

# Optimizing Second Language Acquisition: A Focus on Influential Factors and Techniques

Nahida Abdo Naser\*

## Abstract

*The process through which individuals learn a language other than their mother tongue, usually after mastering their first language, is known as second language acquisition, or SLA. In this context, the second language refers to English, and this paper examines the factors influencing its acquisition. Reviews and research on SLA have been considered for a comprehensive study. The use of various tools and technologies for second language learning is highlighted, and their relationships are clearly established in this paper. Previous studies and controversies are explored to deepen the understanding of the concept. The factors influencing English language learning are broadly defined and reviewed in depth, providing insights into real-world applications. This paper also examines different languages to identify the factors involved in learning English. Various authors' perspectives and viewpoints are analyzed to draw specific conclusions. A secondary research methodology is employed, utilizing reviews and observations from multiple authors. The results and discussion are based on this approach, leading to a well-rounded conclusion. The study also highlights the significance of social and cultural factors in SLA, emphasizing how learners' settings affect their proficiency. Issues including exposure, age, and motivation are examined critically, with an emphasis on using creative teaching techniques to get past these obstacles. Future study directions are also suggested in order to fill in the gaps in the body of literature and promote more successful English learning frameworks around the world.*

**Keywords:** Creative teaching techniques, second language acquisition, factors influencing SLA, variability, changes in English learning

## INTRODUCTION

A vital component of culture and a consistent source of identity is language. Learning a second language is essential for forming one's identity. Focusing on the African and West African perspectives on multilingualism, this work highlights the role of second language acquisition in identity formation, drawing evidence from everyday experiences to support this claim and addressing gaps in observable changes.

Learning English in the United States involves not only acquiring the language but also immersing oneself in the culture. This contrasts with learning English in non-English-speaking countries in West Africa, where cultural immersion introduces a variety of cultural shifts (Loewen & Sato, 2018) [1]. This underscores the strong relationship between language learning and the re-evaluation of cultural norms as learners confront the cultural standards of the target language.

This suggests that learning English globally is not merely a linguistic activity aimed at enhancing the learner's quality of life but also a process requiring adaptation to the cultural dimensions of a new environment. The study of differences in language

### \*Author for Correspondence

Nahida Abdo Naser  
E-mail: [nahidaabdonaser@gmail.com](mailto:nahidaabdonaser@gmail.com)

Lecturer, Department of English, Cihan University-Duhok,  
Kurdistan Region, Iraq

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learning outcomes focuses not on sound filtration and data diffusion but on shedding light on the natural aspects of early and late language acquisition (Mahmoodi & Yousefi, 2022) [2].

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Previous Literature on Second Language Acquisition**

This section reviews case studies addressing issues related to speech skills. The relationship between second language learners' anxiety, confidence, and speech performance (Teimouri et al., 2019) [3]. The study involved 132 Korean doctors and suggested that the use of appropriate speech skills can effectively reduce speaker anxiety. Ali Dincer and Sawas Yeşilyurt (2013) investigated teachers' beliefs about speaking skills in relation to motivational tendencies [4]. Their findings indicated that, although teachers recognized the importance of speaking skills, they held a negative view of oral teaching (Yan et al., 2021) [5]. Furthermore, the study highlighted that while teachers adopted different methods to promote English speaking, they often felt they lacked sufficient communication skills (Hanzawa, 2024) [6]. These results suggest that stress and anxiety significantly hinder students' ability to develop and apply language skills. Additionally, Schmidt (1992) explored collaborative learning activities in second language acquisition [7].

### **Controversy Over Existence**

During a period of technological advancement in fields such as language and psychology, the study of second language acquisition (SLA) expanded. Research has shown that individuals who learn a second language early in life are often indistinguishable from native speakers, while those who begin in adolescence may face greater challenges, such as heightened anxiety (Schiller & Dorner, 2022) [8]. These developments have influenced multiple scientific domains, including research on brain structures, the role of neural maturity in learning, and variability in language skills.

This area also examines the early development of children and approaches to teaching foreign languages (Rothman & Slabakova, 2018) [9]. However, the precise reasons underlying the "critical period" of SLA remain unclear (Mahmoodi & Yousefi, 2021) [2].

