

# “HOW I LEARN ENGLISH IN EFL CONTEXT”: A PSYCOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OF ADULT LEARNERS

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the psycholinguistic phenomenon in the context of second language acquisition of adult learners who work in hospitality industry at tourist destinations, with a case study at popular tourist sites in Bali. The main goal of this research is to identify and analyze the strategies and challenges faced by workers in learning and using a second language in their daily interactions with foreign tourists. This study utilizes primary data collected from direct observations and interviews with 55 workers at various tourist sites in Bali. Respondents were selected based on criteria such as having regular interactions with foreign tourists and at least one year of work experience in the tourism sector. Additionally, secondary data was obtained from a literature review of previous studies on psycholinguistics and second language acquisition. The methodology employed is a qualitative descriptive approach, in which the collected data is analyzed to understand the psycholinguistic aspects of second language acquisition. The results indicate that factors like a multilingual work environment and customs, personal motivation, age, and social support play a significant role in the process of acquiring a second language. Three main types of strategies identified in second language learning are cognitive, social, and affective strategies. This research provides new insights into second language acquisition in the tourism setting and recommendations for second language learning for tourism practitioners.

**Keywords:** Psycholinguistics, Second Language Acquisition, Adult Learner

## INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, cross-cultural communication is becoming increasingly crucial. It is in a high interest due to world borderlessness that enables somebody to directly in contact with other people instantly (Kosareva et al., 2019). Specifically in the tourism industry, English serves as a facilitator to language barrier problems caused by different cultural background (Lifintsev & Wellbrock, 2019). In the tourist destinations like Bali, known for its natural beauty and cultural richness, serve as meeting points for international tourists from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This demand influences many people to master a universal language to provide them with wider opportunity to connect to other people (Adipat, 2023).

In the context of workers who are primarily adult, the acquisition of a second language becomes both a necessity and a challenge for them. Compared to young learners, adult employs different learning mechanism that obstruct them to gain success as close as to their experience in learning first and second language (Colliander & Fejes, 2021). Many believe that adults maintain the ability to acquire literacy in their native language (L1) to the same extent as they did during childhood. Nevertheless, considering the fundamental concepts of neural plasticity and the limited available empirical evidence, it is necessary to

scrutinize this assumption (Martin et al., 2019). Besides, adult's motivation to learn English is frequently influenced by their needs of living (Sabanashvili & Garibashvili, 2022).

Referring to Krashen's theory, the essence of language acquisition is not merely learning grammatical rules but the ability to speak and communicate effectively in the target language. Krashen emphasizes the distinction between language acquisition, which is the process of internalizing linguistic abilities naturally or unconsciously, and language learning, which is more focused on knowledge of linguistic forms and grammatical rules. The language acquisition system is a subconscious process of mastering a second language, where the formulation of rules in the target language occurs internally without conscious attention. The primary focus of this system is Language acquisition occurs when someone masters a language unconsciously and without direct influence from formal language structure teaching in a formal environment. Thus, the natural language acquisition process, as defined by Krashen, takes place without conscious attention to linguistic forms, and the minimal conditions for acquisition are participation in natural communication situations. This allows workers in the tourism sector to acquire the necessary language skills through daily interactions that occur naturally and intuitively.

In addition, a study by Seong et al. (2019) emphasizes that multilingual abilities in the tourism sector not only enrich tourists' experiences but also have a positive impact from the doer perspective. This underscores the importance of second language acquisition for workers in tourist destinations to enhance the quality of service and the tourist experience. Ellis (2004) adds that the second language acquisition process is influenced by various environmental and cognitive factors, including psycholinguistic aspects such as motivation, age, and social support.

This study takes the psycholinguistic phenomenon in the second language acquisition by workers in tourist destinations as the main focus, particularly by examining cases that occur in famous tourist spots in Bali. To achieve this objective, which is to identify and analyze communication strategies and challenges faced by workers, this research applies a qualitative descriptive method. In collecting data, the researcher selected popular tourist destinations in Bali, namely the areas of Sanur, Ubud, Kuta, Seminyak, Canggu, Uluwatu, Nusa Dua, Tabanan, Penglipuran, and Ulun Danu. The research uses direct observation and in-depth interviews conducted to 25 workers from various tourist destinations mentioned earlier. These workers are not only involved in routine interactions with international tourists but also have a minimum of one year of work experience in the tourism sector. Furthermore, to obtain relevant data related to linguistic phenomena such as words and vocabulary, this research employs the observation, survey, and interview methods as the main instruments in data collection. These methods allow the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the dynamics of second language acquisition in this highly interactive environment.

