

## INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF COGNITIVE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL FACTORS ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AMONG SLOW LEARNERS: A STUDY OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper identifies how cognitive and socio-emotional variables can affect second language acquisition (SLA) among the slow learners. Cognitive limitations which are the barriers to learning of a second language include slow processing, poor memory recorder as well as attention deficiency, all these present major obstacles to learning by slow learners. They are also affected by activities that are purely socio-emotional in nature such as anxiety, low self-esteem and motivation which seriously affect their learning attempts. This study investigates the interplay of these factors as well as their effects on the language learning process. The study determines best teaching practices through a mixed-methods design comprising surveys, interviews and classroom observation to help the slow learners clear these hurdles. These include visual aids, learning among the peers and repetitive practice, which was reported to have been helpful in improving the language acquisition. The results underline the value of individual education and the conducive emotional atmosphere in order to promote interactions and stimulate engagement and motivation among slow learners. The study also ends up by recommending that, both the cognitive and socio emotional needs should be addressed to enhance the outcomes of SLA and offer suggestions to the teachers to incorporate the steps in the classroom.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Second Language Acquisition, Slow Learners, Cognitive Factors, Socio-Emotional Factors, Teaching Strategies*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Second language acquisition (SLA) is the process in which one acquires another language other than his native language. It also depends on many different things, such as age, motivation, exposure to the language, or the ways of teaching. The theories of SLA have developed through the years being the works of such scholars as Stephen Krashen who gave much attention to comprehensible input in learning language and Lev Vygotsky who stressed the significance of social interaction during language acquisition. Although the study of SLA has been done in large populations, there has been a big gap of understanding of how slow learning individuals acquire a second language.

Slower learners with their tendency to demonstrate below average cognitive abilities are challenged in the process of learning. Such people might have some problems with memory storage, concentration, and speed of processing information, and these factors may deteriorate their performances in learning the new languages. Things like working

memory, speed and executive functions are important cognitive factors in regard to their effectiveness in acquiring a second language in slow learners. On top of these cognitive difficulties, there are socio-emotional issues (motivation, self-esteem, anxiety, classroom interrelations, etc.) that make their language learning process more challenging. To illustrate, those are slow learners who might lack self-confidence or demonstrate increased anxiety in language learning classrooms and, therefore, suffer a decline in the level of involvement and/or progress.

The importance of the mutual interaction of these cognitive and socio-emotional factors affecting the process of second languages acquisition is to create the strategies of teaching efficiency development. Through meeting the specific needs of slow learners, the educator can apply specific techniques that would increase language development and help slow learners to orchestrate the challenges they are experiencing. This paper attempts to examine these aspects and present those teaching methods that can render the process of learning the second language more accessible and fruitful to slow learners.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Learning about slow learners and the way they learn second languages is also very important in order to develop strategies to help them learn. Such learners have a tendency to encounter some cognitive and socio-emotional impediments that may complicate the processes of language acquisition and that is why it becomes crucial how one can find the answer to the question what strategies work best in addressing the needs of such learners. The targeted teaching approaches can also bring major changes to the language learning experiences as it is through this approach that the learning experiences can be improved in terms of engagement, raising motivation, and even offering sufficient assistance to meet the cognitive challenges. With the emphasis on these strategies, it is possible to develop inclusive learning environment that would encourage the acquisition of the second language among slow learners and lead to the academic and personal success.

### **Research Objectives**

- To explore how cognitive and socio-emotional factors influence second language learning in slow learners.
- To identify effective teaching strategies for slow learners in second language acquisition.

### **Research Questions**

- What cognitive factors impact second language acquisition among slow learners?
- How do socio-emotional factors influence language learning in slow learners?
- Which teaching strategies are most effective for slow learners in second language learning contexts?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The best practices to be used with slow learners are aimed at meeting their thought and social-emotional needs. One of these strategies is scaffolding which is offering of temporary support facilities like guided practice and feedback to assist learners to perform tasks beyond their capabilities to accomplish on their own. This support is slowly discontinued with time as the learner becomes competent. Differentiated instruction is the other strategy in which the teacher will be able to adjust his lesson to fit the needs of the students as individuals. It may include the option of alternating the pace, content or model of teaching as per the need and abilities of the learner.

