

MODULE 1

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UNIT 1 WHAT IS APPLIED LINGUISTICS?

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is designed to take you through a brief history of applied linguistics, its development over the years and the work of a few people who have contributed a lot to the development of applied linguistics (AL). Many people have defined or described applied linguistics and some of their definitions will also be presented. These definitions will give you an idea of what applied linguistics entails and the various areas of language endeavour it covers.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

This course cuts across various disciplines and different areas of human endeavour. As a language student, you need to know all these areas so that you can be exposed to how language can be applied to these areas. Remember that the title of the course is Introduction to Applied Linguistics. It means that every part of this course is introductory and for you to do an in depth study, you need to go through the references at the end of every unit and some other related materials.

Scholars who have worked in applied linguistics have noted that it often deals with solving or at least ameliorating social problems involving language. Applied Linguistics (AL) answers questions such as; how can we teach language better? What type of individual differences do we have in language learning? What are the social influences that affect language learning? How can we write a valid language examination? How can we best advise Ministry of Education officials, curriculum planners and other stake holders in the Education Ministry on the content of a language curriculum for various groups of people and communities? In short, applied linguistics is interested mainly in language problems. All the areas mentioned above and some other relevant issues will be discussed in this course.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- give various definitions of applied linguistics
- describe how applied linguistics became a discipline.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What is Applied Linguistics (AL)?

You have probably taken some courses in psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, multilingualism and some others where the word 'linguistics' or 'applied' has been mentioned. In this course, you will get to know how some of these courses are related to language. Some of the questions that people ask are:

- What kind of language should be the language of instruction in schools?
- What are the procedures for the choice of a language where there are many languages?
- How can we have valid language tests?

These and many more are questions that arise frequently and have to be answered by language specialists. Our knowledge of applied linguistics will help us to answer some of these questions. Many people have tried to define or describe what applied linguistic is, below are some of them.

Brumfit (1977:93) opines that:

AL is the theoretical and empirical investigation of real world problems in which language is a central issue.

Grabe (2000:9) proposes that:

The focus of AL is on trying to resolve language-based problems that people encounter in the real world, whether they are learners, teachers, supervisors, academics, lawyers, and service providers, those who need social services, test makers, policy developers, dictionary makers, translators, or a whole range of clients.

Grabe notes that distinguishing between what linguistics and AL are concerned with is to distinguish between theory and practice.

According to Schmitt and Celce-Murcia (2002:1):

AL uses what we know about (a) language (b) how it is learnt and (c) how it is used in order to achieve some purpose or solve some problems in the real world.

Schmitt and Celce-Murcia note that traditionally, the primary concerns of AL have been second language acquisition theory, second language pedagogy and the interface between the two.

Davis and Elder (2006:11) note the following about AL:

AL is, in our view, a coherent activity which theorises through speculative and empirical investigations real world problems in which language is a central issue.

3.2 History of Applied Linguistics

The term applied linguistics refers to the application of linguistics to the study and improvement of language teaching, language learning, language planning, management of language defects, communication between groups, lexicography, translation etc. It owes its origin to US language-teaching programmes during and after the Second World War. According to Grabe (2002), (please see complete on-line reference at the end of the unit) it was largely based on Leonard Bloomfield's outline guide for the practical study of Foreign Languages (1942), which was said to be influenced by the early European advocates of the direct method, in particular, Henry Sweet.

The history of applied linguistics can be discussed in different countries as noted by Grabe (2002) in the next paragraph.

The history of Applied Linguistics can be summarised thus:

1. AL in North America does have identifiable roots in linguistics.
2. While North American AL has evolved over time in its orientation and scope, so has North American linguistics.

3. A significant amount of work directed to real world issues involving language can be attributed to leading North American linguists.
4. Much of what can now be seen as ground breaking applied linguistics type activity was carried out prior to the formal appearance of applied linguistics.

There was a gradual move away from the central focus on linguistics. Angelis notes that until the 1990s, there were a lot of language activities without much reference to linguistics. It was much later that scholars saw the need to link all these language activities to linguistics in terms of their applications.

McNamara (2001) points to a different tradition for Australian applied linguistics in contrast to the ones for UK and US. To McNamara, Australian applied linguistics made AL of modern languages its target of immigrants rather than English. The application of linguistics to the development of teaching materials and writing systems for aboriginal languages was also focused on.

The Australian tradition of AL shows a strong influence of continental Europe and of USA rather than of Britain. English came in the context of mother tongue teaching and teaching of English to immigrants-English as a Second Language (ESL). The English as a Foreign Language (EFL) British tradition got to Australia in the 1980's. Scholars have noted that the important thing about AL in Australia is its concern for language in education, both with regard to new migrant languages and literacy in English.

The British Association of Applied Linguistics (BAAL) was formally established in 1967 with the aim of advancing education, fostering and promoting the study of language use, language acquisition and language teaching. It is also to foster interdisciplinary collaboration in this study (BAAL,1994). Davies (2001) notes that the British tradition represented a deliberate attempt to establish a distinctive applied linguistics.

Davies (2001) notes that, it was taken for granted in the 1960s and 70s that AL was about language teaching. Over the last 30 years, it became clear that those studying English language teaching had already studied aspects of linguistics. Lewis (2001:19) notes that AL is trying to resolve language-based problems that people encounter in the real world; to Davis and Elder (2006:9), AL has grown quickly and it is flourishing with academic positions, academic departments, international journals and an international association.

