

## SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT (SLD): WHAT FACTORS MIGHT AFFECT STUDENTS' ENGLISH LEARNING DURING COVID19 PANDEMIC

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### Abstract

*This study attempted to investigate how the English language is learned during the covid19 pandemic. This issue was raised because second language acquisition is one of the most impressive and fascinating aspects of human development. This data was collected using an online questionnaire through google form to indicate the students' responses on how English as a second language is acquired in accordance with learning experience. The samples were 158 preservice students in the English Education department, Universitas Borneo Tarakan. This research found that second language development is affected by linguistic factors like vocabulary enrichment, the structure of native language, and the ability to pronounce words. Besides, non-linguistic factors also influenced their learning outcome like personal characteristics and experiences of the learner, social and cultural environment both inside (virtual meeting) and outside (online assignment) of the classroom, the opportunities for communication, access to both oral and written corrective feedback and instruction let by teachers. Those factors were not fully controlled by the teachers but understanding those aspects will make teachers able to consider how students learn English in effective ways to mitigate their learning loss in rapid knowledge growth and technological advancement era. This study provided reflection for teachers to develop their professionalism and the contribution to the second language acquisition theories.*

**Keywords:** Language acquisition and learning, Teacher Professional Development, Linguistics and Non-linguistics Factors, covid19 pandemic

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language as a tool of communication has been learnt since children were grown. The way to acquire language needs to be explored in order to guide children' language development. Language is extremely complex because it needs two perspectives, external and internal, which is determined by the synergy between language acquisition and language learning in the pedagogical discourse (Zaščerinska, 2010). Language is also developed by the interaction between internal and external factors; specifically, between the child's internal knowledge of linguistic structures such as children's vocabulary enrichment, pronunciation, and grammar/ structure knowledge and the external linguistic

experience he receives like children's age, motivation, the influence of technology, the teachers' teaching method, and learners' cognitive styles and personality traits. The main importance of continuous development is to fulfil the needs of the present's life without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own wants (Zimmermann, 2003).

Besides, sustainable personality as a person who sees relationships and inter-relationships between nature, society and the economy are also other aspects of their language progress (Rohweder, 2007). In other words, this is a person who can develop the system of external and internal perspectives, and in its turn the system of external and internal perspectives becomes

the main condition for the sustainable necessary to provide students with linguistic knowledge and confidence to expose their target language and to understand and socially get involved in a social context. It is not sufficient for students to learn the intrinsic language itself; they need to recall the language knowledge they have to learn, and improve other more complex language skills. It also needs the process of being able to construct and use the language automatically (Altenaichinger, 2003). Many previous research only focused on applying one learning method to improve their specific skills without investigating how students/children whose characteristics and learning strategies are different acquire English as the second language. Therefore, the researchers raised a question to see what factors might affect the students' second language development during covid19 pandemic.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Theory of on Second Language Acquisition

A general overview of related literature on SLA that actually studies about the nature of what the field of SLA indicates there has been increasing. The studies include ontological and epistemological issues and how researchers might best go about studying it. This is because theories and research in SLA have developed from a cognitively oriented perspective and extended to an essentially social orientation (Yamat, 2012). In Second language acquisition's history, Skinner's theory (1957) stated that Language learning through operant conditioning as the positive and negative reinforcement can change behaviours with dated and ineffective traditional learning models for second language instruction. Audiolingual attempted to establish language learning as a habit through dialogue and drills. Success received positive reinforcement; failure received negative reinforcement. As a result, the priority focus was on error correction/prevention. However, some problems were found that penalizing students' mistakes created a stressful

personality to develop. It is learning environment. As a result, many people study a language in a way that allows them to pass tests, but they cannot hold a conversation. One aspect in language acquisition that is needed to control the students' language development is the importance of feedback in some form. Language-learners need feedback for success. They also need a feeling of accomplishment to move forward in their language learning studies. Besides that, the fundamental concern of SLA is the study of social action. In general, studies that foreground a social understanding focus on social and cultural influences on SLA because the process of interaction is very much influenced by cultural elements. This is because in going about our everyday business, we give and take orders, request help, commiserate, chat with friends, deliberate, negotiate, gossip, and seek advice, and so on. We participate in such routine activities with ease and can easily distinguish one activity from another (Yamat, 2012).

Meanwhile, Chomsky (2002) believed in at least some innate ability in humans for language and a limited number of ways to organize language in our minds. His proof was the fact that there are some universal elements in all languages. Essentially, we're all born with the ability to learn languages as a result of a language acquisition device. This is a theoretical component of the mind that allows anyone to acquire a language. Building off of the nativist theory of language and some of the previous ideas of thought covered here, it shows that people have a capacity to learn a language in everyone from birth.

