

# Book Review: Trends in Second Language Acquisition (Hamed Bargested et al., Society Publishing, Canada, 2022, pp. 276, ISBN 978-1-77469-090-1 (Hardback): \$155)

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This comprehensive monograph provides an in-depth survey of the theoretical foundations and major empirical developments that have shaped the field of second language acquisition (SLA) over the last few decades. It examines, in eight chapters, the philosophical underpinnings, prominent theoretical orientations, influential hypotheses, and models that characterize contemporary research in SLA. Following an overview of the historical and methodological context, this article examines nine major theoretical perspectives in detail after presenting an overview of the history and methodological context. In subsequent chapters, taxonomic models are critically analyzed and comparative perspectives on the development of first and second languages are explored. A glossary of key terms also contributes to the learning process. Although it presents diverse viewpoints impartially, it also gives postgraduate students a solid grounding in the complex issues surrounding SLA. The meticulously consolidated theoretical and research advances contained in this one-volume work make it an authoritative source for the field. Some critics have noted that the book may have limitations as far as social perspectives and assumptions are concerned, although its importance as a seminal pedagogical text remains undeniable.

*Keywords:* second language acquisition, approaches and theories, hypotheses and models, postgraduate education, EFL/ESL

## Introduction

As interest in foreign language acquisition continues to expand amongst scholars, expert guidance is now more imperative than ever before. This book aims to assist postgraduate learners in navigating predominant trends in second language acquisition (SLA) theory and practice. It presents readers with current prominent theories in the field of SLA and provides a wealth of research-backed instructional strategies. The authors intend this book to serve as a key resource for its target readership, including MA and PhD candidates as well as language instructors and researchers, through which learners can gain initial hands-on experience. A notable strength of this text lies in its concise descriptions and discussions of controversial issues dominating the ongoing debates

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that define the intersecting dimensions encompassed within the domain of English language pedagogy. By engaging with this book, readers will be better positioned to stay abreast of the latest developments in SLA theory and develop deeper insights into the processes of teaching and learning additional languages.

### **Content Summary**

This eight-chapter monograph systematically surveys the theoretical underpinnings and developmental progressions that define the interdisciplinary field of SLA. Chapter One (“Introduction to SLA”) grounds the exploration by tracing the historical antecedents that shaped the emergence of SLA as a domain of linguistic inquiry. It provides a holistic overview of the key objectives, methodological orientations, and domains of research that characterize contemporary investigations into additional language learning and use. Chapter Two (“Branch and Philosophical Foundation of SLA”) expands on this grounding by examining the ontological and epistemological assumptions upon which different theoretical stances have been constructed. It discusses philosophies such as behaviorism, mentalism, and social constructivism that have significantly influenced conceptual frameworks in the field. Chapter Three (“Approaches in SLA”) then evaluates nine prominent theoretical perspectives—including behaviorism, cognitivism, functionalism, and sociocultural theory—that seek to elucidate the cognitive, environmental, and social mechanisms underlying SLA.

Chapters Four (“Theories in SLA”) and Five (“Hypotheses and Taxonomies in SLA”) build upon these theoretical foundations by critically analyzing notable hypotheses, learning constructs, and taxonomic models that have guided systematic empirical inquiry. Chapter Six (“Models in SLA”) surveys some of the leading stage-based and variable-driven models proposed to holistically portray the developmental itineraries observed in SLA. Chapter Seven (“Comparative Perspectives on L1 and L2 Acquisition”) synthesizes insights from previous chapters into a comparative discussion of first and additional language learning processes. Concluding the comprehensive investigation, Chapter Eight provides an extensive 49-term glossary delineating key theoretical notions that pervade contemporary SLA discourse. Concepts featured include, restructuring, languaging, scaffolding, horizontal variation, etc. Overall, through its rigorous exposition of the discipline’s philosophical roots and trajectory of model-building research, this text equips readers with an in-depth understanding of the multi-faceted nature of SLA as an academic domain.

