

De volgende Duitse studie onderzocht bijna 20.000 leerlingen in meer dan 1400 klassen en vond geen langetermijnverschil.	
Baumert, J., Fleckenstein, J., Leucht, M., Köller, O., & Möller, J. (2020). The long-term proficiency of early, middle, and late starters learning English as a foreign language at school: A narrative review and empirical study. <i>Language Learning</i> , 70(4), 1091–1135. https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12414	
1091	We examined the effects of early-start English on receptive language proficiency in a random sample of 19,858 students from 1,431 Year 9 classes in Germany, comparing the reading and listening comprehension of early starters (English from Year 1), a middle group (Year 3), and late starters (Year 5)
1103	findings are also consistent in showing that late starters learn at a faster pace, although these higher learning rates do not always entirely offset the exposure advantage of early starters, in the short or middle term. Nevertheless, full “catch-up” effects have been reported in the longer term, with both early and late starters closing initial gaps
1122	In sum, this study found no evidence for the expected positive effects of early-start English. After 5 years of English at secondary level, the exposure advantage of students who learned English at elementary school was eroded.

Singleton, D., & Leśniewska, J. (2024). The role of age in second language development. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*. (39) 359-371.

360	We argue that the widespread belief in the crucial role of age is not only not supported, but often countered by empirical findings.
363	<p>The Evidence from Classroom Contexts</p> <p>In the mid-twentieth century, under the influence of powerful enthusiasts for early L2 instruction in the school curriculum – such as Penfield – a trend began to lower the starting age of institutional foreign language learning. This trend, which started fairly gradually, more recently has accelerated dramatically the world over (see e.g., Murphy 2014; Singleton & Flynn, forthcoming), seemingly flying in the face of empirical research, which for decades has found that pupils who are taught a foreign language at primary school do not in the long run maintain the advantage of their early start (see Pfenninger & Singleton, 2017; Singleton & Leśniewska, 2021). Already in the 1970s, studies were conducted (e.g, Burstall, 1975; Carroll, 1975) which did not find in favour of the capacity of early instruction to deliver higher proficiency levels than later instruction. This has been the consistent finding since. Later beginners, despite less learning time, prove in the long run to be equal or superior to earlier beginners across a range of measures (see Muñoz & Singleton, 2011). Even in immersion situations it was found that older immersion learners were as successful as younger learners in shorter time periods (e.g, Swain & Lapkin, 1989; Turnbull, Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1998; cf. Pfenninger & Singleton, 2019a).</p>
364	recent years saw several large-scale studies which were able to compare the outcomes for students who started L2 education at different points in their lives. Contrary to expectations, these studies failed to demonstrate any advantage for learners who started FL instruction earlier. For example, Pfenninger and Singleton (2017), Jaekel et al. (2017) and Baumert et al. (2020) did not find any advantage for early-start learners. Pfenninger and Singleton (2017) analysed cross-sectional and longitudinal data from over 200 Swiss learners of English as a third or fourth language. They examined various factors such as learners’ experience, contexts, attitudes, orientations, as well as the correlation between their first language (L1) proficiency and proficiency

	<p>in the target language. Their findings showed that students who began learning English at the start of secondary school performed better than those who started in the third grade of primary school across all areas. Similarly, Jaekel et al. (2017) and Baumert et al. (2020), who conducted studies with German learners of English, also failed to observe greater improvements for early starters. Baumert et al. (2020) found that the advantage gained by students who started learning English in elementary school diminished over time, which led them to conclude that there was “no evidence for the expected positive effects of early-start English” after 5 years of English instruction at the secondary level. Jaekel et al. (2017) found that an early start actually placed learners at a disadvantage.</p> <p>Earlier studies on early second language instruction and its outcomes have been reviewed by Huang (2016) in a thorough synthesis of empirical research. The analysis, which includes articles published in English between 1964 and 2014, reveals that the majority of studies found no advantage for younger learners or indicated an advantage for older learners. Older learners generally performed better or equally well, although some studies showed evidence of younger learners catching up over time. Overall, the synthesis indicates that there is minimal empirical evidence supporting linguistic advantages relative to early second language (L2) instruction, with the exception of a possible benefit in terms of enhanced auditory skills, particularly speech perception, pronunciation, and listening comprehension.</p>
367	Numerous studies have failed to show that early instruction leads to higher proficiency levels compared to instruction provided at a later stage.