Davis and Elder (2006:9) commented on Widdowson's distinction between Linguistics Applied (LA) and Applied Linguistics (AL) thus: The differences between these modes of intervention is that in the case of **linguistics applied**, the assumption is that the problem can be reformulated by the direct and unilateral application of concepts and terms deriving from linguistic enquiry itself. That is to say, language problems are amenable to linguistic solutions. In the case of **applied linguistics**, intervention is crucially a matter of mediation...applied linguistics...has to relate and reconcile different representations of reality, including that of linguistics without excluding others. (Widdowson, 2000, p.5)

Davis and Elder (2006:9) note that the 'linguistic applied' is derived from the coming together of two traditions. First, the European tradition which was exported to the USA through scholars such as Roman Jakobson and the North American tradition of linguistic anthropological field work which required the intensive use of non-literate informants. Second is the linguistic description of indigenous languages for cultural analysis.

Scholars such as Bloomfield (1933) and Robins thought that if you as a teacher understand the use of linguistics as a scientific method in language presentation, your work will be easy. AL looks outward beyond language in an attempt to explain and solve social problems. Linguistics applied looks inward not to solve language problems in the real world, but to explicate and test theories about language itself. To them, this means that LA uses language data to develop our linguistic knowledge about language while AL studies a language problem with the intention of correcting them (2006:09).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- i. What is applied linguistics?

3.3 Some Subfields of Applied Linguistics

Below are the commonly regarded subfields of applied linguistics as noted Grabe (2002):

- **Second Language Acquisition**

Second language Acquisition theory deals with the range of variables- in particular, age of immersion, quantity of input etc. It may interactively determine the level of ultimate attainment.

- **Language Assessment and Testing**

Language Assessment plays a gate-keeping role in terms of the functions they serve for institutions and the corresponding preparedness of institutions to invest in their development and validation. It has always involved the development and implementation of frameworks for describing student's progress in language learning over time.

- **Language Policy and Planning**

The practical nature of language planning deals with the analysis of policy making in contexts where language is a part. Language problems always arise, which could involve rival interest reflecting relations among ethnic, political, social, bureaucratic and class groupings. Language policy and planning research then draws on knowledge far beyond linguistics to solve such problems where necessary.

- **Lexicography**

Lexicography is important and an integral part of applied linguistics in second/foreign language learning and teaching at all ages and levels of education. It is concerned with the writing and study of dictionaries for first/second/foreign language education. It also involves mono- bi- and multilingual works and general children's school, college, and specialised technical dictionaries.

- **Multilingualism**

This is the use of more than two languages within a speech community. Applied linguistics deals with the sociological, psychological, attending problems etc and the implications of these languages on the speech community.

- **Corpus Linguistics**

This is aimed at improving language description and theory and Stubbs (2006) notes that the task of applied linguistics is to assess the relevance of the language description to practical applications. Corpus data are essentially for accuracy in the description of language use and have shown how lexis, grammar and semantics interact.

Corpus is a body of oral and written language collected in the field for analytical purposes.

Some of the supporting disciplines which you must have been introduced to are:

- Psycholinguistics
- Education
- Sociolinguistics
- English studies
- Discourse studies

Some other newly introduced ones are in the area of forensic linguistics (language and the law) and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). You do not have to be scared about all these disciplines. It only shows that AL is a growing discipline and has a lot of other supporting disciplines. We will go through some of these while some other courses will take care of some of the other disciplines. In going through them, we will explain how each of the ones discussed relate to applied linguistics.

3.4 On the Interdisciplinary Nature of AL and Relevance to Language Teaching

A scholar on the site written below made some comments about AL <http://www.translationbureau.gc.ca/index.php?cont=700& language>.

He/she noted that AL is a branch of linguistics which is concerned with practical applications of language studies with particular emphasis on the communicative function of the language. Such functions include: professional practices as lexicography, terminology, general or technical translation, language teaching (general, specialised language, mother tongue or second language), writing, interpretation, and computer processing of language. This shows the interdisciplinary nature of AL and the fact that it can be applied to any area of language study. Douglas L. Rideout in his comment on the book *Applied Linguistics* by Cook (2003), notes that:

‘at its inception in the late 1950s, AL was principally concerned with language teaching especially second/foreign language teaching which became almost synonymous but over time the field grew and expanded to include other fields unrelated to second /foreign language teaching such as language policy and planning, forensic linguistics, clinical linguistics, critical discourse analysis, translation and interpretation and lexicography’.

Douglas noted that despite all these latest inclusion, the close association with second/foreign language still stands. That is why most introductory books about AL still devote a large amount of space to second/foreign language teaching. This shows that many other new disciplines may still be added as time goes on. AL is rich and therefore needs to be given a lot of attention.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

- i. Highlight the differences between the Australian tradition of AL and the British tradition.
- ii. LA believes that language problems are amenable to linguistic solutions. True or False?
- iii. AL believes that intervention is important and that different representations of reality are important in language description. True or False?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have been able to discuss what applied linguistics is in this unit and have also given a brief history on how it came to be. We noted that the focus of AL is on resolving language-based problems that people encounter in the real world. We also dwelt a bit on the differences between AL and LA.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The focus of AL is on trying to resolve language based problems that people encounter in the real world
- The term Applied linguistics refers to the application of linguistics to the study and improvement of language teaching, language learning, language planning, management of language handicap etc
- In 1948, *Language Learning*- a quarterly journal of Applied linguistics was started at the University of Michigan by Charles C. Fries, supported among others by Kenneth L. Pike and W. Freeman Twaddell, to disseminate information about work at Fries English Language Institute (founded 1941).
- In Britain, a school of Applied Linguistics was established by J.C Cartford at the University of Edinburgh in 1956 and the centre for AL was set up in Washington, DC, under Charles Ferguson in 1959 etc.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Give two descriptions of applied linguistics.
2. Which was the first academic journal to have applied linguistics in its title?
3. Which is the international association of applied linguistics which gathers most national associations? When was it born and how often does it meet?