Krashen (1982) described that second language acquisition was developed when Learners begin to understand a language by listening in an immersive environment. Only once a learner has had enough exposure to the language can they begin to speak it. Language-learning comes from having access to comprehensible input, or material that's challenging but still understandable. If it's too complex, people don't learn. If it's too easy, people get bored.



As we develop, we build an internal filter designed to prevent us from making mistakes. This filter can interfere with the language learning process because learning happens through mistakes. Language has layers and complexities. People cannot understand complex syntax and grammar structures before people acquire the necessary abilities beforehand. An understanding of grammar happens naturally. To maximize language learning results, people should learn in a near-zero/zero stress environment. This will allow learners to be at ease to explore the language.

There are many general factors that influence second language learning such as age, aptitude, intelligence, cognitive style, attitudes, motivation and personality (Ellis, 1989). The aim of this session is to present these factors and their contribution to success or failure in second language acquisition. Motivation is one of the most important factors in second language acquisition. Richards (1985, p.185) on (Rees-Miller, 2008) believes motivation as a factor that determines a person's desire to do something. It is obvious that learners who want to learn are likely to achieve more than those who do not. The other factor is learning style. Learning style is also called cognitive style. It is the particular way in which a learner tries to learn something. In L2 or foreign language learning, different learners may prefer different solutions to learning problems. Some learners may want explanations for grammatical rules (audio learners), some may feel writing down words and sentences help them to remember (kinesthetic learners). And others may find they remember things better if they are associated with pictures (visual learners) (Richards: 1985, p. 45 on (Rees-Miller, 2008)).

## 2.2. Current Research on Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition and college English teaching are auxiliary to each other. As a conscious acquisition process in a social environment without the target language, college English learning involves the development and improvement

of language knowledge, language skills and intercultural communication abilities. Therefore, in college English teaching, based on second language acquisition theories, teachers should establish a student-centred class teaching pattern to deliver intercultural communication knowledge, cultivate students' intercultural communication abilities, create language acquisition environment, fully consider students' emotional factors and improve the teaching quality and learning effect of college English (Li, 2009).

Hartshorn and McMurry (2020) investigated the students' progress in English skills during the semester of the pandemic. It found that while students made typical gains in writing, they made markedly less progress with their speaking compared to the previous semester. One student stated "online classes didn't maintain quality for listening and speaking" and another concluded, "online classes are not fully helping students' English ability, especially in grammar, speaking, and listening class." This disparity across skills might be explained by the observation that writing instruction and practice tends to be less interactive than speaking needs to be. The complications of using technology and the constraints on speaking in and out of the classroom during this period may have undermined student language development in terms of their speaking skills. Online learning activities integrating technology can improve children's language skills. Children are naturally stimulated to speak through videos they made. WhatsApp and Zoom Cloud Meeting were used as the main media during the learning process. It showed the use of technology and media in developing students' language will give a significant contribution (Robingatin et. al. 2020). However, Zboun and Farrah (2021) stated that students faced some challenges with online learning; they preferred face to face classes. The disadvantages of online classes from their perspectives are more than the advantages. The weak internet connectivity, poor interaction, less motivation, less participation and less understanding are the biggest challenges of online learning. However, they find online

classes easy to access, convenient and easy to be reviewed for exams.

Second language acquisition and development are an extremely buoyant field of study which has attracted much theoretical and empirical work in the last two or three decades. Much progress has been made in gaining a better understanding of the processes involved in learning second languages, as well as the different external factors which affect this process. Although these complementary agendas remain less integrated than one might wish, bridges are being built which connect them. Similarly, the implications of SLA research for teaching are now receiving more attention, as is the specificity of the classroom context for understanding learning, but much more work remains to be done in these areas (Myles, 2016).

In this study the research attempted to seek how linguistics (vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation) and non-linguistics factors (cognitive styles, psychological aspect, personality traits, technology use, and age) might affect the students' English development to mitigate their learning loss, it also investigated which indicators are the most dominant to form factors, and to see which factors form the most dominant variables (English learning).

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1. Research design

This study was a survey using questionnaires to explore the factors which affect learners' English learning during covid19 pandemic. Population involved students who experience learning English as a second language in Universitas Borneo Tarakan (UBT). The samples were selected randomly to obtain more accurate findings across a greater spectrum of respondents. The reachable samples were 158 from pre-service students in the English department in Universitas Borneo Tarakan.

