

# Second language learning

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# Defintion

It is the process by which people learn a second language. Second-language acquisition is also the scientific discipline devoted to studying that process. The field of second-language acquisition is a subdiscipline of applied linguistics, but also receives research attention from a variety of other disciplines, such as psychology and educationt

**Second language learning** is a conscious process where the learning of another language other than the First Language (L1) takes place. Often confused with bilingualism and multilingualism, the process has to take place after the first language(s) has already been acquired. Having said that, Second language learning could also refer to the third, fourth, or fifth (so on and so forth) language the learner is currently learning.

# L1 vs L2

The First Language (L<sub>1</sub>) refers to the language you learn since you were born (not literally, of course). It is commonly known as the language(s) of your parents or caregivers, basically, the person(s) you spend time with the most from you were in your mother's womb till you are about 5 years old. It is possible to have more than one L<sub>1</sub>. The Second Language (L<sub>2</sub>), on the other hand, refers to the language learned after the L<sub>1</sub> has been acquired. A language can only be referred to as your L<sub>2</sub> if the learning occurs after you have acquired your L<sub>1</sub>.



## Foreign language setting FLSVs. Second language setting SLS

FLS is learning a language that is not generally spoken in the surrounding community.

SLS is learning a language that is spoken in the surrounding community

# Acquisition Vs Learning

**Acquisition** is used to refer to the gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situations with others who know the language.

**Learning** refers to a more conscious process of accumulating knowledge of the features, such as vocabulary and grammar, of a language, typically in an institutional setting. (Mathematics, for example, is learned, not acquired.)

## Note : Activities associated with learning and acquisition differ

-**Activities** associated with **learning** have traditionally been used in language teaching in schools and have a tendency, when successful, to result in more knowledge 'about' the language (as demonstrated in tests) than fluency in actually using the language.

Activities associated with acquisition are those experienced by the young child and, by analogy, those who 'pick up' a second language from long periods spent in interaction, constantly using the language, with native speakers of the language.

# Acquisition barriers

Second language learners encounter the L2 during their teenage or adult years, in a few hours each week of school time (rather than via the constant interaction experienced as a child), with a lot of other things going on (young children have little else to do), and with an already known language available for most of their daily communicative requirements.

There are some individuals who seem to be able to overcome the difficulties and develop an ability to use the L2 quite effectively, though not usually sounding like a native speaker



However, even in ideal acquisition situations, very few adults seem to reach native-like proficiency in using an L2. This might suggest that some features of an L2, such as vocabulary and grammar, are easier to learn than others such as pronunciation. Indeed, without early experience using the sounds and intonation of the L2, even highly fluent adult learners are likely to be perceived as having an ‘accent’ of some kind

# Critical period

This type of observation is sometimes taken as evidence that, after the critical period for language acquisition has passed, around the time of puberty, it becomes very difficult to acquire another language. We might think of this process in terms of our inherent capacity for language being strongly taken over by features of the L<sub>1</sub>, with a resulting loss of flexibility or openness to receive the features of another language.

# Effective learning

The effective learning of an L2 requires a combination of factors. The optimum age for learning may be during the years from about ten to sixteen when the flexibility of our inherent capacity for language has not been completely lost, and the maturation of cognitive skills allows a more effective analysis of the regular features of the L2 being learned.