Furthermore, this research aims to deepen the understanding of how multilingual work environment factors, individual motivation, age, and social support contribute to the process of second language acquisition among workers as adult learners in tourism destinations. By basing the analysis on psycholinguistic theory, this research is expected to successfully identify the main strategies adopted by workers in second language acquisition. This research not only provides a theoretical framework but also aims to offer recommendations applicable to the development of language policies and second language

learning programs. Particularly in Bali, these recommendations are expected to enhance the multilingual communication skills of workers, enabling them to welcome international tourists more effectively.

Aligned with the outlined problem background, this research has clear and defined objectives. The research activities are focused on the identification and comprehensive analysis of various factors influencing second language acquisition and learning strategies applied by tourism practitioners. The results of this research are expected to provide valuable insights and practical recommendations.

## **METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the psycholinguistic phenomena related to second language acquisition by workers in tourist destinations in Bali. The primary focus of this study is to collect and analyze in-depth data on how a multilingual work environment, personal motivation, age, and social support contribute to the process of second language acquisition. By understanding these dynamics, the research aims to identify and comprehend the cognitive, social, and affective strategies used by workers in the language learning process, as well as the challenges they face during language acquisition.

Primary data was collected through direct observation and in-depth interviews with 25 workers from various tourist destinations in Bali, selected based on criteria such as routine interactions with foreign tourists and a minimum of one year's work experience in the tourism industry. Open observation and interview techniques were employed to gain deep insights into their experiences in learning and using the second language.

Additionally, this research incorporates secondary data through an extensive literature review of previous studies on psycholinguistics and second language acquisition. This helps in comparing and supporting findings from primary data, providing a broader theoretical context. The collected data were analysed using a qualitative approach, employing thematic analysis techniques to extract main themes and patterns related to learning strategies and challenges in second language acquisition. The analysis process followed systematic steps, including the identification of research problems, data collection, data analysis, and drawing conclusions, as explained by Emzir (2012). Findings from the data analysis were presented descriptively, utilizing tables and diagrams to facilitate understanding and interpretation of the results. This research adhered to research ethics principles, including obtaining consent from all participants, maintaining confidentiality and respondent privacy, and handling data with care to prevent information misuse.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

From the collected data, the researchers identify three main strategies in second language learning being used by the tourism workers, Cognitive, social, and affective. Factors such as a multilingual work environment, personal motivation, age, and social support were found to play a crucial role in the process of second language acquisition.

Further analysis indicates that daily interactions with tourists contribute to the enhancement of understanding and usage of the English language by workers. Tourism workers employ cognitive strategies to comprehend and internalize language structures and

vocabulary. This findings is in line with the one found by Suyitno et al. (2018) who explain that cognitive strategies in the context of adult learners often function as the tool to grasp structure and other aspects that require higher thinking process. Social strategies, such as talking to tourists and colleagues, assist them in the practical use of the language. Meanwhile, affective strategies, related to attitudes and emotions towards language learning, influence motivation and learning success (Gay et al., 2022).

Specifically, personal motivation is a crucial factor driving tourism workers to master the English language. This is not only due to job requirements but also stems from a desire to improve communication and social interaction. Social support, both from colleagues and tourists, plays a role in motivating and providing feedback that enables workers to enhance their language skills.

The findings of this research indicate that a supportive work environment for second language learning and opportunities for sustained practice, in the form of social interactions, significantly impact the effectiveness of language acquisition. Recommendations resulting from this research point towards the development of integrative language learning programs that leverage cognitive, social, and affective aspects, while addressing the specific needs of workers in the tourism sector. Creating supportive learning environment is known to be effective in fostering intrinsic motivation that accelerate the learning process (Salmee & Arif, 2019)

Therefore, to enhance the second language abilities of tourism workers in Bali, a comprehensive approach is recommended, considering the psycholinguistic factors identified in this research. As a practical step, second language learning programs for tourism workers can be designed by incorporating interactive elements that increase opportunities to use language in real-life contexts, support learning through social activities, and offer emotional and motivational support for learning.

