

# Variability in Second Language Development From a Dynamic Systems Perspective

Citation for published version (APA):

Verspoor, M., Lowie, W., & Van Dijk, M. (2008). Variability in Second Language Development From a Dynamic Systems Perspective. *Modern Language Journal*, 92(2), 214-231. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2008.00715.x>

**DOI:**

[10.1111/j.1540-4781.2008.00715.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2008.00715.x)

**Document status and date:**

Published: 01/01/2008

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Please check the document version of this publication:**

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

[Link to publication](#)

**General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

If the publication is distributed under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license above, please follow below link for the End User Agreement:

<https://www.ou.nl/taverne-agreement>

**Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at:

[pure-support@ou.nl](mailto:pure-support@ou.nl)

providing details and we will investigate your claim.

Downloaded from <https://research.ou.nl/> on date: 22 May. 2025

**Open Universiteit**  
[www.ou.nl](http://www.ou.nl)



# Variability in Second Language Development From a Dynamic Systems Perspective

MARJOLIJN VERSPOOR  
*Departments of English and Applied Linguistics*  
*University of Groningen*  
PO Box 716  
9700AS  
The Netherlands  
Email: [m.h.verspoor@rug.nl](mailto:m.h.verspoor@rug.nl)

WANDER LOWIE  
*Departments of English and Applied Linguistics*  
*University of Groningen*  
PO Box 716  
9700AS  
The Netherlands  
Email: [w.m.lowie@rug.nl](mailto:w.m.lowie@rug.nl)

MARIJN VAN DIJK  
*Faculty of Psychology*  
*Open University of The Netherlands*  
p.a. Koggelaan 3 F  
8017 JH Zwolle  
The Netherlands  
Email: [marijn.vandijk@ou.nl](mailto:marijn.vandijk@ou.nl)

This article illustrates that studying intra-individual variability in Second Language Development can provide insight into the developmental dynamics of second language (L2) learners. Adopting a Dynamic Systems Theory framework (Thelen & Smith, 1994; van Geert, 1994) and using insights from microgenetic variability studies in developmental psychology (Siegler, 2006), we focus on L2 systems during a time of rapid development, applying advanced visualization techniques. A reinterpretation of a longitudinal study by Cancino et al. (1978) on the use of negation shows nonlinear patterns and peaks of regression, and illustrates the relevance of regarding internal variability as a source of information in itself. A case study of an advanced learner reveals a general increase over time for the correlates included, but the development is nonlinear, showing moments of progress and regress. The case study also brings to light an interesting dynamic interaction of subsystems. In accordance with the assumption of a limitation of resources, the learner shows a variable development for some related measurements in the course of the trajectory.

All rights reserved, Blackwell Publishing  
The Modern Language Journal, 92 (2) (2008) 214-231.