As research found out, in the case of SLA, some interventions can particularly help slow learners. Such examples as visual aids, practicing repetition and teaching multisensory have been proven to facilitate language internalization by involving the different cognitive routes. The peer-assisted learning is also found to assist slow learners, as they increased interaction and offered of emotional support. Singh et al. (2014) studied the advantages of peer tutoring in SLA and revealed that low achieving students benefited linguistically and socially when a higher proficient learner became their tutor. Patel et al. (2019) emphasized the success of the differentiated instruction in a secondary language classroom, which does not require the learners to follow each other, as they can go at their own speed. Kaur et al. (2020) attached great significance to teacher-student relations, stating that they help build motivation and minimize anxiety. Munyao et al. (2017) examined the effects of cognitive load management strategies on SLA and found out that poorest learners performed quite well after the task was broken down into smaller steps. According to Verma et al. (2021), scaffolding methods and tools, particularly, methods that deploy technology, contributed to the fact that slow learners gradually mastered complex linguistic phenomena because they received immediate feedback and assistance.

Using these recommendations and by noticing the cognitive and socio-emotional issues of slow students, educators can help a lot with second language acquisition of these students.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research earned a mixed-method approach to offer a clear picture of both cognitive and socio-emotional variables which have influenced acquisition of second language by slow learners. An integration of qualitative and quantitative data gave a more detailed view of the learning procedure and the efficiency of various teaching approaches. The sample population was comprised of 30 slow learners aged between 12 and 16 years in middle and high schools environment. The selection of these students was done on standardized grounds like verifying them intellectually, referrals by the teacher amongst other conditions after meeting the criteria of slow learners which included among others lack of memory retention, processing time and giving attention.

During the data collection, there were interviews with the teachers and the students meant to give the glimpses of what they face in terms of the learning of the second language (challenges and what strategies they use in the classroom). Observation in classrooms was carried to evaluate the real time interaction between the students and the teachers. Standardized assessment used language proficiency to assess the language ability of the slow learners. Also, surveys or questionnaires were used to measure cognitive aspects (e.g. attention, memory) as well as socio-emotional aspects (e.g. anxiety, motivation).

Data would be analyzed using both statistical analysis of the quantitative data, i.e. score on proficiency tests, responses on the survey, and thematic analysis on qualitative data, i.e. interviews, classroom observations. This mixed methodology allowed revealing not only numerical trends but also some insights into the life of learners.

## RESULTS

### Cognitive Factors

**Table 1**

Cognitive Factor	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Sample Size
Memory	3.5	0.8	30
Attention	2.9	1.2	30
Processing Speed	2.7	0.9	30

The information on the cognitive factors shows that the slow learners have great problem in the second language especially in the areas of memory, attention and speed of information processing. The average score in memory was 3.5 implying that the respondent has a moderate ability to recall although there is always room to improve. Attention with a lesser score of 2.9 and higher standard deviation (1.2) demonstrates that the learners are poor in maintaining attention and it can differ greatly among learners. Processing speed applying a mean score of 2.7 shows that slow learners are sluggish at the learning stage. The existence of these cognitive challenges reveals the importance of providing instructions that accommodate preservation, attention, and effective processing of a language.

### Socio-Emotional Factors

**Table 2**

Socio-Emotional Factor	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Sample Size
Anxiety	3.8	1.1	30
Self-Esteem	2.5	0.9	30
Motivation	4.0	1.0	30

Social-emotional factors show major challenges and strengths of slow learners during the second language acquisition. Since the average score in the anxiety domain was 3.8, it implies that the learners have moderate to severe levels of anxiety, and this feeling may negatively affect their capacity to interact with the language learning process positively. Self esteem has an average of 2.5, which implies that they lack confidence in their abilities hence tend to become disengaged/avoidant. But interest was also relatively high at the rate of 4.0, indicating that this group of learners are usually interested to learn, but it might vary under different emotional circumstances. The difference between these scores is what highlights the fact that someone should take care of the emotional well-being to facilitate the process of learning language.

