

# Language Acquisition: Which Factors Make It Easier to Learn Another Language?

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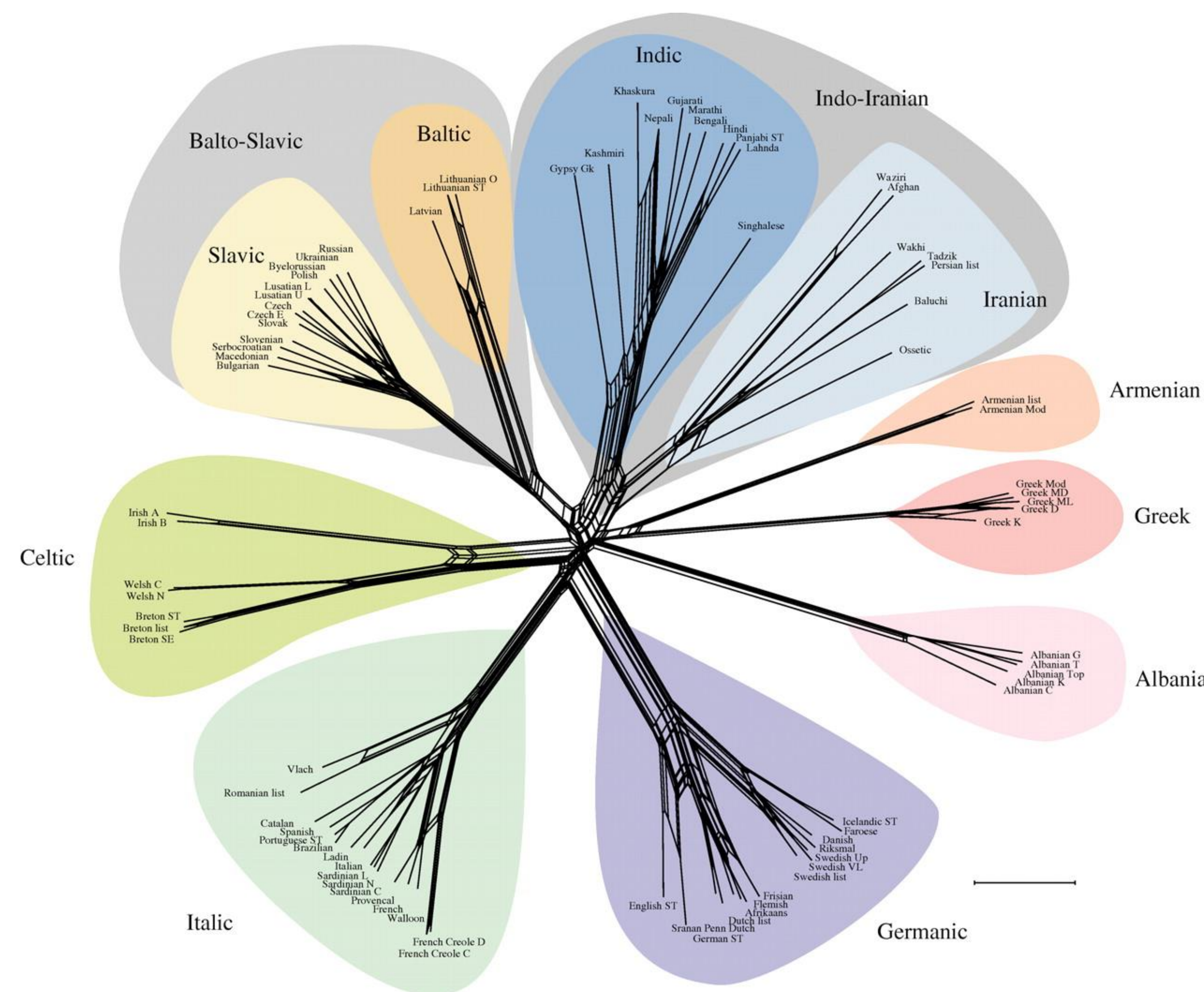
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## First Language Acquisition Theories

- **Nativism, Generative Grammar, & Universal Grammar** (Chomsky, 1998): language emerges with adequate input
- **Behaviorism** (Skinner as cited by Delprato & Midgley, 1992): language learned through operant conditioning and observation
- **Cognitivism** (Piaget, 1997): language acquired through schemata with assimilation and accommodation
- **Interactionism** (Vygotsky, 1962): language develops out of need and desire to communicate
- **Language Instinct** (Pinker, 2010): language is part of our biological inheritance

## Age and Second Language Acquisition

- Age of second language acquisition (L2A) is important for success (Patkowski, 1980)
- Starting L2A before 15 leads to better syntax (Patkowski, 1980)
- In Germany, L2A starts in first grade. Children start learning English at 6 years of age and learn English for 12-13 years in school (Link, 2019)
- Approximately 56% of German people speak English fluently (Ploscaru, 2024)



<https://jgpausas.blogs.uv.es/files/2010/11/Language-network.jpg>

## Intelligence and L2A

- Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory (Gardner, 1983) suggests that there are nine fields of intelligence (see image)
- Intelligence and verbal knowledge are not significantly correlated (Gardner & Lambert, 1965)
- Verbally/linguistically intelligent people have an easier time learning and manipulating language (Gardner, 1983)

## Multilingual Acquisition (Festman, 2020)

- Brain is capable of adapting to learning languages
- A learner becomes aware of their optimal learning style through experience
- It is easier to learn a third or fourth language than it is to learn a second language

## Are Some Languages Easier To Learn?

- Distance between the native language and second language matters (Isphording & Otten, 2011)
- Similarities in vocabulary and syntax are important (Isphording & Otten, 2011)
- Examples:
  - Spanish and Portuguese are close in syntax and vocabulary (Geeslin & Guijarro-Fuentes, 2006)
  - German and Dutch are similar in syntax and vocabulary (Hüning, 2001)

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