

BOOK REVIEW

How Languages Are Learned (2013)

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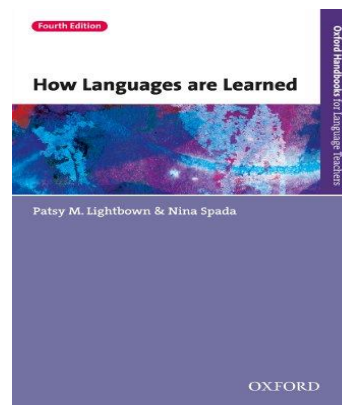
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Language acquisition is one of the most fascinating and unique aspects of human development. Teaching people how to walk is impossible because we are designed to walk; likewise, teaching a language to a child is very unlikely as we cannot prevent him/her learning it (Chomsky, 1994). Because of the fact that language is extremely complex, there are a number of hypothesis and ideas about how children and adults learn their mother tongue or a second/foreign language. In this respect, “How Languages are Learned”, which is a kind of an introduction book to the main theories of first and second language acquisition, can be an invaluable source and guide for educators, researchers, and students.

The book *How Languages are Learned* (ISBN 978-0-19-454126-8) was written by Patsy M. Lightbown & Nina Spada, and first published in 1993. The fourth edition of this award-winning book was published in 2013, and it is extensively used by educators and linguists all around the world. Patsy M. Lightbown is a Distinguished Professor Emerita in Applied Linguistics at Concordia University, Montreal. She has been working on second language learning & teaching for more than forty years. She is an author, editor, consultant and an advisor. The co-author of this book, Nina Spada, is a Professor Emerita in the Second Language Education Program at University of Toronto. Her main research interest is form-focused instruction in classroom SLA. Furthermore, she was a Visiting Professor at Boğaziçi University, Turkey, in 2015. The book’s updated content provides educators some important information about recent research on second language learning. It also presents a number of useful activities and questions related to this field which will trigger critical thinking. The book itself is a good and reliable source that relates language acquisition theory and research to teaching and learning in the classroom.

The prize-winning book consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 deals with language learning in early childhood, and introduces the reader how children, in the first three years, acquire the language, and how they initially form the morphemes and basic questions during language acquisition process. The chapter also highlights three broad theoretical perspectives for describing first language acquisition; namely, behaviorist, innatist, and interactional/developmental perspectives. The chapter,

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finally, outlines the language disorders and delays during the stages of language development as well as childhood bilingualism.

Chapter 2 draws the readers' attention to second language learning. The authors first discuss the learner characteristics and learning conditions. Then, they introduce various hypotheses of error, which are contrastive analysis, error analysis, and interlanguage. After that, how second language acquisition takes place in learners was analyzed in detail by explaining developmental sequences, grammatical morphemes, negation, question, possessive determiners, and so on.

In the 3rd chapter, the authors focus on individual differences in second language learning. Crucial individual characteristics such as intelligence, language learning aptitude, learning styles, personality, attitudes and motivation, motivation in the classroom, identity & ethnic group affiliation, and age. The chapter emphasizes that it is hard to interpret the research results when it comes to individual differences, and it relates this to the fact that learner characteristics are not independent of each other.

The 4th chapter aims to explain second language learning, and theories of second language acquisition in depth. The behaviorist, innatist, cognitive and sociocultural perspectives, which were dealt with in the first chapter, are described with their own theories and models in detail. Krashen's 'Monitor Model', information processing, usage-based learning, the competition model, the interaction hypothesis, the noticing hypothesis, input processing, processability theory are introduced and exemplified in this chapter. The authors touch upon the fact that teachers are not content with the lack of agreement among experts when it comes to language acquisition theories, so they cannot benefit these theories which could clearly give them more insight into language teaching practice.

In chapter 5, discussion is moved towards observing, learning, and teaching in the second language classroom. More specifically, the chapter reviews several ways in which different features of second language acquisition can be explained and interpreted. It also provides a lot of studies examining specific pedagogical features such as corrective feedback and question types. Lastly, examples of chats and taxonomies are presented in this chapter so as to help the reader observe and comment more on the interactions between student and teacher in the classroom.

Chapter 6 concentrates on six crucial and useful proposals for classroom teaching and interaction based on research findings and concentrates on how the proposals get translated into classroom practice. The chapter also presents various examples of classroom interaction, and discuss research findings with the aim of assessing how affective they are.

The 7th chapter, which is the final one, concerns with revisited popular ideas about language learning. It presents 18 practical and useful commonly-held beliefs and ideas, and relates them to the ideas and studies discussed in chapter throughout the whole book. At the end of this chapter, there is a glossary where the reader can check the items that have a special or technical meaning in second language acquisition research and second language teaching.

This prize-winning book covers the theory and practice of first and second language acquisition in a very balanced way. It is well-written and well-organized in such a way that anybody who is not even familiar with the topic can easily read it as the theoretical concepts have been presented as quite reader-friendly. The authors also have succeeded in bridging smoothly between first language acquisition and second language acquisition. What makes the book also remarkable is that there are plenty of examples, evaluations and case studies throughout the book, therefore, the reader is clearly exposed to some research ideas and practical context about the topic. It is worth noting that the majority of these examples presented in the book is based on real-life examples in language classrooms. Thanks to the book, teachers can reflect on their experience in teaching, which, in return, will have a great contribution in understanding of their duties and responsibilities as educators and the students' responsibilities and abilities as language learners. This book is, therefore, insightful and informative handbook for language teachers, teacher trainers, professional researchers, graduate and



postgraduate students who are interested in discovering more about first and second language acquisition.

REFERENCES

Noam, C. (1994). *The Human Language Series 2*.

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