ANSWER TO SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Applied Linguistics is solving real world problem of language applying linguistics to language learning, language teaching, language testing, social problems, etc.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 LANGUAGE LEARNING THEORIES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is designed to take you through some of the views about language, language and the individual and some theories of language learning. Knowledge of language in general is very important in this course. We all use language and there are different kinds of languages but there are a few general things about language which we all need to know as human beings and as language specialists. This is important for our academic work and for research purposes. Learning about language is interesting and rewarding.

In the just concluded Unit 1, you were introduced to Applied Linguistics. You were told that AL tries to resolve language based problems that people encounter in the real world. You also learnt that AL, as a discipline, was introduced in America, in 1948, during a conference that was organised by Charles C. Fries. In this unit, we shall be discussing language learning. We all speak one language or the other

and we have probably watched children at their earlier years of language learning or acquisition.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss general views about language; and
- describe the different theories of language learning.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What is Language and How Does it Work?

In describing language, some people talked about how it works. They see it as an instrument that works, as if it is an alarm clock whose functioning could be understood. People also talk about the birth of a language or its growth or decline as if it is a human being or an empire. Languages have periods of blossoming and flowering. Languages are also described as if they have physical qualities i.e. beautiful, ugly, vulgar, debased or decadent. Some people also talk about language as an event. Someone can say: a discussion 'takes place'; words 'crop up'. Someone can ask another person if he knows French. This makes language something 'we know' (Corder, 1973:20). He further notes that we write, read, speak well or badly shows that we are treating language as skilled behaviour which improves with practice. Our description of language reveals a variety of different ways of regarding it. The question, however, as Corder notes is not which views are right, but which ones are useful for language learning.

3.2 Language and the Individual

The individual is not born with a language. People acquire language skills when they are born. Not everybody develops language skills to the same degree but people speak, listen, read and write as they have opportunity. The study of language involves describing and explaining what is and what is not observable. There are some internal mechanisms

involved in language production that have to be explained. Linguists try to explain what goes on when we speak and perform in any language task (Corder 1973:23).

Corder notes that the descriptive framework and methods of studying of language in the individual must have some compatibility with the study of other aspects of human behaviour and cognitive capacities. There are theories of social structure, social behaviour and human culture that linguists use in analysing language and we are going to discuss some of them in the next section.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- i. Languages can be described as if they have physical qualities i.e beautiful, ugly, vulgar, debased or decadent. True/False
- ii. Language can be described as an event. True/False
- iii. Language can be described as something we know True/False

3.3 Language Learning Theories

Have you ever wondered how you learnt the language(s) you are speaking? Do you know that some people have taken time to find out the kind of processes involved in language learning? In this section, we shall be discussing some of the views of some scholars about language. Below are some of them.

3.3.1 Behaviourist Theory

The first coherent theory of language learning was the behaviourist theory based on the work of Pavlov and Skinner (Hutchinson & Waters, 1986). Using the behavioural patterns of some animals in their experiment, the theory states that ‘language is a mechanical process of habit formation which proceeds by means of frequent reinforcement of a stimulus-response sequence’. It was based on the view that all learning-including language learning-occurs through a process of imitation, practice, reinforcement, habit formation and generalisation (Spada & Lightbown, 2002). Simply put, language is learnt, like other psychomotor skills such as walking, jumping, dancing, etc. “The motto of behaviourism is that language is a verbal behaviour, learn-by-doing activity in learning a language” (Demizeren, 1989:157).

To the behaviourists, the social environment is crucial, not only as the source of linguistic stimuli that learners need to form associations between the words they hear and the objects and events they represent, but also as feedback on learners’ performance (Spada & Lightbown, 2002). Skinner (1957) claimed that if learners correctly produce

language that approximates what they are exposed to in the input, and these efforts receive positive reinforcement, habits are formed.

Spada & Lightbown (2002) note that one of the ideas associated with behaviourism was the notion that L1 habits which learners had already established would interfere with the formation of new habits in the L2, hence, Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) which was proposed to account for the role of the L1 in the L2 learning. However, (CAH) failed to predict errors that L2 learners were observed to make and those it predicted did not occur at all. It was then realised by researchers that learners from different backgrounds made the same errors.

Some of the behaviourist precepts are:

1. The social environment is very crucial in language learning.
2. The teacher or facilitator has a role to play in the language learning activity.
3. Errors must be corrected immediately; they are not permitted in learning.
4. Frequent repetition is essential to effective learning.

3.3.2 Innatist or Mentalist Theory

This theory was developed in America by Noam Chomsky. As a result of the weaknesses in the behaviourist theory, the ‘innatist or mentalist theory’ was introduced. The major principle or tenet of mentalist theory is that everybody learns a language, “not because they are subject to a similar conditioning process, but because they possess an inborn capacity which permits them to acquire a language as a normal maturational process” (Wilkins, 1972:168 cited in Demizeren, 1989).

To Chomsky (1968), the children learning language have innate properties of language because they master their native language in a very short time in spite of the highly abstract nature of rules. He insisted that every human being is born into a society with a language acquisition device (LAD) which embodies the nature and structure of human language. Language acquisition device (LAD) is the language innate faculty which is responsible for language acquisition without any need for the social environment.

This was later referred to as Universal Grammar (UG), which was described as “a specialised module of the brain, pre-programmed to process language” (Spada & Lightbown, 2002:116). Universal Grammar (UG) permits the child to acquire language during a particular developmental period, called “critical period” for language acquisition. At each learning level, the child subconsciously form hypotheses, and

lists them in his/her linguistic formations and thus he/she induces rules from his/her data.

However, it has been argued that language learning cannot be separated from the social environment. The presence of people such as father and mother around the child learner establishes a natural social environment. Therefore, language is not totally of inborn nature nor is it just a matter of biological make-up. Also, language learning involves a learn-by-doing activity to an extent. When the child realises that his/her hypothesis falls short, he/she makes necessary corrections or modifications (Demizeren, 1989). Mentalist tenets are:

1. The language teacher is not needed.
2. Errors are permitted because they serve as reflections of learners' language learning or acquisition process.
3. The role of social environment is undermined.
4. Language is innate.

