

Second Language Acquisition

Based on classic and cutting-edge research, this textbook shows how grammatical phenomena can best be taught to second language and bilingual learners. Bringing together second language research, linguistics, pedagogical grammar, and language teaching, it demonstrates how linguistic theory and second language acquisition findings optimize classroom intervention research. The book assumes a generative approach but covers intervention studies from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Each chapter describes relevant linguistic structures, discusses core challenges, summarizes research findings, and concludes with classroom and lab-based intervention studies. The authors provide tools to help to design linguistically informed intervention studies, including discussion questions, application questions, case studies, and sample interventions. Online resources feature lecture slides and intervention materials, with data analysis exercises, ensuring the content is clear and ready to use. Requiring no more than a basic course in linguistics, the material serves advanced undergraduates and first-year graduate students studying applied linguistics, education, or language teaching.

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Second Language Acquisition

Introducing Intervention Research

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We dedicate this textbook to our respective families
and to all our students: past, present, and future.

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Preface

As globalization continues and the world becomes more and more multilingual, the need for trained language teachers will only continue to grow. Teaching second or foreign languages requires foundational knowledge of the process of second language acquisition (SLA) and the factors that affect it, as well as the understanding that research findings from SLA have implications for the classroom. There are many books that introduce students to second language acquisition, on the one hand, and books that focus on approaches to grammar teaching, on the other. At the same time, until now, no book on the market has informed both students of SLA and current and future language teachers about how particular grammatical phenomena can best be taught to students of a second or foreign language. Therefore, we felt a need to fill this gap and wrote this book to bring together linguistics, findings in second language acquisition, and studies on classroom intervention research.

Who Is the Reader?

The intended audience of this book are upper-level undergraduate students and master's students in a variety of fields, such as linguistics, applied linguistics, and education (specifically, language teaching); the book assumes some basic knowledge of linguistics, so readers who have taken an introduction to linguistics course or equivalent should have little difficulty following along. The book does not assume any prior familiarity with SLA or with classroom intervention research.

What Does This Book Do?

This book aims to bring together the fields of linguistics, second language acquisition, and experimental intervention research in the lab and in the classroom. The objectives of this book are:

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1. to familiarize current, future, and potential language teachers with existing research findings that bear on how specific grammatical phenomena can best be taught;
2. to strengthen the link between linguistics, SLA, and classroom intervention research, by providing specific information about how linguistic theory and SLA findings have informed classroom intervention research;
3. to inform pedagogical practice with evidence from research about the direct effects of language teaching on specific aspects of language learning; and
4. to provide beginning researchers with information and tools that can help them design their own linguistically informed classroom intervention research studies.

Inside This Book

The book mainly focuses on English and Spanish as the target second languages, both because these are the languages on which by far the most classroom intervention research has been done and because this choice makes our book particularly relevant for courses that prepare future English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) teachers or future Spanish teachers. Despite this focus, we mention several studies with other target languages (Japanese, Italian, French, Russian, etc.), and the studies in the book discuss a great variety of typologically distinct native languages, in order to address the kinds of challenges faced by learners as a result of cross-linguistic influence. In the discussion questions and application activities we have included references to other languages as well.

In terms of populations, we discuss studies of child and adult second language learners and of adult heritage speakers. Heritage speakers are early bilinguals whose first or home language is a minority language. As adults, many of these students seek to relearn their heritage language in the classroom, and very often they are placed in classes with second language learners. In the last two decades, teacher education programs and foreign-language programs have recognized heritage speakers as a bilingual population with specific linguistic needs. Many countries in Europe have policies of mother tongue instruction for heritage speakers, and while this situation does not generalize to other contexts, the education of heritage speakers is a global concern. The last few years have seen significant growth in language classes and programs at the post-secondary level to address the linguistic needs of speakers who do not fully develop their heritage language in childhood. Understanding their specific linguistic development and how they

react to instruction about specific forms in the classroom is a topic of significant relevance at the moment. Intervention studies with heritage speakers are very scarce currently, and the few mentioned in this book were carried out in the United States.

Why Did We Choose These Topics?

This book is written in an accessible manner, with all linguistic terms clearly defined and provided in a glossary. The focus of the book is on the findings of classroom and lab-based intervention research studies in several specific areas of the grammar (articles, inflectional morphology, question formation, adverb placement, the subjunctive in Romance languages, argument structure, object expression, and phenomena related to word order). We chose these topics because the studies discussed represent both classic and most recent research in these areas. Each content chapter (as opposed to the introductory and concluding chapters) briefly explains the relevant linguistic structure, discusses the challenges that this structure presents to second language learners, summarizes major findings from experimental SLA research concerning acquisition of the structure, and then discusses existing intervention studies on the topic. Each chapter also provides ideas and discussion points for further research.

