



First Language Acquisition, 3rd Edition. Eve V. Clark Cambridge University Press, 2016. 575 pp.

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Article citation: Hojabrzare, N. (2018). First Language Acquisition, 3rd Edition. Eve V. Clark Cambridge University Press, 2016. 575 pp., *Applied Linguistics Research Journal*, 2(3): 67–69.

Received Date: 26 November 2018

Accepted Date: 03 December 2018

Online Date: 21 December 2018

Publisher: Kare Publishing

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E-ISSN: 2651-2629

This review focuses on the third edition of *First Language Acquisition*, by Clark (2016), a book on how young children acquire the language. The book is appropriate for a wide range of audience including students of linguistics, developmental psychology, and cognitive sciences. Furthermore, this book is ideally suited to undergraduate-level courses in first language acquisition for its clarity of writing style. The author of this edition, like two previous editions, has been involved in both observational and experimental studies in her research and more interested in discovering what language children understand and what they produce during different stages of cognitive development and language acquisition. As most, her studies focus on first language acquisition, Clark's work, this time, brings use-based as well as usage-based approach to acquisition to its readers' attention. This book can be considered a journey through language acquisition which begins with presenting various nonlinguistic and linguistic resources available to the infant from the very beginning contact with adults. During the journey, a complex set of conventions on the uses of words and related meanings are addressed. It is shown that the child undergoes different developmental stages such as prelinguistic, perceptual, phonological, phonemic, phonotactic, and language development respectively.

The 16 chapters are organized into an introductory chapter and four parts each of which representing significant aspects of acquiring the first language or two languages simultaneously. The author recounts the main points of some theoretical issues and fundamental approaches to children's first language acquisition that have concerned researchers in the introductory chapter (Chapter 1). This chapter begins with an overview of the related issues in language acquisition including debate over nature vs. nurture; product vs. process; learners and learning; cognitive dimensions; social dimensions; and stages in acquisition.

Part I includes 5 chapters (Chapters 2-6) largely differentiating comprehension from production. Chapter 2 introduces the speaking community in which children communicate with others and focuses on child-directed speech and its structural characteristics. Chapter 3 provides evidence and examples of the analysis of speech stream by children to recognize words. The author, in this chapter, reviews very critical steps taken by infants including identifying units of meaning; in other words, perception and breaking the language into smaller units in size and complexity. Some issues are addressed in Chapter 4: (a) the content of children's single words, first utterances and early vocabularies, (b) the

use of different classes of gesture from very beginning. Chapter 5 introduces the presence of a single syllable repeated as babbling in infants' production and shows how they learn to produce words and how they are heard and understood in conversational exchanges. In Chapter 6, the author indicates how children match meanings with words. Moreover, it is mentioned that the social interaction which takes place in conversational setting is detailed as a major part of communication around age one. A subsection entitled "fast mapping, memory, and meaning assignment" is added to this chapter to explain the inferences made by children when they acquire meaning.

The next part (part II) including 5 chapters (chapters 7-11) on constructions and meanings addresses children's acquisition of structure and their uses of more than one word at a time to convey their meanings. The major focus of Chapter 7 is on multiword combinations produced by children and to compare the components of longer utterances with early word combinations as well as early constructions. By providing examples of different languages, the author, in Chapter 8, shows children's ability to modify each word with suitable inflections and grammatical morphemes. Chapter 9 addresses their tendency to elaborate the information within clauses by adding inflections and auxiliary verbs to express more precise and complex meanings. In Chapter 10, a body of examples provided by the author from different languages shows how children combine clauses, how they talk about more complex events, and how they choose different options for different addressees and for different purposes. Word formation and constructing new words are the focus of the last chapter of the second part of this book (Chapter 11). It indicates how children coin words for unknown meanings and construct new words.

Part III (chapters 12-14) is basically concerned with using language; in other words, social dimensions of language that children need to take part in conversations is of focus and interest here. Chapter 12 represents examples from different languages to show how children improve the conversational skills such as turn-taking to contribute to conversational exchanges. Chapter 13 explains how children learn to get things done by acquiring added skills in communication such as giving instructions, and telling stories. Besides, it shows how they talk to different addressees in different situations and settings. Chapter 14 deals with the issue of bilingualism or communities with two dialects in which children grow up and how they are required to choose suitable language to speak with related addressee; in other words, it shows how children experience two languages at a time and analyze their choices.

In part IV (chapters 15 & 16), the author returns to the issue of nature vs. nurture and draws the readers' attention to the process of language acquisition. Some points of biological specialization for language processing in the brain are discussed in Chapter 15 including: the specialization of the brain for language acquisition, a sensitive period for acquiring a language, the damage of the brain and its relationship with language acquisition, whether considering some build-in language acquisition device, and the absence of normal social setting in which children grow up. And finally, in Chapter 16, the author finalizes the issues concerning first language acquisition and reviews some skills and mechanisms for the acquisition of a complex system called language. The sections of glossary, references, name index, and subject index are respectively followed after the last part of the book.

Although the contents in previous editions were rich in giving reference to other related studies carried out by different scholars throughout the world, the third edition is characterized by referring to more recent and up to date studies in this regard. In addition, in some parts of the book, the author attempts to elaborate and expand on some complicated concepts by more tangible explanations and examples from English and other languages.

Like other editions, in this one, the author places increasing emphasis on the setting and social context in which a language is acquired. For example, in Chapter 2, she provides readers with accurate and reliable information of why there is much less direct language input in some cultures like Mayan in Mexico.

Besides, some subsections have been added throughout the book. In Chapter 5; for example, in order to further clarify and present more details on the previous section on words and segments, Clark adds a section under the title of making repairs as "a diagnostic tool of what children know... to produce their language" (Clark, 2016, p. 130).

All in all, *First Language Acquisition* is a decent introduction and presentation of different stages in child language development from infancy to early childhood and then to childhood, from non-verbal aspects of acquisition to child-directed speech, from pre-linguistic period to first-words period, and from speech perception to speech production. In fact, this reviewer is impressed with well-documented and quality of the presentation of the Clark's *First Language Acquisition*, the third edition. The book's heavy emphasis is on social setting and context such as parental input as a stepping-stone towards acquiring language. Furthermore, it would seem to most clearly fit in undergraduate programs in developmental psychology and applied linguistics.