3.3.3 Monitor Theory

This theory was propounded by Krashen (1982). Spada and Lightbrown (2002) noted that this theory shares a number of assumptions with the Chomskyan Universal Grammar (UG), but its scope is specifically second language acquisition. One of these assumptions is that human beings acquire language without instruction or feedback on error. Krashen developed this theory in terms of five "hypotheses" – the acquisition-learning hypothesis; the monitor hypothesis; the input hypothesis; the natural order hypothesis; and the affective filter hypothesis (See Krashen, 1982; 2003).

The fundamental hypothesis of Monitor Theory is that there is a difference between "acquisition" and "learning". The monitor hypothesis suggests that in the case of spontaneous or impromptu speeches, which originate in the system, what has been learned may be used to edit or self-correct speech of the L2 learnt (Spada & Lightbrown, 2002). In order to state that L2 learners undergo a series of stages like L1 learners, Krashen (2003) presents the following five hypotheses as the core of his language acquisition theory. They are as follows:

3.3.3.1 The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

This hypothesis claims that we have two independent ways of developing language ability: acquisition and learning. Language acquisition is a subconscious process. Nobody is aware when it is happening. Language learning is done in school. It is a conscious process. Error correction helps learning. "When we make a mistake and

someone corrects us, we are supposed to change our conscious version of the rule” (Krashen 2003:1).

3.3.3.2 The Natural Order Hypothesis

This hypothesis claims that the parts of language are acquired in predictable order. That is, you can predict which aspect of the language the learner will learn first. This theory seems to relegate the language environment to the background. It is said that the order of first and second languages are similar. This also depends on the individual and exposure to the language. In a situation where a learner has some natural deficiencies such as deafness, a natural order hypothesis may not work.

3.3.3.3 The Monitor Hypothesis

This monitor hypothesis is an attempt to explain how acquisition and learning are used. Language is normally produced using our acquired linguistic competence. Conscious learning functions as a “monitor” or “editor”. Our conscious monitor corrects, inspects and scans internally human subconsciously acquired competence. For instance, before a sentence is uttered, our monitor or edit must scan the sentence for any error. This is referred to as “self-correction”. Three conditions are stated by Krashen, to successfully use the monitor. The acquirer must know the rule. The acquirer must be thinking about correctness, or focus on form. The acquirer must have the time.

3.3.3.4 The Input Hypothesis

The input hypothesis attempts to explain how language acquisition occurs. It reflects the view that L2 learning occurs like L1 learning as a result of exposure to meaningful and varied linguistic input which helps the learner’s developing competence (Spada & Lightbown 2002).

3.3.3.5 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

This suggests that a condition for successful acquisition is that the learner is motivated to learn the L2 and, thus receptive to the comprehensive input (Spada & Lightbown 2002). This motivation could be intrinsic or extrinsic. If intrinsic, it means the learner is naturally motivated to learn the language and if extrinsic, it means the learner is motivated by social factors such as jobs or social climbing.

As reported by Spada & Lightbown (2002), Krashen (1982) has been criticised on the ground that his “hypotheses” are vague and difficult to investigate empirically. Nevertheless, the monitor theory has had a significant impact on the field of L2 learning and teaching. His attempt to distinguish between “acquisition” and “learning” is laudable.

3.3.4 Socio-Cultural Theory of Language Learning

This theory was proposed by Vygostky (1987). Spada and Lightbown (2002) state that the theorists working within a socio-cultural perspective of L2 learning operate from the assumption that there is a dialectical relationship between culture and mind, and that all learning is first social, then individual. Their argument is that through dialogue or communication, learners construct knowledge and this knowledge is later internalised. In this theory, emphasis is laid on the integration of the social, cultural, and biological elements.

3.3.5 The Acculturation Model

The acculturation model sees the learner adapting to a new culture. It was used to explain the acquisition of an additional language by immigrants in naturalistic majority language contexts. Barkhuizen (2006:561) notes that the theory emerged from a now famous case study of a 33year-old Costa-Rican named Alberto who failed to acculturate to the target language community and thus developed only a pidginised form of English. Schumann (1978:34), who was the proponent of the study, explains his findings as follows:

Second language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language.

Acculturation is said to be expressed in terms of social distance (becoming a member of a target group) and psychological distance (how comfortable learners are with the learning task). Welsh (2001) used the acculturation model in investigating English learners' perception of their language learning within a home stay as an accommodation which includes full board and lodging for students studying in a foreign country through which they may be exposed to the culture, language and social structures of that country. Welsh noted that, for many of the students, their expectations were not met. The study provided useful insights into the connection between acculturation of international students and their experiences of language learning. Some of the limitations that the model had are summarised below.

- It does not explain the internal mechanisms of how an L2 is acquired.
- It is a psychological model rather than a cognitive processing model.
- The model does not consider the language learner as having a complex.

- It does not consider social identity that must be understood with reference to larger and frequently inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day to day social interaction (Norton Pierce 1993:13) as reported in Barkhuizen (2006:562).
It focuses on group differences between the language learners group and the group associated with the target language (Barkhuizen, 2006:562).

3.3.6 The Intergroup Model

This emphasises ethnicity and the issues of social inequality as a social factor in L2 learning. According to Giles and Brye (1982), language learners tend to define themselves in ethnic terms and identify with their own group. They tend to make insecure social comparison with the out-group. Giles and Brye (1982) note the following as criticisms against the inter-group theory:

- It is a theory which also takes into account the relationship between the learner's group (in-group) and the target language group (the out-group)
- Unlike the acculturation model which sees the relationship between the groups as static or changing very slowly, inter-group theory emphasises the dynamic nature of the interaction between the groups, specifically groups with different ethno-linguistic identities.