**Table 1. Strategies for Second Language Acquisition by Tourism Workers**

No.	Category	Description	Findings
1	Cognitive Strategy	It deals with method and technique employed to internalize language structure and vocabulary	-using flashcards - conversational practices with foreigners -Independent learning
2	Social Strategy	Social interaction that assist adult learners to learn new language	-small practices with coworkers -being a host in a tour
3	Affective strategy	Maintaining motivation of the language learners	-self-motivation -creating an emotional bond with the target language
4	Working environment challenges	External factors that affect learning process in the working environment	-Age gap that influence the learning pace

The presented table illustrate the summary of qualitative data categorized into strategies and challenges identified through the qualitative data analysis in the study of second language acquisition by tourism workers in Bali. Each category is followed by a brief description and specific findings resulting from the research, providing a general overview that can be easily understood and interpreted by readers.

**Table 2. Strategies and Challenges faced by tourism workers in Acquiring the Target Language**

No.	Learning Strategies	Challenges
1	Cognitive Strategy - Applying grammatical rules while communicating with foreigners	Linguistic problems -incapability to apply the grammatical rules -lack of vocabulary
2	Social Strategy -having regular interaction with foreign tourists -collaborating with colleagues	Sociolinguistic barrier - Difficulties in comprehending culture in communication
3	Affective strategy -personal motivation -attitude toward the language	Psychological problems -afraid to make mistakes -fear of other people judgement
4	Working environment challenges -multilingual working environment -social support	Resisting factor -Limited learning time -lack of relevant sources of learning

Table 2 presents the strategies employed by tourism workers in Bali in second language acquisition, as well as the challenges they face in the process. These strategies are divided into three main categories: cognitive, social, and affective. First, cognitive strategies involve structured language learning methods, such as studying grammatical rules and practicing vocabulary. While these strategies are essential, workers often encounter linguistic obstacles, such as a lack of understanding of language structures and limited vocabulary, indicating the need for a more in-depth and focused learning approach. Second, social strategies consist of direct interaction with tourists and collaboration with colleagues, which not only reinforce language understanding but also help build trust and communicative skills. However, sociolinguistic barriers such as difficulty understanding culture and discomfort during conversations can hinder these interactions, highlighting the importance of cultural training as part of language learning.

Third, affective strategies involve personal motivation and attitudes towards language learning, which significantly influence the success of language acquisition. Psychological barriers, such as fear of making mistakes and concerns about others' judgments, often hinder learning. This underscores the importance of supporting the psychological aspects of language learning through positive reinforcement and a supportive learning environment.

Lastly, environmental factors such as a multilingual work environment and social support are recognized as major drivers in language acquisition. However, inhibiting factors such as limited time for learning and a lack of access to relevant learning resources indicate

a need to adjust working conditions to better support language learning. Through this analysis, the research offers profound insights into the complexity of second language acquisition in the tourism environment. By understanding the strategies adopted by workers and the challenges they face, second language learning can be tailored to enhance its effectiveness, helping workers not only meet their job demands but also enrich their interactions with international tourists.

**Table 3. Influencing Factors in Second Language Acquisition**

No.	Factors	Case Description
1	Multilingual Working Environment	<p>1. Customer Service: Tourism workers may need to explain facilities and services to tourists in English, providing them with the opportunity to use phrases and sentences they have learned.</p> <p>2. Guided Tour: When conducting tours, tour guides use the second language to explain the history and stories behind tourist sites, helping them develop speaking skills and cultural understanding.</p> <p>3. Bargaining: In buying and selling situations, workers must use English to negotiate prices or explain products, which trains speaking and listening skills.</p> <p>4. Handling Complaints: When tourists have complaints or issues, workers must respond in English, involving problem-solving and the use of more complex language.</p> <p>5. Booking and Reservation: When taking reservations, workers need to understand and use proper English sentences to confirm details and provide information</p> <p>6. Social Interaction: Casual conversations with tourists in restaurants, hotels, or tourist spots provide opportunities for workers to practice English in relaxed and less structured situations.</p> <p>7. Cultural Exchange: Exchanging stories and experiences with tourists helps workers learn new expressions and idioms and deepens their understanding of language use in different cultural contexts.</p> <p>8. Providing Instruction: Giving directions or instructions to tourists on how to use facilities or participate in activities requires clear and precise use of English</p>

