners learn a new language. Based on the findings of this study, it would be interesting to explore motivational factors inside or outside a classroom that can support the adults in learning English in their thirties.

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