Barkhuizen notes that the theory did not get off the ground probably because of lack of any research evidence to support its claims. For more on the theories of language learning see Barkhuizen (2006:575).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Describe the acculturation and the inter-group models of language learning.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have talked about the fact that different people have different ideas about language, depending on who they are and why they are writing. No individual is born with any language. We all acquire the language of the environment in which we find ourselves when we are born. It was also discussed that there are different theories about language learning.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- every individual has an idea about what language is, depending on who we are;
- we all use language and there are different kinds of languages;
- some people talk about how language works;
- people also talk about the birth of a language or its growth or decline as if it is a human being or an empire;
- languages are also described as if they have physical qualities i.e beautiful, ugly, vulgar debased or decadent;
- some people also talk about language as an event;
- the acculturation model sees the learner adapting to a new culture;
- Barkhuizen (2006:561) notes that the theory emerged from a now famous case study of a 33-year-old Costa-Rican, named Alberto, who failed to acculturate to the target language community and thus developed only a pidginised form of English;
- the intergroup model emphasises ethnicity and the issues of social inequality as a social factor in L2 learning;
- unlike the acculturation model which sees the relationship between the groups as static or changing very slowly, intergroup theory emphasises the dynamic nature of the interaction between the groups; and
- the first coherent theory of language learning was the behaviourist theory based on the work of Pavlov and Skinner (Hutchinson and Waters, 1986).

ANSWER TO SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- 1) True 2) False 3) True

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Write short notes on the innatist or mentalist theory, monitor theory and the socio-cultural theory of learning.
2. The motto of behaviourism is that language is a verbal behaviour. How will you explain the language behaviour of a child whose parents are Yoruba but born in India and has the problem of interference?

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UNIT 3 THE NATIVE SPEAKER IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In unit 1, you were introduced to applied linguistics; and in Unit 2, we reviewed some theories on language learning. This unit centres on the native speaker in Applied Linguistics. It dwells on childhood acquisition intuitions about idiolectal grammar, standard language grammar, and so on.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe who a native speaker is; and
- describe the extent to which a second language learner can acquire native-like competence.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

The concept of the ‘native speaker’ in AL is a curious one as Davies (2006:431) puts it. There are so many controversies about the concept of the native speaker and some linguists have asked the question about its usefulness to AL. Some even see the idea as pointless. Below are some arguments from notable linguists along that line. Ferguson (1983:07) in Davies (2006:431) has the following comments:

‘Linguists.... have long given a special place to the native speaker as the only true and reliable source of language data’.

He notes further that:

‘Much of the world’s verbal communication takes place by means of languages which are not user’s mother tongue, but their second, third or nth language, acquired one way or another and used when appropriate. This kind of language use merits the attention of linguists as much as do the more traditional objects of their research’.

This means that, to Ferguson, the idea of a native speaker is not limited to a particular language or set of speakers. As much as Davies (2006) also believes in the myth-like properties of the native speaker idea, he also thinks about its possibility of being real. David refers to Chomsky, a protagonist of the universality of languages, as equating language development with other human development. Chomsky quoted in Paikeday (1985), notes that the question of what are the languages or dialects attained and what are the differences between native and non-native is pointless.

He concludes that everyone is a native speaker of the particular language and that; the person has grown in his/her mind/brain. Chomsky, a theoretical linguist, is not interested in languages, he studies language. Davies comments that Chomsky does, in fact, acknowledge the real individual, living as he says in the real world, whose repertoire (stock of information on language use) is multiple and that applied linguistics has its role in the real world of the native speaker.

3.1 The Concept of Universal Grammar (UG)

The concept of Universal Grammar (UG) is that different languages are the same language but with different settings. This means that languages differ essentially in terms of vocabulary. He notes that a child may be a native speaker of more than one language as long as the acquisition process starts early and necessarily pre-puberty. Felix (1987) notes that after puberty, it becomes difficult [and Birdsong (1992) added ‘very

difficult'] to become a native speaker. Native/non-native speaker differences are not innate, but learnt. This concept of the native speaker, Davies says, has the reality of membership that it always gives.

The native speakers are believed to know how things are done because they know the tradition and the repository of the language. They are expected to exhibit normal control, especially in fluent speech, writing, and general communication. they are said to have a natural intuition for shared cultural knowledge at different levels. McCawley (1986) notes that native speakers combine their role as learners with that of authority, and this differentiates them from the non-native speakers. Davies (2006) notes that remaining a learner helps the native speakers gain access to the standard language.

3.2 Definitions of 'Native Speaker'

Below is a summary of what Davies and some other scholars agree on about the native speaker (all native speakers). The native speaker may be defined in the following six ways Davies (1991, 2003) in Davies (2006:435).

- The native speaker acquires the L1 of which she/he is a native speaker at childhood.
- The native speaker has intuitions (in terms of acceptability and productiveness) about his/her idiolectal grammar.
- The native speaker has intuitions about those features of the standard language grammar which are distinct from his/her idiolectal grammar.
- The native speaker has a unique capacity to produce fluent spontaneous discourse, which exhibits pauses mainly at clause boundaries (the 'one clause at a time facility) and which is facilitated by a huge memory stock of complete lexical items (Pawley& Syder 1983). In both production and comprehension, the native speaker exhibits a wide range of communicative competence.
- The native speaker has a unique capacity to write creatively (and this includes, of course, literature at all levels, from jokes to epics, metaphor to novels.
- The native speaker has a unique capacity to interpret and translate into the L1 which she/he is a native speaker. Disagreements about the deployment of an individual's capacity are likely to stem from a dispute about the standard or (standard) language.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

(Answer True or False)

- i. The native speaker cannot acquire the L1 of which she/he is a native speaker at childhood.
- ii. The native speaker has a unique capacity to produce fluent spontaneous discourse.
- iii. The native speaker does not have intuitions about those features of the standard language grammar which are distinct from his/her idiolectal grammar.