### Effective Teaching Strategies

**Table 3**

Teaching Strategy	Mean Effectiveness Score	Standard Deviation	Sample Size
Visual Aids	4.2	0.7	30
Peer Learning	3.9	1.0	30
Repetitive Practice	4.5	0.8	30

It is observed that the demonstration of effective teaching approaches to slow learners in the process of their second language acquisition portrays positive trends. Visual aids have a score average of 4.2 and are quite effective in learning probably because of their tendency to make difficult topics easy and their tendency to improve memorization. The effectiveness of peer learning with the scores of 3.9 also proves to be present but with more variability, indicating that although peer learning interactions are useful, there may be more or less impact in the way that it is achieved on an individual level. The highest at 4.5 was received by repetitive practice, meaning that it proves to be especially effective in

terms of arguing language skills and enhancing proficiency by means of repeated use. This shows that the use of visual aids, peer learning and repetition may greatly improve the result of language acquisition among slow learners.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of the present study offer important information on the impacts of cognitive and socio-emotional variables on the second language acquisition (SLA) among slow learners. The processes of thinking were also found to play a very important role in language learning such as memory, attention and processing speed. Moderate to low measure on all these cognitive factors in this study was presented by slow learners and this is congruent with some of the previous researches that have been carried out on the cognitive problems that learners with learning difficulties encounter. Slow learners suffer a lot in reeling in the new information, their ability to stay focused, and efficiently process the language input, and all these difficulties do not bode well with the second language acquisition. The results indicated that there is a high reverse of variability in attention because there were students who found it difficult to maintain attention more than others and this portrays the individual difference aspect that should be considered when one develops any instructional practices. Through these cognitive challenges, there is a need of special intervention during the learning of language to enable the learner with a slow pace of cognition not be left behind in a traditional learning environment.

Besides the cognitive aspects, socio-emotional issues were also important factors in language learning process. Emotional factors which were found to be crucial to SLA were anxiety, self-esteem and motivation. This issue of high anxiety levels among slow learning students also indicates that emotional stress contributes significantly in the slow make ability of students to interact with language materials. Language anxiety may cause avoidance and low involvement level in language learning as learners not only fear committing mistakes but also find it afraid of being judged by peers. Low scores of self- esteem further support this idea that slow learners sometimes lack confidence in what they can do hence this can demotivate them not to actively participate in the learning process. The relatively large score of motivation on the positive side indicate that slow learners in general are ready to work to acquire a second language despite emotional issues that tend to overpower their motivation. This is a projection of the multivariate nature of the influence of cognitive and emotional factors in SLA of a learner.

These observations are in line with the current literature which has given priority to the need of incorporating both cognitive and socio emotional needs, in order to enhance the performance of slow learners. Emotional well-being, especially motivated desire and anxiety, was also identified to be a contributing factor in the second language learning (Kaur et al., 2020; Verma et al., 2021). Also, according to Munyao et al. (2017), cognitive loads should be taken into account to enable slow learners to process language more efficiently, which is backed by the study given in the area of memory, attention and the speed of processing.

These findings are very important to teaching. The educators and the teachers should also acknowledge the cognitive and socio-emotional issues that slow learners encounter in the realm of the second language acquisition. According to results of the study, it alludes to the need to customize teaching to accommodate the needs of slow learners and therefore there is a need to personalize instructions. The strategies that were found to be especially effective were visual aids, peer learning, as well as repetitive practice, and can be integrated in curricula to help slow learners. Objects, such as visual aids, are one example that fills in the thought/cognitive gaps that people have and give visual, concrete representations of abstract language concepts. The social life can be encouraged with the help of peer learning and help to avoid anxiety and increase self-esteem as well as increased language learning because of the collaboration. The repetition

practice, in its turn, provides means to reinforce language skills on a regular basis, allowing the slow learners to memorize new vocabulary and grammar patterns.

Instructors ought to look into the idea of differentiated learning whereby learning resources and instructions are adapted to suit the speed and requirements of the learners. As an instance, one might reduce the lessons rate, involve more practical tasks and give more time to practice in order to assist learners with processing speed issues. Moreover, educators are required to establish classroom settings that make students feel emotionally nurtured, have high self esteem, and are less anxious. This may entail positive reinforcement, risk-taking behavior, and constructive feedback that emphasizes on effort and not results.