The process of acquiring a second language system involves determining how to integrate elements from the target language. For instance, adapting the existing structure of L1 often requires learners to redesign or rearrange features in ways that may differ significantly in the second language (Meşe & Sevilen, 2021) [10]. This process is more complex than simple "replacement" or "selection" models, which are sometimes used to describe SLA (Sato & Csizér, 2021) [11]. Additionally, there is an ongoing debate about comparative research in SLA, particularly regarding which linguistic behaviors should be analyzed when evaluating functional classes.

## **FACTORS INFLUENCING SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

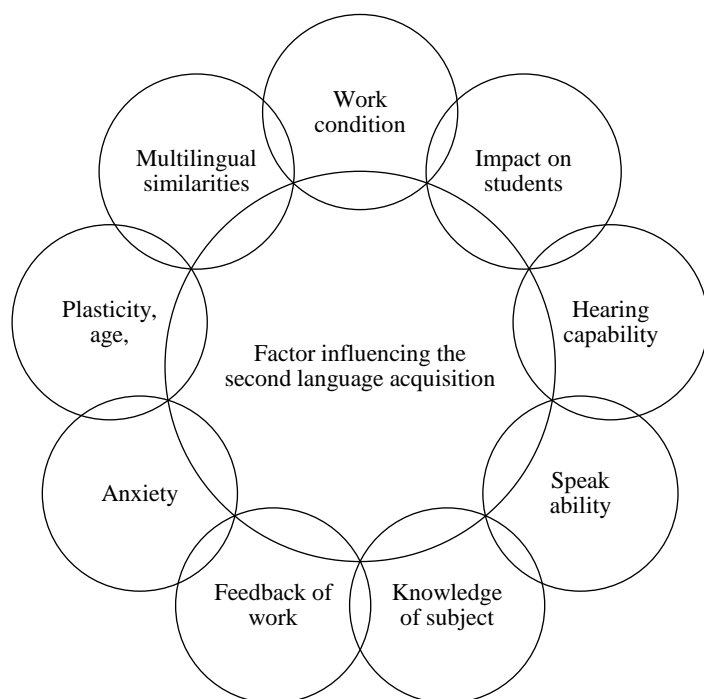
Various factors described below influencing the acquisition of a second language as shown in Figure 1.

### **Work Conditions**

Student speaking performance is influenced by work conditions, involvement, hearing ability, and responsiveness during speaking activities. Work conditions include factors such as time pressure, planning, task quality, and the availability of support. These elements significantly affect students' ability to perform speaking tasks (Khajavy et al., 2018) [12].

### **Impact on Students**

The second factor is the impact on students. Oxford emphasizes that one of the most critical aspects of language learning is its effect on learners (Leong & Ahmadi 2017) [13]. Krashen (1981) associates second language acquisition with variables like motivation, confidence, and anxiety, which have been extensively studied [14].



**Figure 1.** Different factors influencing the acquisition of second language.

### **Individual Hearing Ability**

Hearing ability is the third crucial factor. According to DAF, students cannot improve their speaking abilities without first developing their listening skills. Effective communication depends on the ability to comprehend spoken messages. Speaking and listening are interdependent processes, where speakers must also act as listeners. A lack of understanding hampers students' ability to respond appropriately, underscoring the close relationship between speaking and hearing.

### **Prior Knowledge of the Subject**

Prior knowledge is another significant aspect. Ericsson and Kintsch (1995) describe cognitive structures stored in long-term memory as crucial for speaking performance [15]. Subject knowledge allows learners to apply language effectively in context, particularly in their local environment. A strong understanding of the subject matter positively influences students' speaking abilities.

### **Feedback on Work**

Feedback during speaking activities plays a vital role. Students often rely on constructive feedback from teachers to improve their language skills. Wong et al., (2019) advises teachers to carefully evaluate the stage of students' studies and the nature of errors they make during tasks [16]. While immediate problem-solving may disrupt the flow of speech, regular correction and encouragement help students refine their abilities and build confidence.