3.3 Native Speaker or Native-Like

There have been questions about the extent to which the L2 learner becomes a target language native speaker. Davies answers these questions based on the six points listed earlier on the definitions of the native speaker. Davies (2006: 436) responds as summarised below.

3.3.1 Childhood Acquisition

The second language learners do not acquire the target language in early childhood. If they do, then the learners become bilingual native speaker—that is, native speakers of L1 and L2.

3.3.2 Intuitions about Idiolectal Grammar

It is possible for the L2 learner to have intuitions about idiolectal grammar of the target language. This can be done through sufficient contact and practice. For the second language learner to gain access to intuitions about his own idiolectal grammar he/she must have been able to have some childhood acquisition.

3.3.3 Intuitions about the Standard Language Grammar

With sufficient contact, and practice, the L2 learner can gain access to the standard grammar of the target language. It is reported that in many formal learning situations, it is through exposure to target language standard grammar that the target language idiolectal grammar would be learnt.

3.3.4 Discourse and Pragmatic Control

In practice, it is very difficult for a non-native speaker to gain the discourse and pragmatic control of a native speaker, although, it is not an impossible task. For example, if a Nigerian stays for a long time in a

country like Britain, he/she can have discourse control of the English language, and in fact many do.

3.3.5 Creative Performance

It should be possible for a second language learner to become an accepted creative artist in the target language. Davies (2006: 436) reports on writers such as Conrad, Becket, Senghor, Narayan who did well in creative performance. He however mentions the attitudinal issue of non acceptability of the L2 creative writer by the L2 community. Another attitudinal issue is the acceptability of a standard variety of a language to readers of other standard varieties.

3.3.6 Interpreting and Translating

Davies (2006) notes that this must be possible even though international organisations generally require that interpreters should interpret into their L1

Even though it is difficult, he goes ahead to say that the adult non-native speaker can acquire the communicative competence of the native speaker and also acquire the necessary confidence for membership, with a lot of exposure or contact to the target language . He also notes that if a non native speaker wishes to become a native speaker or be seen as a native speaker and it is accepted, it then becomes irregular if he/she shows differences on more refined tests of grammaticality. Davies also notes that, since this is purely psycholinguistic, it is unimportant.

Davies notes further that the positions of psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics on the differences between native and non-native speakers are irreconcilable. To him, no test is ever sufficient for the psycholinguist to demonstrate the distinction between the native and non- native speaker. Whereas the sociolinguist would always find another exceptional learner who will demonstrate that exceptional non native speaker can be equated to native speakers on ultimate attainment. That is probably why Cook (1999) submitted that the distinction between native/non native speakers should be one above all of biography. There are all kinds of reactions to this. Finally, on the issues of the native speaker's identity, Davies refers to Hyltenstam and Abrahamson (2000) on the different views of what being a native speaker means. These include:

- native speaker by birth (by early childhood exposure)
- native speaker by virtue of being a native user
- native speaker for native speaker-like (by being an exceptional learner)
- native speaker through education in the target language medium
- native speaker through long residence in the adopted country.

3.4 Losing a Native Speaker Identity

This section talks about the global expansion of English in the twentieth century which has been widely discussed. Some discuss the expansion in a favourable light, while some others in a non-favourable light. Davies (2006: 438) mentions Fishman, Cooper and Conrad (1975); MacArthur (1999) as some of the scholars who discuss the expansion favourably and they commented on the empowering role of English, the access it provides, both to knowledge and to markets, the empowerment it provides by having most of the world's technological development in English.

Those who discussed the expansion unfavourably saw it as a domineering language through globalisation. Phillipson (1992) notes that English squeezes other languages into less and less central roles until they are marginalised and eventually displaced or replaced by English in the communities. Davies cites the examples of Singapore where English is now the only language of instruction in the school. The same thing Davies notes happened in Guyana where the local languages were marginalised.

In Nigeria, English is the nation's official language in that it is the language of government, education, law, commerce and inter-ethnic communication. The national policy of education recommends the use of some of the indigenous languages, along with English, at the lower primary school education and in conducting proceedings at the various assemblies in governance. The general picture in Nigeria now is that, English is surviving side by side with the indigenous languages. It does not seem presently that it will displace the indigenous languages totally as it has done in some other countries; but the threat it poses to the indigenous languages is the prestigious status it occupies as the language of the elite, which open doors to good jobs and opportunities and this makes everyone to desire at least basic literacy in it. Apart from this, Nigeria, being a multilingual nation has a lot of indigenous languages which have not been committed to writing and since some of the main speakers are dying, the languages run the risk of extinction.

There are countries where becoming proficient in English, while at the same time not losing their first language have been regarded as successful. In all cases of the intrusion of English as a second or foreign language, there is the issue of self and identity, which Davies notes is closely associated with language and, in particular, one's first language. This image of self or identity can be threatened by seeing one's language as inadequate or not good and, yet, unable to attain the necessary perfection in the L2. This is what has happened to some Nigerian speakers of English. Details about losing a native speaker identity can be found in Davies (2006: 438-442).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

What do you think is the future of English Language in Nigeria?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have been able to define who a native speaker is and the criteria for doing so. You have also learnt about the possibility of losing a 'native speaker' identity.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- There are so many controversies about the concept of the native speaker and some linguists have asked the question about its usefulness to AL.
- Much of the world's verbal communication takes place by means of languages which are not user's mother tongue.
- Native/non-native speaker differences are not innate but learnt.
- The native speaker acquires the L1 of which she/he is a native speaker in childhood.
- It should be possible for a second language learner to become an accepted creative artist in the target language.
- Phillipson (1992) notes that English squeezes other languages into less and less central roles until they are marginalised and eventually displaced or replaced by English in the communities.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. A friend of yours relocated to the US at age 10. He /she has spent about 10 years there now. Do you think your friend can achieve native-like competence in English? If no, why? And if yes, how?
2. According to Davies (2006), to what extent can the L2 learner become a target language native speaker?

