

# ***Review of the Relationship Between Second Language Acquisition and Students' Psychological Health***

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**Abstract:** A prevalent subject of research in the field of education is the relationship that exists between second language acquisition and students' psychological health. Although these two factors have been hypothesized by prior studies, the specific nature and the underlying mechanisms remain inadequately explored. Additionally, the research has unintentionally ignored some pivotal reviews of second language acquisition, such as its positive and negative outcomes as well as the influential moderating factors of this relationship. This paper fills in the gap by examining the relationship between second language acquisition and students' psychological health in light of a positive psychology perspective. It aims to provide insight into the intricate procedures between these two variables and also highlight that gender plays a crucial role in this relationship. By thoroughly examining the topic, this study contributes to a more profound comprehension of explicating the mechanisms that would produce the relationship between second language acquisition and psychological well-being along with extensive examination on both its possible benefits and drawbacks inherent in the process.

**Keywords:** Second language acquisition, psychological health, students

## **1. Introduction**

The academic achievement of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pupils is closely connected with their level of happiness [1]. Thus, to better understand the relationship between second language acquisition and students' psychological health, many researchers have looked into learners psychological health. Psychological health refers to one's state of mind of maintaining physical, mental, and emotional adaptation with others [2]. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is defined as the process people learn languages in addition to their native tongue(s) [3].

Although the research is insightful, it ignores some important aspects of the relationship between second language acquisition and psychological health. First, given the dynamic nature of second language acquisition, it ignores the review of the negative and positive outcomes of second language acquisition [4]. In addition, the research did not pay attention to combining the perspective of positive psychology and learner psychology perspective [5]. Moreover, most researchers collected data and did quantitative studies, but they may ignore reviewing prior studies is also very important because qualitative review is a hermeneutic approach to interpreting the relationship between second language acquisition and psychological health and contributing to the accumulation of psychological knowledge about second language learners [6].

To deal with the limitations, I propose two research questions. The first question is how second language acquisition would influence students' psychological health. The second question is when second language acquisition would influence students' psychological health. These two research questions may make the following remarkable contributions. First, given the dynamic nature of foreign language acquisition, the development of a review can contribute to exploring the negative and positive outcomes which benefit the second language education research. Second, combining the perspective of positive psychology and learner psychology perspective will make a contribution to foreign language acquisition research. Specifically, when foreign language acquisition is benefited, educational practices will be improved by a better emotional atmosphere in class and health [7]. Third, the research contributes to the conclusion that gender plays an essential moderated role in the relationship between second language acquisition and psychological health.

## 2. Results & Discussion

Positive results are the first sort of outcome, and they may be illustrated by two theories. The first is a nine-part model that looks at the connection between learning a language and having pleasant feelings or empathy [8]. It employs "EMPHAYICS," which stands for "emotion, motivation, preservation, and autonomy," to explain the driving forces behind various pupils' academic achievements [8]. The relationship between learning a second language and students' psychological well-being may also be explained from a psychology perspective [5]. Positive psychology, in other words, is the view that individuals strive to enhance their life quality as opposed to concentrating just on fixing the negative aspects [9]. For instance, an earlier study discovered that in Chinese students who learned a second language, there is an advantageous relationship between foreign language learning and foreign language enjoyment [5]. The current positive psychology stance was first put out by Martin Seligman in 1998. He utilized his position as president of the American Psychological Association to argue for a shift in psychology's focus toward more positive psychology [10]. He was a key proponent of the Journal of Personnel Psychology. By examining what we can do to strengthen traits like resilience, well-being, and positive emotions, positive psychology adds a new viewpoint to psychology. The functioning of psychological health, such as good outcomes, is one of the most significant subjects of positive psychology [11].

Additionally, learning a second language may not immediately benefit students' performance or psychological well-being, but it still has long-term advantages. According to a study, learning a second language may not instantly boost language beginners' enthusiasm for learning a second foreign language, but it is still useful in the long run. The second type of outcome is negative outcomes, which means second language acquisition may have influences on negative emotions, including burnout, anxiety, or depression. The study found that individuals' degrees and frequency of foreign language enjoyment were much greater than their levels of foreign language classroom anxiety after learning a second language. And the research indicated that there was a negative relationship between foreign language acquisition and students' worry about unfavorable evaluation [5].