### **Ability to Speak**

EFL students' speaking abilities are influenced by various linguistic components, including phonology, vocabulary, and physiological factors such as personality development. English pronunciation often diverges from spelling, and identical spellings can yield different pronunciations depending on context, such as tense or vowel placement. These challenges can confuse non-native speakers, who must learn to divide words into distinct sounds and apply sentence-level emphasis.

### **Motivation**

Motivation is a key factor in second language learning. An integrative and supportive approach to language learning fosters familiarity with audio and linguistic features, enhancing students' ability to

speak thoughtfully. Students with a positive attitude toward the language tend to make greater progress in mastering its various aspects (Figure 2).

**Plasticity, Diversity, and Age**

**Neurobiology Evolution and Behavioral Consequences**

Inhibition is the second-highest factor affecting second language acquisition, with a value of 0.75. This is followed by attitude at 0.7, and working conditions and motivation, both at 0.68, among others. These factors play significant roles in shaping the language learning experience, emphasizing the complexity of acquiring a second language.

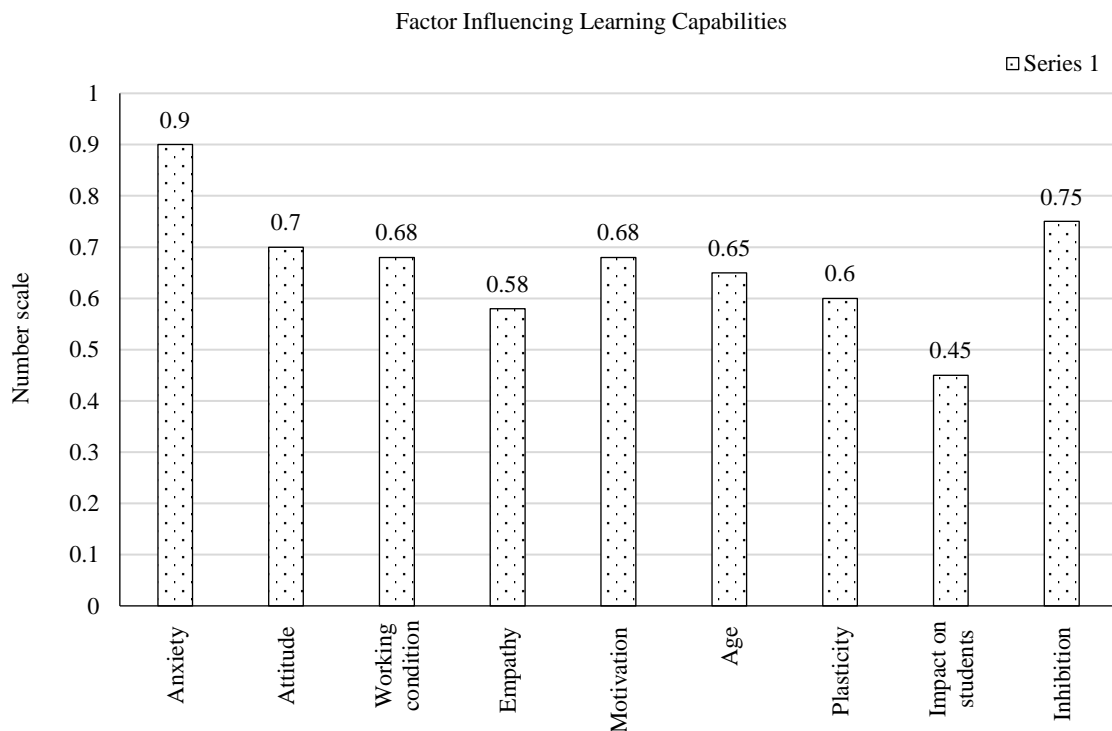
**Neurobiological Perspectives on Language Acquisition**

The concept of plasticity in adult language acquisition has been widely discussed (Birdsong, 2018) [17]. They argued that treatment for aphasia in the adult brain had limited success, whereas a child's brain was "plastic," allowing for language recovery and learning. Similarly, linking difficulties in second language acquisition among older learners to specific hemispheric functions and the reduced plasticity of the brain, which hampers basic language acquisition.

