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This is a book about second language acquisition. As such it deals with the ways in which second languages are learned. We take a multidisciplinary approach in that what we have selected to present in this book represents the research knowledge that has been accumulated by linguists, psychologists, sociolinguists, and other well-established disciplines. The content of the book is limited, for the most part, to a discussion of adult second language acquisition. This is done largely out of the need to impose limits on the content as well as our own particular research interests.

The book is designed to be used in an introductory course for post-graduate or graduate students. The goal is to make the information contained herein available to students with a wide variety of background knowledge. The book can be used with those with a background in languages and/or linguistics and those with little or no background in these areas. The book developed out of our belief that the complexities of the field can and should be brought to the attention of many students, both those who are intending to delve further into the field and those who are only curious about the pervasive phenomenon of learning a second language.

The field of second language acquisition is one about which everyone seems to have an opinion. For instance, even a casual airplane conversation with a stranger, during which we are asked what we do, always elicits opinions about second language acquisition, some of which are accurate, some of which are not. It is our intent to help set the record straight on this complex research area.

The field of second language learning is old and new at the same time. It is old in the sense that scholars for centuries have been fascinated by the questions posed by the nature of foreign language learning and language