As the reader has undoubtedly surmised by this point, the focus of this book is on language structure (morphology, syntax) and meaning (semantics), in both SLA and intervention studies. There are many other topics that this book does not cover, including phonology, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics. These are all worthy topics in their own right, but due to scope and length limitations, we made the choice to limit our topics to intervention studies on syntactic, morphological, and semantic phenomena. This choice is driven both by our own expertise and by the large body of intervention studies done on these topics.

We furthermore largely restrict our focus to intervention studies in which researchers actively manipulate instruction and/or input to learners in the lab or in the classroom. We consider a variety of instructional contexts, ranging from instructed learners in a foreign-language classroom to learners in immersion and study abroad programs to immigrants learning a new language in their host country. However, with very few exceptions, the studies we selected do not examine the effect of the instructional setting itself (e.g., comparing how students might learn via study abroad vs. in a foreign-language classroom). The main reason for our choice is that research on the effects of instructional setting typically focuses on overall language

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development rather than on specific grammatical areas. There are exceptions: in Chapters 6 and 9, we briefly discuss studies that examined the effects of study abroad on learners' performance with specific grammatical topics (subjunctive mood and adjective ordering); in Chapter 5, we consider how verb conjugations are acquired by children in different types of foreign-language settings. These aside, however, nearly all studies highlighted in this book are intervention studies with researcher-controlled manipulations to the instructional setting.

How to Use This Book

The first two chapters of this book set the theoretical foundations that students need in order to understand the studies on specific grammatical properties described in Chapters 3 to 9. We recommend spending as much time as needed covering this foundational knowledge. After establishing the foundations, instructors can choose to follow the book linearly, from Chapter 3 to Chapter 10, or they can choose to focus on just some chapters or parts of some chapters. For example, those interested only in English as a second language can skip all the sections and studies that focus on Spanish. Conversely, if the focus of a class is on Spanish, then focusing on Chapter 6, the second part of Chapter 7, and the second part of Chapter 8 would be of greatest interest. If the instructor wishes to discuss intervention studies across a variety of target languages (not limited to English and Spanish), then Chapter 9 is the best place to start. If syntactic terminology is beyond the level of understanding of a particular group, the more technical sections of Chapters 4 and 6 could be skipped, without endangering comprehension of the main studies discussed.

For a course that focuses on education, we recommend starting with Chapters 1 and 2 in order to ensure students have the necessary foundational knowledge, and subsequently focusing on those chapters whose topics are most closely related to the course. For example, a course in a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program, or any other program that prepares ESL/EFL teachers, should focus on Chapter 3 (articles) and Chapter 4 (verb placement and questions), the first half of Chapter 5 (verbal morphology), the first half of Chapter 7 (passives), the first half of Chapter 8 (double objects), and parts of Chapter 9 (adjectives and relative clauses). The topics presented in those chapters and sections are especially relevant for the kinds of challenges faced by ESL/EFL learners. Chapter 10 provides a conclusion and further ideas that are relevant for any course. We recommend that instructors of education-focused courses briefly cover the

main linguistic phenomena at the start of each chapter or section, and spend more time on sample intervention studies on the topic, as well as on the discussion and applications questions.

Key Features

Each chapter includes suggestions for further reading as well as discussion questions, which invite students to think critically about the topics covered in the corresponding chapter. Chapters 3 through 9, which cover intervention studies on specific areas of the grammar, include applications questions in addition to discussion questions. The applications questions ask students to apply what they have learned, for example, by outlining a new intervention study or by applying a particular instructional technique to a different language, a different phenomenon, or a different population of learners. For Chapters 1 through 9, the discussion and applications questions are in numbered subsections at the very end of the chapter. Chapter 10 (the concluding chapter) is structured differently, in that the discussion questions are scattered throughout the chapter, after individual subsections.

The discussion and applications questions are open-ended, rather than requiring specific answers, which we thought is most appropriate to generate critical thinking and discussion in upper-level courses. Instructors can supplement the information presented in each chapter with additional linguistic explanations or exercises, or by assigning other related reading material that complements the information presented in each chapter. The book comes with an online companion site that contains supplementary resources, including lecture slides for the main studies presented in Chapters 3–9 and sample instructed intervention materials.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|-----------------------------|
| 1: | first person |
| 3: | third person |
| ACC: | accusative case |
| CAUS: | causative particle |
| DAT: | dative case |
| DEC: | declarative mood |
| DOM: | differential object marking |
| FEM: | feminine gender |
| FUT: | future tense |
| IMPERF: | imperfect tense |
| IND: | indicative mood |
| INF: | infinitive |
| INST: | instrumental case |
| MASC: | masculine gender |
| NEG: | negation |
| NEUT: | neuter gender |
| NOM: | nominative case |
| PART: | partitive clitic |
| PASS: | passive particle |
| PAST: | past tense |
| PL: | plural number |
| PRES: | present tense |
| PRET: | preterit tense |
| REFL: | reflexive clitic |
| SG: | singular number |
| SUBJ: | subjunctive mood |