### **Analysis and Evaluation**

This comprehensive monograph authored by four scholars provides an expansive survey of the theoretical foundations and empirical advances that have shaped the progression of SLA as an interdisciplinary academic field over the past several decades. Its modular organization into eight focused chapters facilitates mastery of core historical, conceptual, and methodological information through sequential examination of relevant topics. Notable conceptual strengths include the introductory chapters’ skillful contextualization of SLA within its philosophical roots and as a distinctive domain of linguistic inquiry. Additionally, the detailed 20-page treatment of the nine major theoretical orientations in Chapter Three allows for a robust comparison of perspectives and frameworks. The text further builds analytical sophistication among readers through subsequent discussions critically reviewing prominent hypotheses, taxonomic classification systems, and comparative analyses of first and second language development trajectories. Moreover, the inclusion of a comprehensive 49-term glossary elucidating frequently referenced theoretical constructs significantly amplifies the utility of this volume as a

foundational reference for students and researchers alike.

While achieving the ambitious goal of imparting a cohesive understanding of the multifaceted terrain encompassed by contemporary SLA research, some minor opportunities for enhancement remain. For instance, augmentation of the text's sociocultural perspective with a more expansive consideration of the complex interplay between social, cultural, and linguistic factors could provide deeper insight. Additionally, though comprehensive in scope, a more vigorous critical evaluation of divergent or contrasting theoretical viewpoints as well as a discussion of recent innovative work pushing paradigm boundaries may help challenge student assumptions. Nonetheless, these minor constraints do not detract from the value conveyed by this meticulously researched and structured single-volume monograph. Through its successful synthesis of theoretical genealogy with seminal empirical contributions, it offers an insightful resource seldom matched for rigorously grounding readers within this progressively transdisciplinary field.

This book makes a significant contribution to the field of SLA in several ways. First, it provides a comprehensive overview of the extensive theoretical foundations and landmark research that have shaped the understanding of second language acquisition. Having this breadth of knowledge consolidated into a single resource will benefit students and researchers embarking on studies within the field. Second, the text synthesizes key issues to build analytical skills, offering readers developmental progress in critically examining SLA. Third, it comprehensively canvasses perspectives without being biased to any single view. This impartial treatment exposes readers to diverse ideas. Finally, the inclusion of an extensive terminology glossary constitutes a unique ancillary learning tool. If applied, it could enhance discourse sophistication within the SLA community. Overall, the book establishes itself as an authoritative reference for novice and experienced scholars alike.

### **Conclusions and Limitations**

This meticulously researched monograph makes an invaluable contribution to strengthening the understanding of second language acquisition as a diverse and progressive field of interdisciplinary inquiry. By synthesizing key theoretical influences, methodologies, hypotheses, and interpretive models into a single expertly structured volume, it serves as an authoritative tool for grounding readers in SLA's underlying complexities. It is an invaluable resource for postgraduate students seeking to develop a comprehensive understanding of second language acquisition. By synthesizing the extensive theoretical genealogy and landmark empirical works that have characterized the evolution of SLA into a cohesive single-volume reference, it equips students with the robust foundational knowledge necessary to successfully undertake postgraduate-level linguistic inquiry. Its detailed examination and comparison of the major theoretical orientations, coupled with discussions of influential hypotheses and models, provide students with comprehensive exposure to diverse perspectives shaping contemporary research. With its extensive terminology glossary, the text also functions as an authoritative guide for enhancing students' discourse sophistication. While some critiques regarding the scope of social factors discussed remain valid, the book sets the new standard for efficiently equipping postgraduate linguists with the specialized knowledge base required to critically engage with and advance work in this progressive interdisciplinary domain.

While setting a new standard for comprehensive SLA overviews, certain assumptions may invite criticism. As an example, the text does not sufficiently consider viewpoints based on social power dynamics or non-dominant language contexts. As a result, a narrow interpretation of acquisition realities may be presented. Furthermore, promoting behavioral and cognitive theories may minimize the importance of new sociocultural

perspectives. The dense amount of information could also challenge some readers' abilities, so a more integrative approach addressing intersections between perspectives may have offered deeper insight. The inclusion of recommendations for targeted future research could enhance the contextualization of the results. The volume's overall significance as a pedagogical landmark for informing diverse SLA concepts is not greatly diminished by these minor issues. A further limitation of this book is the fact that the entire structure appears to be a compilation of disconnected topics. The transitions between chapters should be demonstrated to make the book appear like a cohesive unit.