#### 3.2. Instrument

This study used an 18-item questionnaire which was adapted from Lightbown & Spada (2013). The questionnaire was divided into two factors;

linguistics and non-linguistics. To investigate how the learners study English and the aspects that influence their learning, this questionnaire was firstly validated. Some feedback from the expected judgement given were carefully considered to have quality improvement like time allocation and the appropriateness of the questionnaire items and the research questions. After having been revised, the questionnaire was tried out to the 33 preservice students who have experience in learning English. To measure the reliability of items, sample sizes should not be less than 30 samples (Samuels, 2015) and Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 6 ( $n=33$ ). Questionnaire was analysed to measure the validity and reliability through SPSS. Pearson Product moment ( $r$ ) was used to measure the validity and it resulted in the significance level was 0,05 and t-table was 0.344,  $n=33$ . While reliability used Alpha Cronbach which described reliability coefficient was higher than 0,6 (linguistics factors was 0.602 and non-linguistics factors was 0,806). It indicated that the questionnaire was valid and reliable.

#### 3.3. Procedure

The participants were confirmed whether they were available to be samples of this study. This online questionnaire was spread out to the samples using google forms. The data was delivered via digital communication from friends to friends. Before giving a response to all items of the questionnaire, they were reminded to read the instructions carefully. To avoid misunderstanding the questionnaire was translated in the first language. All participants were given two days to fill out the responses based on the learning experience. Participation in this survey was voluntary and their perspectives were kept confidential and anonymous. Time allocation was approximately 10 minutes to respond to the 18 items with 4 columns of participants' opinion; "strongly agree (SA)", "agree (A)", "disagree (D)", and "strongly disagree (SD)".

#### 3.4. Data analysis

After collecting the data of the questionnaire, the data was analysed using

factorial analysis (principle componential analysis) (Yurdugül, 2008). The result showed what factors (linguistic or non-linguistic) were dominant to determine the students' English learning. Besides, it also pointed out what indicators influenced the learning during covid19 pandemic. The results of the analysis then were interpreted by comparing with the existing theories and found what factors and indicators strongly affected the students' learning experience to develop their second language.

#### 4. RESULTS

To obtain the answer what factors might affect students' English learning to mitigate their learning loss, a factorial analysis is used to see which indicators are the most dominant to form factors, and to see which factors form the most dominant variables (English learning). The main objective is to see the consistency of the indicators in the variables to form these variables. In this section, the variable used is the variable of learning English. Variable learning English has 2 factors, namely Linguistic and non-Linguistic. The linguistic aspect has 3 indicators; (1) vocabulary, (2) pronunciation, and (3) grammar. The non-linguistic aspect has 5 indicators; (1) Cognitive styles, (2) Personality traits, (3) Social psychological factor Motivation, (4) Technology use, and (5) Age.

##### 4.1. Linguistics Factors

**Table 1** Summary of The Results of Factor Analysis

Indicators	MSA	Loading factor
Vocabulary	0.530	0.798
Pronunciation	0.546	0.690
Grammar	0.579	0.587
KMO	= 0.545	
Bartlett's test	= 26.524	
Sig. of Bartlett's test	= 0.000	

*Scores of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) dan Bartlett*

From the calculation results to obtain a KMO value of 0.545 which is greater than 0.5, which means that the indicators used have met the factor feasibility test. From the Bartlett test with a chi-square value of 26.524 with a significance of 0.000, because the significance value is below 0.05, it can be concluded that the indicators used in this Linguistic aspect are eligible and following the first requirements to be further processed.

##### *Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA)*

Based on the table 1 above, it is found that the indicator used has an MSA value greater than 0.5, it can be concluded that 3 indicators from the Linguistic aspect are worthy to be included in factor analysis. The second requirement is fulfilled and can be continued.

##### *Loading Factor*

The loading factor value of the indicator to form the Linguistic aspect shows the order from the most dominant to the weakest forming that aspect. The highest loading factor value is the indicator Vocabulary of 0.798, then the indicator Vocabulary is the most dominant forming the Linguistic aspect, followed by the Pronunciation indicator of 0.690, and the Grammar indicator of 0.587.

##### 4.2. Non-Linguistic Factors

**Table 2** Summary of Factor Analysis Result

Indicator	MSA	Loading Factor
Cognitive styles	0.725	0.837
Personality traits	0.818	0.748
Social psychological factor Motivation	0.744	0.581
Technology use	0.802	0.726
Age	0.709	0.661
KMO	= 0.757	
Bartlett's test	= 192.455	
Sig. of Bartlett's test	= 0.000	

*Scores of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) dan Bartlett*

From the calculation results to obtain a KMO value of 0.757 which is greater than 0.5, which means that the indicators used have met the factor feasibility test. From the Bartlett test with a chi-square value of 192,455 with a significance of 0.000, because the significance value is below 0.05, it can be concluded that the indicators used in this Non-Linguistic aspect are eligible and following the first requirements to be further processed.

