

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF RECENT RESEARCH TRENDS AND LEARNING PROCESSES

Suhria¹

¹STKIP Paris Barantai
Kotabaru, Indonesia
Riariski1992@gmail.com

Uswatun Hasanah²

²STKIP Abdul Mujib Laewang Dampal Selatan
Tolitoli, Indonesia
uswatunuswa010599@gmail.com

Abstract:

This study aimed to identify research trends, learning processes, and factors influencing English Language Acquisition (ELA) based on Scopus-indexed publications from 2021 to 2026. A literature review method was employed using articles retrieved from the Scopus database with the keyword “*English Language Acquisition*.” The search was limited to journal articles, open-access publications, and studies published between 2021 and 2026. A total of 17 articles that met the inclusion criteria were analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings revealed five major themes: phonological acquisition, morphosyntactic acquisition, vocabulary development, cognitive factors, and instructional interventions. Phonological acquisition emerged as the most dominant area, emphasizing the influence of first-language systems on second-language speech perception and production. The review also demonstrated that cognitive factors, including memory and auditory processing abilities, significantly contribute to language learning outcomes. Furthermore, multimodal learning environments and technology-supported instruction were found to facilitate language development. Overall, the findings indicate that English language acquisition is a multidimensional process shaped by the interaction of linguistic, cognitive, perceptual, and environmental factors.

Keywords: English Language Acquisition; Second Language Acquisition; Phonological Acquisition; Language Learning; Literature Review

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tren penelitian, proses pembelajaran, dan faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi English Language Acquisition (ELA) berdasarkan artikel yang terindeks Scopus pada periode 2021–2026. Penelitian menggunakan metode literature review dengan sumber data yang diperoleh melalui basis data Scopus menggunakan kata kunci “*English Language Acquisition*”. Pencarian dibatasi pada artikel jurnal, publikasi open access, dan terbitan tahun 2021–2026. Sebanyak 17 artikel yang memenuhi kriteria inklusi dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan thematic analysis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan lima tema utama, yaitu pemerolehan fonologis, pemerolehan morfosintaksis, perkembangan kosakata, faktor kognitif, dan intervensi pembelajaran. Tema yang paling dominan adalah pemerolehan fonologis yang menyoroti pengaruh bahasa pertama terhadap persepsi dan produksi bunyi bahasa kedua. Selain itu, penelitian menunjukkan bahwa faktor kognitif, seperti memori dan kemampuan pemrosesan auditori, berperan penting dalam keberhasilan pemerolehan bahasa. Temuan lain menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan pembelajaran multimodal dan dukungan teknologi berkontribusi positif terhadap perkembangan kemampuan berbahasa. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pemerolehan bahasa Inggris merupakan proses multidimensional yang dipengaruhi oleh interaksi faktor linguistik, kognitif, perseptual, dan lingkungan belajar.

Keywords: Pemerolehan Bahasa Inggris; Pemerolehan Bahasa Kedua; Pemerolehan Fonologi; Pembelajaran Bahasa; Tinjauan Pustaka

INTRODUCTION

English has become a global language that plays a crucial role in education, employment, and international communication. In Indonesia, increasing access to digital technologies has

enabled many learners to acquire English independently outside formal educational settings. Through social media, online videos, digital games, podcasts, language-learning applications, and artificial intelligence (AI) tools,

learners are exposed to authentic English input and opportunities for meaningful interaction. As a result, self-taught language learning has emerged as a significant phenomenon in contemporary language education (Thomas & Janosy, 2020).

Research on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) suggests that successful language learning is influenced not only by linguistic exposure but also by learner autonomy, motivation, engagement, and self-regulation Alharbi, A. S. *et al* (2023). Self-taught learners are characterized by their ability to independently manage learning goals, select resources, and monitor progress. Such autonomy allows learners to create personalized learning experiences that support language development beyond classroom instruction. The rise of Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) has further transformed language acquisition processes. Digital environments provide extensive opportunities for learners to interact with English through authentic and self-directed activities. Recent studies have highlighted the growing role of digital technologies and AI in facilitating language learning by offering personalized feedback, interactive practice, and continuous access to learning resources (Yusupova, 2026). These developments have made independent English learning increasingly accessible to Indonesian learners.

Despite growing interest in learner autonomy, digital learning, and AI-assisted language education, research focusing specifically on English language acquisition among self-taught Indonesian learners remains fragmented. Existing studies often examine motivation, technology use, or autonomous learning separately, providing limited understanding of how Indonesian learners acquire English independently. Consequently, a comprehensive synthesis of existing evidence is still lacking. This study addresses this gap by reviewing previous research on English language acquisition among self-taught learners.

