

SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, PHD

Second language acquisition (SLA) is the systematic study of learning, using, and sometimes losing any form of language beyond the mother tongue. SLA is a burgeoning research field because today there are more people on the planet who use at least two languages than there are monolinguals. For individual learners and for every community in diaspora, second language acquisition is an experience that challenges their knowledge of language, their understanding of different cultures, and their personal identities. The experiences and challenges surrounding SLA are studied by scholars whose training is in a variety of fields—linguistics, psychology, sociology, education, anthropology, and communication arts—a variety that makes the study of SLA richly interdisciplinary.

The PhD Program in Second Language Acquisition at the University of Wisconsin–Madison is a rigorous interdisciplinary academic program that embodies the university’s mission to foster the study of globally important issues. In their coursework, students in the program learn from and collaborate with experienced and distinguished faculty in many departments and, through their original dissertation research, students generate and contribute new knowledge to the field. Students develop a thorough understanding of the scope of SLA as a field of inquiry, and develop and refine research skills that will serve them as they define and pursue their own research agenda. A PhD in SLA opens the door to scholarly and professional careers as university faculty, directors of foreign language programs, educational policy makers, and multilingual specialists.