



The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Individual Differences

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Li, S., Hiver, P., & Papi, M. (Eds.)

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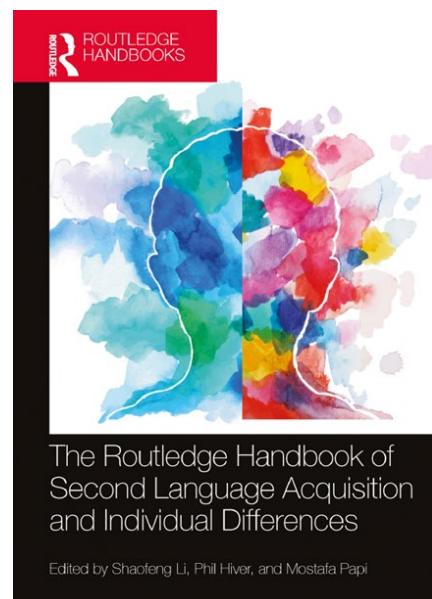
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Addressing the needs and aims of language learners is an essential facet of teaching. That is, while teaching a language other than the native language of the learners requires a process where individual factors are taken into consideration as they may yield success in second language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2006). These individual factors can be various such as the level of motivation and age of the learner. In the book entitled *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Individual Differences*, the aforementioned factors that may be found in every individual are discussed in terms of specific behaviors and basic language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and their implications in second language classes are evaluated based on several research studies.

In this handbook on second language acquisition (SLA) and individual differences (IDs), the editors, Shaofeng Li, Phil Hiver, and Mostafa Papi from Florida State University, divided the content into seven parts, which are (1) *introduction*, (2) *cognitive differences*, (3) *conative differences*, (4) *affective differences*, (5) *sociocultural and demographic differences*, (6) *ID factors for aspects of SLA*, and (7) *research methods*. Each part of the book consists of chapters and in total there are 32 chapters. In each chapter, the individual differences are divided into smaller units and discussed through various studies. Besides, the implications and effects of individual factors are covered based on the results of the studies mentioned above, and the data collection tools for each factor are evaluated briefly. At the end of each chapter, the editors provide practical ideas for teachers. The practical application sections are based on the results of the studies discussed in the previous pages and they include ways to apply them to real classrooms.

To begin with, in Part 1, the editors discuss the concept of individual differences and what it mainly encompasses. In addition, the importance of individual differences in second language learning is discussed in a detailed manner. It is stated that the importance of individual factors reflects itself in the learning outcomes, the process of learning a second language (i.e., differences in learning techniques and their impact on the process), and teaching of a second language. Following the general introduction to the concept, it is also evaluated under the scope of ten main theories in second language acquisition. Firstly, the editors provide a brief definition and major principles of the theories. In terms of IDs, they are conceptualized and evaluated based on the tenets of the given theories.

Part 2, on the other hand, focuses on cognitive differences in learners. In this part, five concepts are discussed regarding cognition and learning. These are *explicit and implicit language aptitudes, working memory, declarative and procedural memory, learning styles and strategies, and metacognition*. The first chapter elaborates on aptitude and its components. Following the background information, relevant studies are provided along with their results in terms of SLA. The tools that were preferred in those studies are explained under the title of “data elicitation”. At the end of the chapter, there are practical ideas on how to elaborate the data on aptitude and apply them to real classroom settings. In the same vein, the structure of the other chapters follows the same pattern but with a different area of focus.

When it comes to Part 3, the concepts regarding conative differences are introduced through background information and related studies. This part is divided into four chapters and they are treated under four headings: *motivation, mindsets, goal complexes, and willingness to communicate*. In each chapter, the main focus is on the students’ purposeful acts during the learning process. In other words, second language learners set goals and follow different paths depending on their reasons and their level of motivation. Besides, the way that the learners differ in those aspects is supported by the studies of the professionals in these areas (e.g., Dörnyei for motivation) and second language teachers are provided with practical ideas on how to assist their learners to set goals based on their differences. Following that, in part 4, affective differences are the focus and four concepts are discussed under this title. The first two chapters mainly elaborate on second language learning anxiety and enjoyment. These concepts are evaluated by referring to the aforementioned factors such as motivation and establishing connections with the other IDs. Besides, the studies provided for anxiety and enjoyment focus on main language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The last two chapters put emphasis on the beliefs of the learners and their self-efficacy. That is, the student’s thoughts and beliefs on their abilities to learn a language are discussed in terms of studies and applications. In part 5, sociocultural and demographic differences are introduced shortly. The editors prefer to address two IDs, identity and age of the learners. These variables are analysed under the scope of different sociocultural differences such as ethnicity.

As far as language skills are concerned, in part 6, the role and the effects of certain individual differences on acquiring four basic language skills are provided. In this regard, there are 8 chapters that encompass four main language skills along with sub-skills (i.e., pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar). In the chapters, each language skill is analyzed with individual differences which may affect the process. For example, while discussing vocabulary retention, motivation is considered to be one of the effective factors. As indicated previously, IDs and their role in improving language skills are supported by empirical research and future orientations for both teachers and other researchers.

Having discussed the individual factors and their relationship with four language skills, the final part of the book focuses on certain research methods used in studying IDs in terms of second language acquisition. This part consists of eight chapters that evaluate certain research methods. The covered research methods are presented with background information including their key features and components. Besides, some technical issues related to tools and their

preparation procedures are provided. Along with this, detailed information can be found regarding how to analyse the data collected through these methods and tools. Finally, the ways that they can be made use of in ID research are discussed under the title of *Contribution to ID Research*.

To sum up, with its sections and chapters devoted to specific components of IDs and SLA, this handbook provides readers with detailed information on the concepts in a reader-friendly manner. In this regard, the book can be considered a valuable resource for language teachers and researchers who would like to conduct studies on individual differences and their relationship with second language acquisition.

REFERENCES

Dörnyei, Z. (2006). Individual differences in second language acquisition. *AILA Review*, 19(1), 42-68. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.19.05dor>