Based on these considerations, the novelty of the present study lies in its attempt to integrate findings from research on second language acquisition, learner autonomy, informal digital learning, and artificial intelligence into a unified analytical framework focused specifically on Indonesian self-taught learners. Practically, it offers insights for educators, policymakers, technology developers, and language learners seeking to understand and support effective

autonomous language learning. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to describe and analyze the process of English language acquisition among self-taught Indonesian learners based on findings reported in existing scholarly literature. The research is guided by the following research question: How do self-taught learners acquire English according to findings reported in the existing academic literature?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a literature review design to examine research on English language acquisition. The literature search was conducted using the Scopus database with the keyword “English Language Acquisition.” To ensure the relevance and quality of the sources, the search was limited to journal articles, open-access publications, and studies published between 2021 and 2026. These criteria were applied to capture recent developments in the field while ensuring accessibility and scholarly rigor.

Following the search process, the retrieved articles were screened based on their titles, abstracts, and relevance to the research objective. Studies that focused on English language acquisition and related learning processes were retained for further analysis, while irrelevant publications were excluded. The final selection resulted in 17 articles, which constituted the data set for this review.

The selected articles were analyzed using thematic analysis. Key findings from each study were identified, coded, and grouped into recurring themes. The analysis focused on patterns related to language acquisition processes, learner characteristics, learning environments, and factors influencing English language development. The synthesized findings were then used to provide a comprehensive overview of recent research trends and insights into English language acquisition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

A review of 17 Scopus-indexed articles published between 2021 and 2026 identified five major themes in English Language Acquisition (ELA) research: phonological acquisition, morphosyntactic acquisition, vocabulary development, cognitive factors, and instructional interventions.

Table 1: Major Themes Identified in the Literature

Theme	Number of Studies	Focus
Phonological Acquisition	7	Speech perception, pronunciation, gestures, audiovisual input, voice onset time
Morphosyntactic Acquisition	5	Grammar, relative clauses, gender agreement, anaphora, feature reassembly
Vocabulary Acquisition	2	Vocabulary learning, word recognition, note-taking strategies
Cognitive Factors	2	Memory, chunking ability, auditory processing
Learning Interventions	3	Explicit instruction, phonetic training, guided note-taking
Technology and Multimodal Learning	2	Audiovisual input, visual cues in language learning

Phonological acquisition emerged as the most frequently investigated area. Several studies examined learners’ perception and production of non-native sounds. Kaan et al. (2023) found that first-language phonological systems significantly influenced learners’ perception of oral–nasal vowel contrasts. Similarly, Cheng and Mok (2023) reported that bilingual experience affected the acquisition and attrition of English voice onset time (VOT), while Simonet and Amengual (2021) demonstrated a relationship between speech perception and production among bilingual speakers. The reviewed studies also highlighted the contribution of multimodal input to phonological learning. Jeong et al. (2026) reported that learners achieved greater shadowing accuracy when audiovisual input included visible facial information. Likewise, Zhang et al. (2024) found that articulatory hand gestures improved learners’ production of English vowels. Giannakopoulou et al.

(2025) further showed that phonetic training facilitated children’s acquisition of non-native vowel contrasts.

Morphosyntactic acquisition represented another major research area. McDonough and Trofimovich (2025) found that chunking ability predicted learners’ sensitivity to gender agreement during language processing. Marsden et al. (2022) demonstrated that explicit instruction supported the acquisition of inverse scope constructions. Additional studies investigated relative clause processing (Rahmani & Foucart, 2024), backward anaphora resolution (Yusa et al., 2026), and aspectual marker acquisition in second-language learning contexts (Zhang & Yuan, 2022).

Vocabulary acquisition was examined in fewer studies but remained an important theme. Jin and Webb (2025) reported that guided note-taking produced greater vocabulary gains than conventional note-taking strategies. McLean et al. (2021) also identified considerable variation in vocabulary knowledge among English language learners through the development of new vocabulary-level measurements.

Finally, several studies emphasized the importance of cognitive factors in language acquisition. Saito et al. (2026) found that auditory processing ability, memory, and learning experience significantly influenced second-language speech learning. Similarly, McDonough and Trofimovich (2025) highlighted the role of chunking ability in grammatical processing and language development.

Discussion

The findings of this review demonstrate that contemporary research on English Language Acquisition (ELA) has moved beyond traditional views that primarily emphasized linguistic input and grammatical development. Consistent with the broader framework of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), the reviewed studies suggest that language acquisition is a multidimensional process shaped by the interaction of linguistic,

cognitive, perceptual, and environmental factors. This finding supports the argument presented in the introduction that English language acquisition cannot be explained solely through exposure to language forms but must also consider the complex mechanisms through which learners perceive, process, and internalize linguistic information.