Recent studies provide neurobiological explanations for the reduction in plasticity with age. The "Use and Loss" model suggests that necessary neural areas for language learning are pruned after adolescence due to the lack of pressure to acquire new languages in adulthood. This is further exacerbated by the "greedy nervous system," which reallocates resources away from language acquisition in favor of other cognitive functions (Figure 3).

**Plasticity, Variability, and Critical Time for Second Language Acquisition**

It is generally believed that adults are less able to acquire a second language at a basic level due to the missed "critical period" for language learning (Hartshorne et al., 2018) [18]. This critical period is often associated with the Age of Acquisition (AoA), which is a crucial factor in second language proficiency.



**Figure 2.** Factor influencing the learning of second language at multiple scale.

Two primary factors contribute to this difficulty:

1. The type of work involved in language acquisition, which relates to the fulfillment of AoA.
2. Evidence of a comprehensive domestic second language process encompassing all aspects of knowledge, production, and performance.

### **AoA - Second Language Acquisition Function**

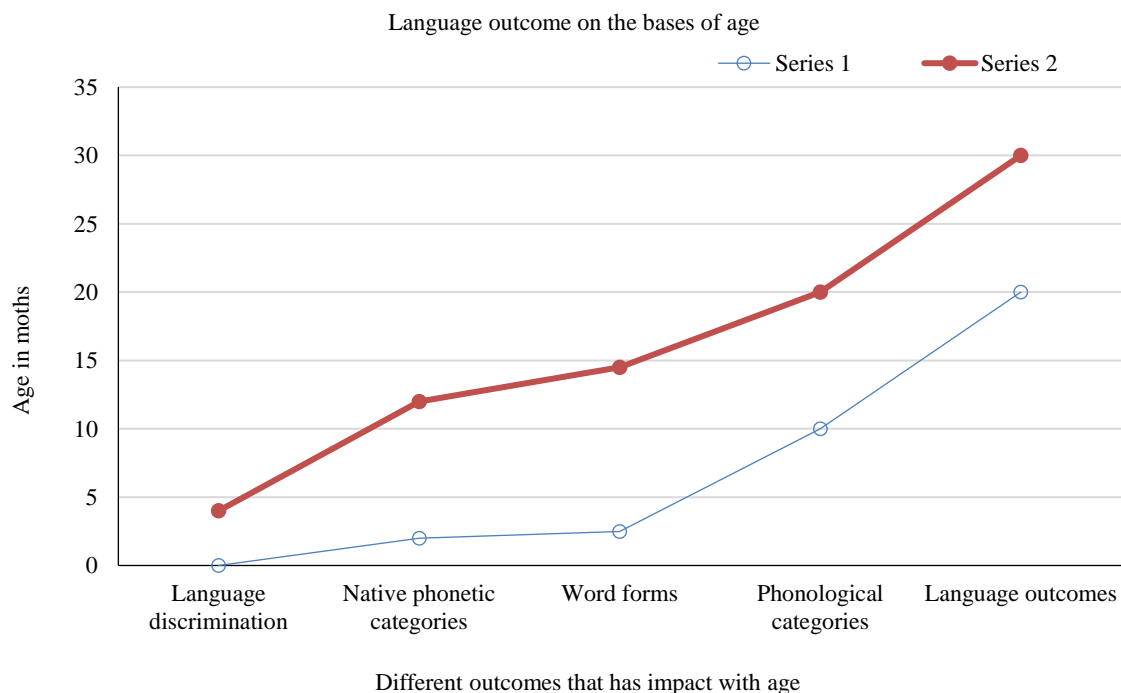
It's clear from the Figure 3 that language discrimination is lowest in young people, and second language outcomes are Higher in older individuals. The geometric principles of AoA are believed to reflect the processes responsible for language learning and show relevant results. Some researchers have argued that second-language learning, which starts late after puberty, should be discontinued. In other words, the impact of AoA on second language learning should be most apparent for early language specialists, but AoA should no longer be an invisible barrier to young students, as it only matures at that time. In this view, the geometry of language learning should resemble the "extended L" (Alexopoulou et al., 2017) [19].