#### *Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA)*

Based on the table 2 above, it is found that the indicator used has an MSA value greater than 0.5, it can be concluded that 5 indicators from the Non-Linguistic aspect are eligible to be included in the factor analysis. The second requirement is met and can be continued.

#### *Loading Factor*

The loading factor value of the indicator to form the Non-Linguistic aspect shows the order from the most dominant to the weakest forming that aspect. The highest loading factor value is the indicator Cognitive styles of 0.837, then the indicator Cognitive styles is the most dominant forming the Non-Linguistic aspect, followed by the Personality traits indicator of 0.748, the Technology use indicator of 0.726, the Age indicator of 0.661, and the Social psychological factor Motivation indicator of 0.581.

### 4.3. Variables of English Learning

**Table 3** Summary of Factor Analysis Result

Aspect	MSA	Loading Factor
Linguistic	0.500	0.911
Non-Linguistic	0.500	0.911
KMO	= 0.500	
Bartlett's test	= 89.281	
Sig. of Bartlett's test	= 0.000	

*Scores of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) dan Bartlett*

From the calculation results to obtain a KMO value of 0.500 which is equal to 0.5, which means that the aspects used have met the factor feasibility test. From the Bartlett test with a chi-square value of 89,281 with a significance of 0.000, because the significance value is below 0.05, it can be concluded that the aspects used in the English learning variable are eligible and following the first requirements to be further processed.

#### *Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA)*

Based on the table 3 above, it is found that the aspects used have MSA values greater than 0.5, so it can be concluded that 2 aspects of the English learning variable are eligible to be included in factor analysis. The second requirement is met and can be continued.

#### *Loading Factor*

The loading factor value of the indicator to form the variable of learning English shows the order from the most dominant to the weakest forming that aspect. The factor loading value of Linguistic and Non-Linguistic aspects is 0.911, so the two aspects are equally large in forming the variable of English learning.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1. The Linguistics Factors

From the results of the analysis, it was revealed that vocabulary with the loading factor of 0.798 became the most dominant indicator for students' language acquisition followed by pronunciation which was 0.690 and Grammar (0.587). Some previous findings also stated that recognizing a certain number of vocabularies will determine the ability of students to obtain the top-level cues. (Bonk, 2000) because students can derive the meaning from the word comprehension, access the appropriate contextual information, and interpret a sufficient meaning representation of the text. The position of vocabulary has long been realized by language teachers as well as researchers as a worthy area to mastery of language skills (Cahyono & Widiati, 2011). It is in line with the previous research that

words, phonological features, text structure/syntax are substantial aspects for successful L2 (Goh, 2000; Ramli, et al., 2019).

As a demand, the students need to enrich their vocabulary knowledge because the language can be produced once they have sufficient words to convey meaning, the students can easily participate in conversations with native speakers when they recognize 1000 words and they put their effort to step up to the next level of words and more complex structure of language. Bearing curiosity to explore unfamiliar words and making glossaries are effective ways to increase numbers of vocabulary. Besides, reading English textbooks is very obvious and beneficial to develop language features and background knowledge (bottom-up process). Among linguistic aspects, Vandergrift (2007) emphasized L2 vocabulary and syntactic knowledge are the basis elements needed to process and understand L2 listening content and essentially contribute to L2 listening proficiency.

Being able to pronounce all the individual sounds is essential for students because understanding can be raised from how accurate and fluent the learners speak in English. Pronunciation can be obtained through imitation and modelling from how native speakers use English. According to Messum (2007) Pronunciation is generally taught on the basis that imitation is the natural mechanism for its acquisition. Moreover, there was a demand for the teachers/ parents to correct the students' pronunciation and grammatical errors when they study English to avoid intensive mistakes in using English. In order to enhance students' English, teachers should present grammatical rules one at a time, and learners should practice examples of each one before going to another complex one because grammar knowledge can be functional and measurable when it is applicable in English skills. Knowledge of *verbal* syntax is one of the baselines to build English skills like listening ability (Buck, 2011).

In teaching grammar, students might find it difficult to put words in sentences. Therefore, they should be taught how they can create language and see the meaning in both writing and speaking in order to maintain that students know how to use language for communication. By solving the problem, they need to analyse the different components and become aware of grammar and how it can be used (Widdowson, 1991). In this situation, students strongly agreed to be able to deepen their linguistics competence in order to present the performance. Inevitably, students easily comprehend the complex lesson when they are taught from the simple English structures. However, mistakes in learning are normal but it should be corrected in terms of word choice, pronunciation, and language structure as soon as they are made to prevent the formation of bad habits.