The positive psychology perspective proposed some moderators, including gender, have a substantial impact between foreign language acquisition and psychological health. For example, a study found that female learners demonstrated a stronger relationship between foreign language acquisition and enjoyment than male learners [5]. According to the foreign language acquisition research, I propose a theoretical model with the moderator of gender to explain the relationship between second language acquisition and psychological health in Figure 1.

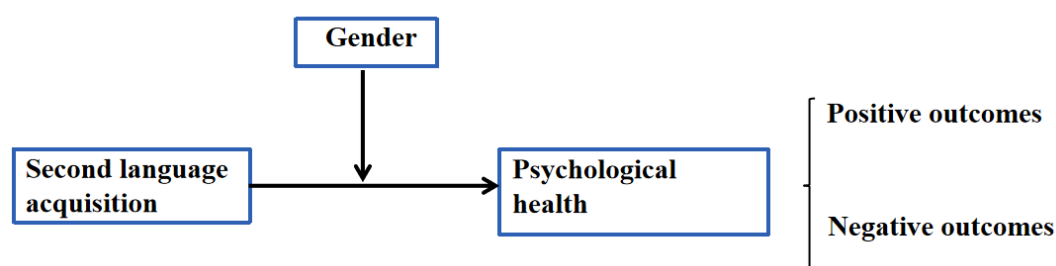


Figure 1: The relationship between second language acquisition and psychological health.

### 3. Conclusion

To examine the relationship between second language acquisition and psychological health, I reviewed both the negative and beneficial psychological outcomes of Foreign Language acquisition. Moreover, I found gender as the moderator between foreign language acquisition and psychological health [12].

Our review may contribute to the following aspects. First, after combining the perspective of positive psychology and the nine-component model, we contribute another perspective to research on second language acquisition by researching what we can do to increase strengths (such as resiliency, happiness, and optimism) and decrease weaknesses (such as anxiety, depression, and stress). Second, by reading our review on the relationship between second language acquisition and psychological health, positive psychologies may understand the positive internal experiences, such as emotions of second language learners, more comprehensively [7]. Third, our review has highlighted that second language acquisition will benefit learners in the long run by increasing their psychological health (such as resiliency, happiness, and optimism) and decreasing negative psychological outcomes (e.g., anxiety, depression, and stress).

Researchers should pay attention to the limitations and future directions of this research. First, since most studies research is only conducted in one country, future studies should conduct in more geological locations to test the moderator of locations. For example, since most studies have participants from Pacific or American countries, future researchers could pay more attention to some social-demographical variables, including nationality, countries, or culture. Second, although many studies found a positive relationship between second language acquisition and psychological health in an online or offline learning context, future studies could pay more attention to comparing the potentially different relationship between second language acquisition and students' well-being under the different contexts of online and online learning.

Third, future studies may look into the relationship between second language acquisition and psychological health when students are learning the language in an emergency remote teaching (ERT) context during COVID-19 [5]. Specifically, if students have stronger psychological health after second language learning during COVID-19, researchers can examine potential mechanisms (e.g., positive emotions) in their language learning process to explain the relationship between second language learning and psychological health during emergency remote teaching. Fourth, from the perspective of social exchange theory, future research should also examine teachers' positive emotions between students' second language acquisition and students' psychological well-being. Practically speaking, instructors of foreign languages should be informed of how they might influence students' motivation, good feelings, and proficiency in their target language. For instance, teachers should be aware that while positive emotion may not always improve students' language proficiency over the short term, it can boost learning motivation and foster a sense of cultural or linguistic belonging, both of which will benefit psychological health over the long term. Fifth, despite the fact

that earlier research has focused on a variety of psychological outcomes, it needs to incorporate perspectives from positive psychology and learner psychology to analyze results that are both beneficial and detrimental [5].

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