ANSWER TO SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

- 1) False 2) True 3) False

ANSWER TO SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

English may likely displace indigenous languages in the future due to the threat it poses to the indigenous languages at the moment.

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UNIT 4 FIRST AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Factors Responsible for the Rapidity and Accuracy of the Acquisition of a Language
 - 3.2 Characteristics of L1 and L2
 - 3.2.1 Age
 - 3.3 Similarities and Differences between L1 and L2
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit takes you deeper into some of what has been mentioned in units 1-3 about the language learner. In this unit, you will learn about first and second language acquisition. You know we all just discover that we speak one language or the other and some of us speak up to two or three languages, depending on our flair for languages and the need for them. There are a lot of things that we are able to do with our bodies that we just take for granted. This includes the ability to speak and reason out things without being told, at times. First language acquisition is one of such mysteries and we need to know what linguists who have researched into this area of study have to say.

In Unit 3, you were introduced to different language learning theories. In this unit, you will be introduced to first and second language acquisition. How many languages can you speak? How did you learn your second language? This unit discusses the learning variables in first and second language acquisition. Tucker (2003) notes that no matter the number of languages that are learnt later in life, 'the rapidity and accuracy of the first acquisition can simply not be repeated'. These were the thoughts of Tucker as a student as at the time she made these comments. The claim seems to be true as many other scholars also imply this in their studies. To her, this seems to be why first language acquisition and subsequent second language acquisition is such a highly researched topic. In both cases, the learner learns the sounds, the words, phrases, sentences until the learner is able to make very complex sentences that will show some level of competence in the language.

Tucker also notes that the outcomes of both types of acquisitions are different and, according to Tucker, the differences are dramatic in that the child's ability to communicate in the target language far surpasses that of the adult. She went ahead to mention some of the things that make for the differences. These will be discussed along with the views of other scholars in section three. Before we continue, let us look at some of our objectives for this unit. This will guide you as you read because they will remind you of your expectations.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the factors responsible for the rapidity/accuracy of the acquisition of a language; and
- describe the differences between LI and L2.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Factors Responsible for the Rapidity and Accuracy of the Acquisition of a Language

Let us consider the following.

a. Input

The quality and quantity of the 'input' makes the first difference. The quantity of the exposure to the target language that a child has is greater than that of the adult (Tucker, 2003). The 'input' is the learning situation in form of exposure to the language in various ways that a learner is opportuned to have. A child hears the language all day long at home, at play, in the classroom, when rebuked, etc but an adult may be restricted to the classroom or home instructors as a result of lack of time to study or listen to the language being spoken or read. A classroom situation where an instructor may be speaking to twenty to twenty-five learners at the same time may not give enough room for individualised attention that could aid learning. Relevance of the language to the lives of the

adult may be another determining factor in the acquisition of the language.

b. Age

Scholars have noted the issue of a 'critical period' after which successful learning may be difficult to accomplish. This period is usually tied to puberty because it has been noticed that people go through significant changes physically, emotionally and in terms of cognition during puberty. Three main changes noted in terms of language acquisition are considered below.

i. The presence of muscular plasticity

A child's plasticity is said to go away at about the age of five. Some psychologists note that it is difficult for a learner to fully master pronunciation of a second language. What then happens when young people and children above five years old travel outside their countries to other countries and within one or two years they have mastered the art of speaking the host language? This only shows that this claim may not be true for all cases and this is why motivation is important in language learning. There have been cases of children and young people from Nigeria who have settled in Europe or America after they were five and have mastered to an appreciable extent the host language. It was actually taken over as their first language as most lose their original language.

ii. Memorisation capabilities

It has been noted that as a person grows older, their ability to retain large amount of information reaches its peak and then begins to decrease (Tucker (2003)).

iii. Neurobiological changes

Tucker notes what she referred to as lateralisation hypothesis. This is related to neurology. Medical science reports that as a person matures, the left hemisphere, which controls the analytical and intellectual functions becomes more dominant than the right side, which controls the emotional functions. This also affects language learning. Adults have the advantage of getting the essentials of grammar and structure than children because of their cognitive development. The disadvantage of this ability is that adults tend to still hold on to the structures of their first language.

c. Motivation

Motivation has a lot to do with emotional changes. Children are easily motivated more than adults. Tucker notes two ways by which adults can be motivated and these are 1) integrative motivation (encourages a learner to acquire the new language so as to be able to identify with speakers of the target language) 2) instrumental motivation (encourages a learner to acquire proficiency for practical purposes such as becoming a translator, doing research in different areas).

d. Egocentricity

It has been reported that adults may get annoyed when corrected during learning another language but children do not. Adults may even feel frustrated or threatened when learning a new language, especially if it has to do with status enhancement. The adult sees mistakes most often as failures rather than an avenue for correction (Tucker 2003).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Mention and discuss three of the factors affecting the acquisition of a language as discussed by Tucker (2003).

3.2 Characteristics of L1 and L2

A person's first language is usually seen as the first language learnt and still spoken. In some cases, the first language may be lost, leaving the individual with the second and other languages learnt later. This is referred to as language attrition. This can happen when young children move to a new environment and the earlier learnt language is no longer spoken frequently. A person's first language may not even be the dominant language.

A second language is any language learnt after the first language or the mother tongue. Ervin-Tripp (1974) notes that it has been observed that the development of comprehension of syntax and of morphological features follows the order in the mother tongue studies. She noted that children of older ages learnt much faster than younger children for the sample in the age of four through nine.

3.2.1 Age

Some researchers have claimed that one of the important things to note about a first and a second language is the age the person learnt the language. It is believed that a second language is consciously learnt and used after puberty while a first language is unconsciously acquired. In most cases, people never achieve the same level of fluency and comprehension in their second languages as in their first.