2	Personal Motivation	"Every day I meet tourists from around the world, and they all come here to enjoy the beauty of our island. I feel very motivated to learn English because it helps me connect with them on a deeper level. When I can tell them about the culture and traditions of Bali in their own language, it not only makes them happy but also makes me proud of my job. Moreover, I see this as an opportunity to advance my career in the tourism industry and, someday, perhaps start my own business."
3	Age	<p>Young Adults (18-25 years old): Individuals in this age group typically have an advantage in second language acquisition as they tend to have greater cognitive flexibility and can adapt to a new language system more quickly. They may also be more open to new learning methods and technology.</p> <p>Early Adults (26-35 years old): Respondents in this age group are often motivated by professional needs to learn a second language. Their learning may be more focused and goal-oriented, with a practical and applicable approach.</p> <p>Middle Adults (36-45 years old): Individuals in this age group may take longer to learn a new language, but they have the advantage of applying the language to their work context due to their broader work experience.</p> <p>Older Adults (46 years and above): Although they may face challenges in learning due to age-related factors such as declining memory abilities, respondents in this group are often highly motivated to learn as part of personal development or to keep their skills sharp.</p>
4	Social Support	<p>Support from Colleagues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learning Session Together: Colleagues organize study sessions outside of working hours to help each other understand complex aspects of English, such as tenses or phrasal verbs.</li> <li>2. Sharing Learning Materials: Colleagues who are more proficient in English may share learning materials, such as books, learning apps, or video tutorials that have helped them in language acquisition.</li> <li>3. Conversation Practice: To boost confidence in speaking, colleagues can practice together through role-playing or informal conversation practice.</li> <li>4. Constructive Feedback: After communicating with tourists, colleagues can provide constructive feedback on language usage, helping identify and correct mistakes.</li> </ol> <p>Support from Tourists:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Patience and Understanding: Patient and understanding tourists can give workers time to formulate their words, reducing the pressure to speak perfectly.</li> <li>2. Polite Corrections: Some English-proficient tourists may offer polite and helpful corrections when they hear mistakes made by workers.</li> </ol>

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3. **Vocabulary Enrichment:** In conversations, tourists often use vocabulary or expressions unfamiliar to workers, providing opportunities for learning new language in a real-life context.
  4. **Acknowledgment and Praise:** When workers make an effort to communicate in English, acknowledgment and praise from tourists can serve as positive reinforcement, boosting motivation to continue learning.
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The findings of this study highlight the importance of a multilingual working environment as a key factor in second language acquisition. Such an environment naturally facilitates daily interactions in the second language, providing valuable learning opportunities for workers. For instance, in practice, workers often engage in conversations with tourists from various countries, enriching not only their vocabulary but also enhancing cultural understanding and linguistic sensitivity.

Moreover, personal motivation proves to be a primary driver in the learning process. Respondents expressed various sources of motivation, from the desire for career advancement to aspirations for more effective communication with tourists. Quotes from respondents indicate that this motivation often stems from deep personal and professional goals, urging them to overcome language learning challenges.

The age of respondents also plays a significant role in learning, with data showing variations in approaches and learning outcomes based on age groups. For example, younger workers may adopt a new language more quickly and be more open to innovative learning methods, while older workers may rely on their life experiences to enrich the learning process. Social support, both from colleagues and tourists, emerges as another crucial factor. Examples of such support vary, from study sessions to positive feedback and polite corrections of language mistakes. Such support not only aids in the technical aspects of language learning but also helps build confidence and sustain motivation.

