

UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE ACQUISITION



First Language Acquisition - L1

A natural process, in which native language is learned without formal instruction

- Children absorb phonetic sounds from natural exposure.
- Achieved by imitation and instinctive learning processes

Second Language Acquisition - L2

A process of learning a new language, usually through formal instruction

- Challenges occur due to pre-existing language patterns.
- Often requires more structured learning and explicit instruction.




Differences

- L1 is more immersive, without having a direct focus on learning of the language, whereas the L2 requires an active focus on learning.
- Age of acquisition plays an important role, as younger children have higher neuroplasticity aiding the absorption of both L1 and L2 during a young age.



Similarities

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- Both L1 and L2 involve the processes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, developing from basic to more complex levels over time.
 - Both are enhanced through social interactions, with active participation with native speakers.



Why It Matters

Understanding and learning about how and when these different language acquisition processes take place will enable educators to make appropriate decisions when planning and preparing their classrooms for their students. Understanding the difficulties L2 learners can encounter and the ages at which these occur will allow educators to set proper scaffolds that mimic L1 learning, in an attempt to access the learning that took place during a student's L1 development. Research into language acquisition will enable us to create a classroom that supports linguistic diversity. Along with scaffolds, we can incorporate explicit instruction, allow for translanguaging, and build on students' strengths, facilitating a smoother and timelier L2 acquisition process.



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