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ANNOUNCEMENT

# The 2025 Albert Valdman Award

We are pleased to announce that the winner of the Albert Valdman Award for Outstanding Publication in 2025 is "Testing the three-stage model of second language skill acquisition" by Ryo Maie and Aline Godfroid. Please join us in congratulating Ryo and Aline on this contribution to the journal and to the field of second language acquisition.

## A note from this year's winners

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the review board of *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (SSLA) for selecting our article for the 2025 Albert Valdman Award for Outstanding Publication. It is a true honor and privilege to receive this recognition. We are also deeply grateful to the U.S. National Science Foundation, as this study would not have been possible without their generous financial support (Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant, Award No. 2140704).

In the field of SLA, Skill Acquisition Theory is widely recognized as one of the major theoretical approaches to second language (L2) learning. One of its central claims, the three-stage model (as we term it), proposes that the development of L2 knowledge and skills progresses through three stages: declarative, procedural, and automatic. We began this study in 2020 with the observation that, despite the theory's strong impact on the field, this important theoretical tenet had not yet been formally tested in L2 learning. In our article, we combine computational modeling of reaction-time data (i.e., hidden Markov modeling) with analyses of cognitive individual differences (i.e., declarative and procedural learning abilities) to demonstrate, for the first time, that L2 skill acquisition indeed follows this three-stage developmental process.

At the same time, we argue that this process is not universal across all language features (e.g., vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatics) or all learners (e.g., younger learners or those with less formal education). As we note in our article, the cognitive theory underlying Skill Acquisition Theory originated in cognitive psychology more than four decades ago (i.e., ACT-theory: Anderson, 1982), but SLA has matured sufficiently as a scientific discipline since then for the theory to be further developed and specified in relation to L2 learning. We continue to stand by this view and believe it remains just as relevant today as when we began this study. In our view, the investigation of L2 learning as skill acquisition began with DeKeyser (1997), published in *SSLA*. Nearly three decades later, we are pleased to contribute to this line of research in the very journal where it first began. It is our hope that this study will serve as a stepping stone for future research and stimulate further interest in Skill Acquisition Theory.

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