Overall, this study indicates that second language acquisition in the tourism context is a multifaceted process influenced by various environmental and personal factors. By understanding these factors, language learning programs can be designed to be more effective, leveraging the natural workplace environment and reinforcing elements of motivation and social support. The results of this research not only provide new insights into second language acquisition in the tourism environment but also offer practical recommendations to enhance language learning practices in this sector.

**Table 4. Age Distribution of the Respondents and its Influence on SLA**

No.	Age Group	Number	Influence toward SLA
1	18-25 years	5	Adaptation to the new language goes rapidly due to cognitive flexibility
2	26-35 years	10	Language learning is driven by professional needs and career development

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3	36 -45 years	7	Language learning process may take longer time but having relevant experience to apply the language in working environment context
4	46 years	3	Facing a lot of challenges in language learning due to attrition and aging, but generally equip with high motivation for self-development
Total		25	

Analysis of the age distribution of respondents in this study indicates variations in how second language learning is influenced by age factors. With a total of 25 respondents involved in this case study in popular tourist destinations in Bali, the findings reveal important insights into the dynamics of second language acquisition based on age groups.

The 18-25 age group, consisting of 5 respondents, showed quick adaptation and acceptance of the new language, which can be attributed to higher cognitive flexibility at a young age. This supports language learning theories suggesting that a young age provides an advantage in language learning because the brain is still in a highly adaptive and responsive phase to new language input.

Meanwhile, the 26-35 age group, with 10 respondents, is the largest among all age groups. This suggests that language learning at this age is often driven by career motivation and professional needs. Individuals in this age group may already have clear career goals and see proficiency in a second language as a tool to advance their professional aspirations.

For respondents aged 36-45 with total 7 individuals, language learning may proceed more slowly compared to younger age groups. However, they have the advantage of relevant experience that they can apply in a work context, providing a rich practical perspective in language learning. The oldest age group, 46 years and above, although consisting of only 3 respondents, indicates that challenges in language learning may be more prominent due to age-related factors. Nevertheless, this group also demonstrates a high motivation for personal development, showing that the drive to learn does not diminish despite facing physical and cognitive barriers.

From these distributions and findings, it can be concluded that motivation for second language learning and effective learning methods vary according to age. This underscores the need for a tailored language learning approach that considers the specific needs, motivations, and challenges faced by learners at different stages of their lives. The results of this research provide valuable insights for developers of second language learning programs in the tourism sector, emphasizing the importance of flexible and responsive learning strategies to cater to the unique needs of learners from different age groups. By understanding how age influences language learning, educators and program developers can design more effective courses, enhance the second language proficiency of tourism industry workers, and ultimately enrich their interactions with international tourists.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted on the psycholinguistic phenomenon in the context of second language acquisition by workers in the tourist destinations of Bali, it can be concluded that: English, as a second or third language for some workers in Bali's tourist destinations, is acquired through various means, adapting to the multilingual work environment and the daily interaction needs with international tourists. Language acquisition occurs both naturally in direct communication contexts and through conscious efforts in formal and informal learning. Observations and interviews with 25 workers indicate that personal motivation, supported by age and social support, plays a crucial role in shaping the cognitive, social, and affective strategies used by workers to learn English. Cognitive strategies manifest in the utilization of systematic learning methods and the use of the second language in the work context. Meanwhile, social strategies are reflected in interactions with tourists and collaboration with colleagues, which not only strengthen language skills but also enhance cultural understanding. Affective strategies emphasize motivation and personal attitudes leading to the courage to communicate and learn from mistakes. Challenges faced, such as vocabulary inadequacy, difficulties with grammatical structures, and barriers in pronunciation and understanding accents, become the primary focus for further learning interventions.

The language-rich and culturally diverse work environment offers a rich context for natural second language acquisition. However, without strong personal motivation, the environment alone is not sufficient to facilitate deep language acquisition. When there is pressure, such as job demands or the need to interact effectively with tourists, motivation to speak in the second language increases significantly.

Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of understanding various factors influencing second language acquisition in the tourism setting. The recommendations derived from this research are expected to support the development of effective language learning policies, not only enhancing the second language proficiency of workers but also improving the quality of interactions and overall tourist experiences. Thus, it can be concluded that the synergy between motivation, work practices, and social support is key to successful second language acquisition for workers in the tourism industry in Bali.

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