### **Multilingual Similarities**

People with multilingualism often have better memory, more motivation to learn metaphysical knowledge, and stronger analytical abilities in all the languages they have already learned. The qualities of "talented multilingual speakers" greatly benefit intellectual testing; they are imaginative, tenacious, and knowledgeable. Many languages have been gifted to human speakers, while they also possess an extraordinary memory for words. They use their advanced analytical skills to identify phonological and morphological syntax patterns, and with high levels of control, they can switch between languages without the slightest interruption.

### **Anxiety**

Early studies described second language anxiety in general terms, either as personality sensitivity or as a transient emotional state that manifests itself at specific times (e.g., during peak testing). However, over time, researchers have developed an explanation for a particular type of anxiety that "occurs from time to time in specific situations," such as during the language acquisition process in a repetitive classroom environment, dividing this into a common type of anxiety (MacIntyre, 2017) [20].



**Figure 3.** The outcomes of second language acquisition according to the age (in months).

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- RQ1: How can the field of second language acquisition or development help students cope with the complexity and dynamics of the world in which we live?
- RQ2: What insights can be gained from your changes in language learning?

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This paper relies entirely on secondary research. Available articles, papers, and magazines have been used for this purpose. The information gathered helped in investigating the case and will be useful for the authors to complete the study. Theoretical concepts are given the most importance in order to cover the paper comprehensively.

This approach has also helped us understand the perspectives of others and reconsider their views. It aids in analyzing past data and supports this well-researched work. The quantitative research approach is heavily emphasized here. Information and resources available on the Internet also assist in drawing the right conclusions. The use of technology for learning purposes is beneficial, and most countries are familiar with it. Many high schools and universities use technology to teach English.

Notes, letters, and journals from various authors have been helpful in locating relevant information. The sample study and past results are also useful in research studies. The focus is on factual information and research based on valid data. Various universities and research institutes are considered in this study.

Key processes are essential in the research process to reach a certain level. Appropriate research data is collected and reviewed. Insignificant or excessive data is not considered here; the focus is primarily on relevant data. Therefore, no author's value or point is generally accepted without proper evaluation. This research work is systematically organized and presented. The results and recommendations are based on the relevant information available.

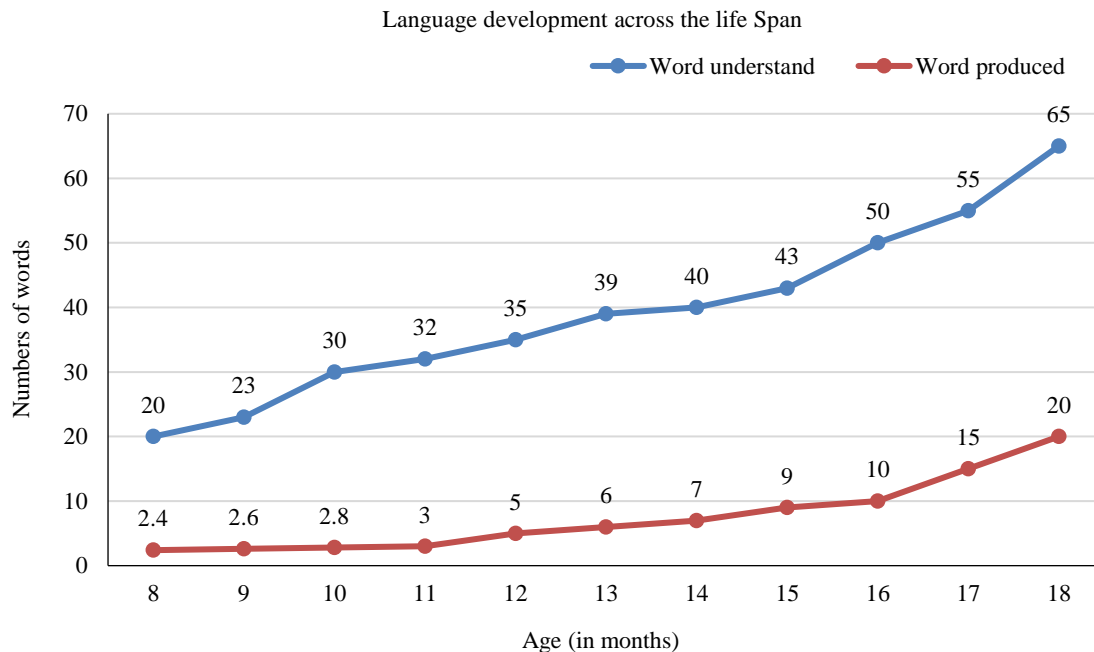
**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In line with previous work on second language acquisition (SLA), as well as a global perspective on the importance of language, SLA researchers have developed new questionnaires that can propel us forward in the future. Two key points have caught the researcher's attention in this article.