One of the most prominent findings of this review is the dominance of research on phonological acquisition. The studies reviewed consistently indicate that learners' first language continues to influence second-language speech perception and production. Findings reported by Kaan et al. (2023), Cheng and Mok (2023), and Simonet and Amengual (2021) demonstrate that phonological development is strongly constrained by previously established linguistic systems. From a second language acquisition perspective, these findings suggest that acquiring a new language involves not merely learning new sounds but restructuring existing phonological representations. The persistence of first-language influence across different learner populations indicates that phonological acquisition remains one of the most challenging aspects of language learning and continues to be a central concern in contemporary SLA research. The review further reveals the increasing importance of multimodal learning environments in facilitating language acquisition. Studies by Jeong *et al.* (2026) and Zhang *et al.* (2024) found that visual information, including facial cues and articulatory gestures, enhanced learners' pronunciation and speech processing. These findings reinforce contemporary perspectives that view language acquisition as a multisensory process rather than a purely linguistic activity.

The growing emphasis on audiovisual input reflects recent developments in language learning environments, where digital technologies enable learners to access richer and more authentic forms of communication. This trend supports the proposition outlined in the introduction that technological advancements have transformed language

learning by providing learners with multiple channels of linguistic input. Consequently, successful language acquisition appears to depend not only on the quantity of language exposure but also on the quality and modality of the learning experience.

Another important finding concerns morphosyntactic acquisition. The reviewed studies demonstrate that learners often encounter difficulties when target-language structures differ substantially from those of their first language. Research on gender agreement, inverse scope, relative clause processing, and anaphora resolution suggests that grammatical development requires learners to reorganize existing linguistic knowledge and construct new representational systems. These findings align with contemporary SLA perspectives that conceptualize language acquisition as a gradual developmental process rather than the simple accumulation of grammatical rules. Furthermore, the positive effects of explicit instruction reported in several studies indicate that pedagogical intervention remains an important factor in facilitating complex grammatical acquisition. This finding suggests that while exposure plays a critical role in language learning, instructional support continues to contribute significantly to learners' ability to acquire advanced linguistic structures.

The review also highlights the role of cognitive factors in English language acquisition. Findings from Saito et al. (2026) and McDonough and Trofimovich (2025) demonstrate that auditory processing ability, memory resources, and chunking capacity significantly influence language learning outcomes.

These results provide empirical support for cognitive approaches to SLA, which emphasize the importance of information processing mechanisms in language development. Individual differences in cognitive abilities appear to affect how learners perceive input, store linguistic information, and retrieve language knowledge during communication. Therefore, successful

language acquisition cannot be attributed solely to external learning conditions but must also consider learners' internal cognitive capacities. This finding reinforces the argument that language acquisition is a complex process involving interactions between environmental exposure and individual learner characteristics.

The findings also reveal a growing tendency toward interdisciplinary research in English language acquisition. Many recent studies integrate perspectives from linguistics, psychology, neuroscience, and educational technology to explain language learning processes. This development reflects a significant shift from earlier approaches that treated language acquisition primarily as a linguistic phenomenon. The increasing incorporation of cognitive and technological perspectives suggests that contemporary researchers recognize the need for more comprehensive explanations of how languages are learned. Such interdisciplinary approaches are particularly relevant in the current era, where technological innovations continue to reshape learning environments and influence the ways learners engage with language.

Overall, this review indicates that English language acquisition research between 2021 and 2026 is characterized by an increasing recognition of complexity. The reviewed studies collectively demonstrate that language acquisition emerges from the interaction of phonological, grammatical, cognitive, perceptual, and environmental factors rather than from any single dimension of learning. This finding contributes to the growing body of literature emphasizing that successful language acquisition requires an integrated understanding of how learners process linguistic input, interact with learning environments, and utilize cognitive resources. Consequently, future research should continue adopting interdisciplinary perspectives to explore the evolving nature of English language acquisition in increasingly diverse and technology-rich contexts.

CONCLUSION

This literature review examined 17 Scopus-indexed open-access articles published between 2021 and 2026 to identify recent trends in English Language Acquisition research. The findings revealed that contemporary ELA research is primarily concentrated on phonological acquisition, morphosyntactic development, vocabulary learning, cognitive factors, and instructional interventions. Among these themes, phonological acquisition emerged as the most frequently investigated area, highlighting the persistent influence of first-language systems on second-language speech perception and production. The review further demonstrated that English language acquisition is not solely determined by linguistic exposure but is also influenced by cognitive abilities, perceptual processes, and learning environments.