## 5.2. The Non-linguistics Factors

The computation analysis showed that non-linguistics aspects also became the big indicators of students' successful language learning. It resulted that Cognitive style was 0.837 as the most dominant, tracked by personality traits 0.748, Technology use 0.726, Age 0.661, and Social psychological factor 0.581. The study found that different students had their own learning experience. Students mostly learned English through imitation. The finding showed that some learners imitated their second language from what they have heard or watched using English applications or media but again they still selectively imitate certain words or structures that they need in the process of learning. The way the learners imitate is based on their learning strategies and characteristics. Willian and Burden (1997), Oxford (1990) students will have their strategies and resources to finish and solve the task and to make the learning process easier, enjoyable, self-directed, effective, and transferable into a new situation. Students not only learn English from what they are taught but when students are active to learn monotonously, they will learn English from many aspects.

To introduce English earlier in school programs, the greater the prospect of success in learning. Munoz (2010) stated that young learners will lose the advantages of learning and insufficient exposure when they study at an early age. It needs motivation as another factor to help them expose their language and in successful second language acquisition (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 2000). Besides, mostly students made mistakes due to the influence of their first language interference. In learning a second or foreign language, interference is something inevitable. Teachers should highlight the serious mistakes/ errors students of target language make in the learning process by employing a good strategy without embarrassing/ discouraging them to explore their language acquisition. To reduce the error of students, teachers should respond to students' errors by correctly restating what they have said rather than by explicitly pointing out the error. Therefore, they do not feel frustrated by obtaining feedback to make an improvement, progress, and avoiding frustration (Sabbah, 2015, Thyab, 2016)

Understanding the students' learning will mitigate the learning loss and teachers could make reflection and adjustment during and after learning. García (2015) stated that reflective teaching helps teachers to develop their planning skills and to explore new situations so they can change their teaching and transmission of knowledge. They can integrate technology, select appropriate media, and sources for students' learning. Teachers can assess the students not only in the end as the outcome but the learning process is also the concern to identify the students' strength and weakness. How the students are struggling to acquire their second language needs teachers' teaching strategies and students' autonomy for learning especially during the covid19 pandemic where independence learning is really required. Seemingly, overall, the roles of teacher are extremely huge to influence second language learners and to achieve complete SL competence. Teachers should use kinds of materials, media, and varied technology that expose

students not only to English structures they have already been taught. It will challenge the students to use various materials sources. Another finding showed the significant effect of collaborative learning. When the students can interact freely (e.g., in one group or in pair activities), it is possible to copy each other's mistakes. However, Rao (2019) states that collaborative learning is a very beneficial technique for the learners to learn the English language systematically in the modern English classrooms. It helps the students improve their interactivity, reduce anxiety, mix learning styles, and develop a wide range of skills.

When students have improved their English, students can learn both English and academic content (e.g., science and history) simultaneously in classes where the subject matter is taught in their second language. English is just a language that is unable to measure one's knowledge or education. High intelligence will not guarantee students' language performance, it depends on their language exposure because English is just a medium of communication. Pinker (1994) emphasized that language is a medium of communication that uses symbols in a regular way to create meaning. It provides the ability to communicate our intelligence and knowledge to others by talking, reading, and writing. Besides, students also have positive feedback saying that classrooms are good places not only to learn about English but also to learn how to use English. Students need more opportunities to expose their English in real and meaningful communication. However, the students are sometimes reluctant to have an English exposure outside of the classroom. As a result, students need to get lots of practice in the classroom like listening and speaking to make significant progress. (Lindsay and Knight, 2006).

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study showed the need to investigate process-oriented learning to acknowledge how students acquire their language development. Internal linguistics aspects are not sufficient to acquire another language besides the mother



tongue. More than that, cognitive styles like students' autonomy and teachers' strategies, personality traits like English exposure, psychological aspects like motivation, technology integration and age are extremely substantial non-linguistics factors that affect successful second language acquisition achievement. Teachers are not only the main centre of learning but they can provide some attempts for students' language development both inside (synchronous) or outside of the classroom (asynchronous) to track students' encouragement to learn language in order to avoid their learning loss. Meanwhile, students need to increase their learning based on their interest, they can maximize their classroom activities guided by teachers' instruction and feedback, social environment by intensifying communication to build confidence and language structure, peers' sharing, the advent of social networks or multiple technology use. This study also provided self-reflection for teachers to develop their personal and professional development and the contribution to the second language acquisition theories.

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