**Environmental Situation**

Due to the uncertainty of our planet, the environment will be the first area of investigation, with the appropriate focus. Rather than trying to understand the difficulties by minimizing the ways many sectors have operated over the decades, today's global context needs a coherent, comprehensive, ecological, and contextual accounting system (Yashima et al., 2018) [21]. From an environmental standpoint, the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) assumes that SLA does not always occur in isolation from local and regional areas. Instead, it is shaped by nature and is strongly connected to it. Ideas for environmental policy plans are essential because systems contain interconnected components; changes to any element of a growing system can affect others in unexpected, non-linear ways (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017) [22].

Research on each variation provides examples from the past. Since the beginning of the SLA field, there has been a division of research efforts, with some researchers focusing on the primary SLA process mentioned above, while others explore why L2 learners differ in their success. In regard to the question of differing successes, significant research has assessed differences such as fitness, age, attitude, and motivation (Van Houten-Schat et al., 2018) [23]. Recently, new topics have emerged, such as communication skills, student concerns, recognition, feelings, beliefs, and strategies. However, with the full level of minimalism the student is not just a combination of flexibility (Anderson et al., 2018) [24]. The rejection of the "general student" and the shift in SLA research have ushered in a new era focused on individual research.



**Figure 4.** Language development across the age of an individual.

### The Importance of Social and Political Context

The second necessary change is the restoration of the understanding of the importance of social and political status and the nature of the obstacles that shape a specific context. Language learning does not occur in an isolated environment; it can be strongly influenced by the beliefs of others (Horwitz, 2017) [25]. For this reason, scholars have challenged SLA researchers and theorists, particularly in theories related to disease, and hope this article will contribute to more comprehensive future SLA studies.

### Learning with Age

Some aspects of second language learning have sparked more controversy regarding age. Differences in interpretation are not new to any area of research. However, disagreements about both the facts and their implications are particularly significant here. According to theories, there is a paradox: children are often considered better and more successful second language learners than adults in all respects. However, younger and older children are more effective and efficient second language learners than children, creating the least amount of disagreement among SLA researchers. The four main positions on age-related differences in SLA are: 1) "Young = Better," 2) the opposing view, "Old = Better," 3) "Young = Better in some ways," and 4) "Smaller age differences = Ultimately better." Various studies have supported each of these four variables in age-related differences in second language acquisition as shown in Figure 4. Throughout this paper, numerous studies and theories on the role of age in SLA are presented and discussed. The next step is to determine whether one or more positions can be dismissed and, if possible, whether one opinion can be considered definitive or credible (Age as a Factor in Second Language Acquisition).

### CONCLUSION

While SLA researchers continue to examine the range of cognitive, social, and interpersonal interactions involved in the SLA process, they also explore the dynamic relationships between elements in the learner's language system that define and transform the learning process. Additionally, researchers consider the role of materials and seek to avoid simplistic approaches that do not yield effective results. Stretching techniques have been found in several studies, but these do not always involve consistent application and access to language resources. Multilingualism and multidisciplinary tools are employed for different purposes, contexts, and challenges across various domains.

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### Scope for Further Research

Future research in SLA should focus on the long-term effects of age, cognitive factors, and social contexts on language learning. The impact of technology in language acquisition, particularly in personalized learning, also remains underexplored. Additionally, investigating the relationship between multilingualism and cognitive development could lead to new teaching strategies. A more holistic approach, considering cognitive, emotional, and social factors, would offer a comprehensive framework for SLA, especially by studying individual learner profiles and their impact on success.

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