Factors such as memory, auditory processing, chunking ability, multimodal input, and instructional support were found to contribute significantly to language development. In addition, recent studies increasingly emphasize the role of technology-enhanced and multimodal learning environments in facilitating language acquisition.

In sum, the reviewed literature suggests that English language acquisition is a complex and multidimensional process that requires an integrated understanding of linguistic, cognitive, and environmental factors. Future research is encouraged to adopt interdisciplinary approaches and explore the evolving role of digital technologies in supporting language acquisition across diverse learning contexts.

REFERENCES

- Alharbi, A. S., Foltz, A., Kornder, L., & Mennen, I. (2023). L2 acquisition and L1 attrition of VOTs of voiceless plosives in highly proficient late bilinguals. **Second Language Research**. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02676583221124011>
- Bakkouche, L., & Saito, K. (2026). Effects of auditory processing, memory, and experience on early and later stages of second language speech learning. **Second Language Research**. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02676583251317909>

- Brekelmans, G., Evans, B. G., & Wonnacott, E. (2025). Training child learners on nonnative vowel contrasts with phonetic training: The role of task and variability. **Language Learning**. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12677>
- Brysbaert, M., Keuleers, E., & Mander, P. (2021). Which words do English non-native speakers know? New supranational levels based on yes/no decision. **Second Language Research**. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658320934526>
- de Leeuw, E., Stockall, L., Lazaridou-Chatzigeorgaki, D., & Gorba Masip, C. (2021). Illusory vowels in Spanish–English sequential bilinguals: Evidence that accurate L2 perception is neither necessary nor sufficient for accurate L2 production. **Second Language Research**. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658319886623>
- Gil, K.-H. (2026). Restructuring vs. development: When typological closeness does not facilitate L2 acquisition. **Second Language Research**. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02676583251389463>
- Guo, Y. (2022). From a simple to a complex aspectual system: Feature reassembly in L2 acquisition of Chinese imperfective markers by English speakers. **Second Language Research**. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658320911433>
- Jeong, H., Kadota, S., Kajiwara, M., Nakanishi, H., Kazai, K., Kawasaki, M., Nakano, Y., & Hase, N. (2026). Seeing the speaker's face enhances second language shadowing: Neural and behavioral evidence. **Language Learning**. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.70026>
- Jin, Z., & Webb, S. (2025). How do different forms of note-taking affect second language vocabulary learning? **Language Learning**. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12705>
- Martinez, R. M., Goad, H., & Dow, M. (2023). L1 phonological effects on L2 (non-)naïve perception: A cross-language investigation of the oral–nasal vowel contrast in Brazilian Portuguese. **Second Language Research**. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02676583211044953>
- McManus, K., Bayas, K., Kerschen, K., Khoruzhaya, Y., Zhuang, J., & Magnuson, A. (2026). Revisiting blocking effects in second language learning: A close replication of Ellis and Sagarra (2010b). **Language Learning**. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.70005>
- Pulido, M. F., López-Beltrán, P., Dussias, P. E., & Christiansen, M. H. (2025). Chunking ability predicts online sensitivity to L2 morphosyntax: Evidence from Spanish gender agreement. **Second Language Research**. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02676583251396348>
- Solaimani, E., Myles, F., & Lawyer, L. (2024). Testing the interpretability hypothesis: Evidence from acceptability judgments of relative clauses by Persian and French learners of L2 English. **Second Language Research**. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02676583231162783>
- Su, Y.-C., Sorace, A., Hirose, Y., Mochizuki, K., Hirakawa, M., Chen, C.-H., & Hsieh, H.-Y. (2026). Backward anaphora in L2 acquisition of English, Mandarin and Japanese. **Second Language Research**. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02676583251320031>
- Thomas, M., & Janosy, R. (2020). Self-taught language learners in China and their learning strategies: A multiple, instrumental case study of approaches in contextual situations. *Asian EFL Journal*, 24(2), 136–161.
- van Maastricht, L., & Esteve-Gibert, N. (2025). Head gestures do not serve as precursors of prosodic focus marking in the second

language as they do in the first language.
 Language Learning.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.70015>

Wu, M.-J., & Ionin, T. (2022). Does explicit instruction affect L2 linguistic competence? An examination with L2 acquisition of English inverse scope. *Second Language Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658321992830>

Xi, X., Li, P., & Prieto, P. (2024). Improving second language vowel production with hand gestures encoding visible articulation: Evidence from picture-naming and paragraph-reading tasks. *Language Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12647>

Yusupova, S. (2026). Ai-Driven Adaptive Learning Systems in English Language Teaching: Enhancing Personalization And Learner Autonomy. *Asian Journal of Technology and Applied Sciences*, 1(1), 205–208.