To sum up, it can be noted that teaching slow learners needs educators to consider the cognitive and socio-emotional needs of slow learners in planning and execution of second language curriculum. Inclusion of strategies like the involvement of visual aids, learning among peers, and repetition of practice, and ensuring an emotional supportive environment can assist the slow learners to get rid of their difficulties to succeed in their acquisition of the second language.

## CONCLUSION

The research has given a lot of information about the influence of cognitive and socio-emotional aspects on the second language acquisition (SLA) in slow learners. The results presented the indication that among the challenges associated with slow learners include a great weakness in their memory, attention and processing speed that has a direct influence in learning a second language. In particular, cognitive problems, including poor memory and slowness in processing also limit their capabilities of grasping and manipulating language concepts effectively. The scores indicated that there was a significant deviation in the factor of attention and it indicates that the cognitive problems experienced by poor learners could not be generalized at all but it is rather on an individual basis. Such mental bottlenecks explain why teaching techniques that address this differentiated capacity to process language input are necessary.

Socio-emotional wise, factors that were found to influence SLA on the outcome were anxiety, self-esteem and motivation. Due to the nature of anxiety and low self-esteem, which fostered emotional towards language learning, high anxiety and low self-esteem were observed to have had adverse effects on language learning because learners are not willing to participate in classroom proceedings. Some of these emotional issues resulted in avoidance and failure to believe that they could learn. The learners were, however, also relatively motivated and this means that there is good internal drive to succeed regardless of the emotional challenges the learners have. This observation explains why an entirely positive and constructive learning environment should be encouraged to help build a sense of intrinsic motivation in learners, as well as deal with their emotional issues.

The research too discerned some of effective strategies of enhancing SLA results of slow learners. Cognitive and socio-emotional barriers to learning were particularly effective in receiving the assistance of visual aids, peer learning and repetitive practice that helped to resolve these barriers. The aspect of visual learning tools was critical to explain some inaccessible terms, which made terms easily understood, and to aid the visual memory. The association with peers helped lower anxiety and emotional support. Drilling served the purpose of cementing rules of language and vocabulary knowledge in learners so that there was improved retention and usage of the same. The teaching practices should include these strategies that can meet cognitive as well as the emotional needs of slow learners to maximize learning output.

Along with beneficial results, there are a few limitations to this study. Although the sample is sufficient in a research to start studying the phenomenon, the small size of 30 participants does not imply that the results are applicable in generalizing the findings about slow learners in a wider context of the educational system. Also, the research targeted a certain age range, education framework, so it might be that the findings cannot be as general as people would want it to be when applied to other populations, as well as cultural environments. The particular methodology was also basically observational and cross-sectional and it cannot track the changes over time. This would require longitudinal study regarding the development of cognitive and social- emotive aspect over time and the influence of teaching strategies on long-term effects of language development.

The other constraint is the use of self-reported data that is based on the survey or interviews that might create bias or incorrectness in the comprehension of the emotional states of the learners. Additional objective scales of anxiety and self-esteem measuring (physiological assessment, standardized psychological tests, and so on) could be included into the future study. Also, some of the teaching strategies might be more or less effective based on the experience of the teacher and the way he or she teaches, and this is another factor not controlled in the case of this study.

Further research should target the area of technological support to SLA of slow learners. Such digital applications as language learning applications or interactive software might be combined with teaching lessons to enable personalized learning in order to satisfy the particular cognitive and emotional needs. The effects of various teaching methods, including flipped classrooms or blended learning model on language acquisition in slow learners, may also be researched in the future. Longitudinal research might follow the improvement of slow learners during a long duration of time, analysing its cognitive and socio-emotional evolution and how it affects their results in language learning overall.

To sum up, this paper has stressed that there is a need to comprehend the cognitive and socio-emotional issues that slow learners encounter in the second language acquisition. Successful methods like visual aid, peer learning and repetitive practice can be identified as elements that can be used by the educators to make the learning environment more friendly and workable, especially by slow learners. Nonetheless, some studies should be conducted to consider more strategies and technological interventions that will be useful to such learners in their language acquisition process.

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