3.3 Similarities and Differences between L1 and L2

Below are some of the similarities and differences that some scholars have noted between L1 and L2.

a. Speed

It is believed that the speed at which a first language is learnt is faster than that of a second language. The acquisition of a second language can be a lifelong process for many people and that most people never have native-like competence in the second language no matter the number of years they spend learning it.

b. Stages

A lot of research has shown that basic sounds, vocabulary, using grammatical structures are developed while learning a second language. The rate at which they are learnt, however, depends on the individual for second language learning.

c. Competence

L1 speakers always try to achieve target language competence while L2 learners may be content with less than target language competence or more concerned with fluency than accuracy (Ellis 1994). Ellis (1994) also notes that children normally achieve perfect L1 mastery but adult L2 learners are unlikely to achieve perfect L2 mastery. Children are also noted to develop clear intuitions about correctness, while L2 learners are often unable to form clear grammaticality judgments. In terms of overall success, Ellis notes that children normally achieve perfect L1 mastery while adult L2 learners are unlikely to achieve perfect L2 mastery.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Why do you think complete success is rare in L2 acquisitions for a Nigerian learner of English?

ANSWER TO SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

This can be found in the relevant section of the manual and module. Some of these are: age, motivation, input, etc.

ANSWER TO SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Complete success in L2 is hampered by MT interference, completely within the L2 itself and limited exposure.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we talked about the acquisition of the first and second languages as noted by some scholars. Tucker (2003) notes some factors affecting the accuracy of the acquisition of the first and second languages. Some of these are age, motivation and egocentricity. We also noted the findings of Ellis 1994 on the differences between the first and second languages.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, the following are aspects learnt by you:

- The quantity of the exposure to the target language that a child has is greater than that of the adult.
- The 'input' is the learning situations in form of exposure to the language in various ways that a learner has.
- Relevance of the language to the lives of the adult may be another determining factor in the acquisition of the language.
- The child's language is a system in its own right rather than being a small fragment of the adult system.
- Wherever there is a relationship between cognition and language development, language depends on cognition.
- The learning of a first language has many sides and is not simply a matter of learning syntax and vocabulary.
- There are particular stages of development through which all children progress, even if the rate of progression varies.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What are the major characteristics of L1 and L2 acquisition? Can you try to account for why there would be major differences in L1 and L2 acquisitions of a Nigerian learner of English?
2. What are the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 acquisition? Can you remember any notable similarity between your L1 and L2 when you learnt them? Write about your experience.

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UNIT 5 SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON LANGUAGE LEARNING

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- 7.0 References/Further reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is designed to take you through some of the things that influence language learning around us. It is important to note that we all live in a society among people with all kinds of environments, and whether we believe it or not, it affects all that we do, including learning a language. In this course, you will notice in almost all the units, that there are a lot of references to earlier scholars. You should not feel bored by all these, it only shows that a lot of people have worked in this area of study and we need to make references to them. In fact, you will do yourself a lot of good if you can check up some of these references and learn more about what has been reported about them.

One of the questions that AL answers is- what are the social influences that affect language learning? In short, applied linguistics is interested mainly in solutions to language problems. In this unit, you will be taken through some of the findings of scholars on social influence on language learning. Below are some of the objectives of this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the types of learners that we have ; and
- mention the social factors that can affect a learner's understanding of a language.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Act of Language Learning

The act of learning a second language is a difficult one. The grammatical system has to be learnt and the learner has to battle with how to use it appropriately in real life situations. One of the assignments of the applied linguist is trying to examine or determine what goes on in the mind of the learner in relation to the environment. Obviously, a lot of things go on at the same time in the mind of the learner which the linguist cannot see physically. This means that, in matters of language learning, a number of variables come into play. Widdowson (2000:3) notes that applied linguistics is a mediating activity, which seeks to accommodate a linguistic account to other partial perspectives on language so as to arrive at a relevant reformulation of real world problems.

The word 'social', according to Barkhuizen, has different definitions and scholars have reacted to it in different ways. Ellis (1994) differentiates between social context and social factors. According to Ellis, social context refers to different settings in which L2 can take place. Each setting can be seen as a context in which a number of social factors influence learning outcomes. His examples of social factors are age, sex, social class and ethnic identity. To him, settings could be natural settings where informal learning occurs or educational settings where formal learning takes place. Ellis also refers to what he calls social 'aspects' Ellis (1997:37) social determinants (Ellis and Roberts 1987:26), situation domains and situational contexts (Ellis & Roberts 1987: 7), situational variables (Ellis, 1992), learning environments (Ellis, 1990) and external constraints (Ellis 1999:461).

For Brown and Fraser (1979), they use the term situation but divided it into two, i.e. scene and participants. They later divided scene into setting and purpose. Long (1998:93) uses social settings and environments interchangeably. Other scholars who have worked on the social settings and environments are Stern (1983) and Spolsky (1989). All these studies point to the fact that language learning takes place in a social context, which consist of a number of influential social factors. Language learning, as described by Krashen (1981), is consciously studying the language and acquisition. It is subconsciously internalising it. Some scholars, however, use the term interchangeably. Evidence of what is learnt is revealed through the interlanguage.

Researchers who look at the development use of interlanguage and output mention both the product of the learning (the form of the actual language used by the learner) and the process of learning (the psychological processes that occur during learning and the social context factors that interfere with the learning process (Barkhuizen 2006:554). Barkhuizen distinguishes between product, process and language education by saying that language education refers to practices, procedures and provision of language learning. He notes that there is obviously a connection between social context and language learning. To him, learning cannot take place in a social vacuum.

3.2 Second Language Learning

Barkhuizen (2006:556) notes that learning a second language involves at least five elements. Below is a diagram of the relationship between the elements.

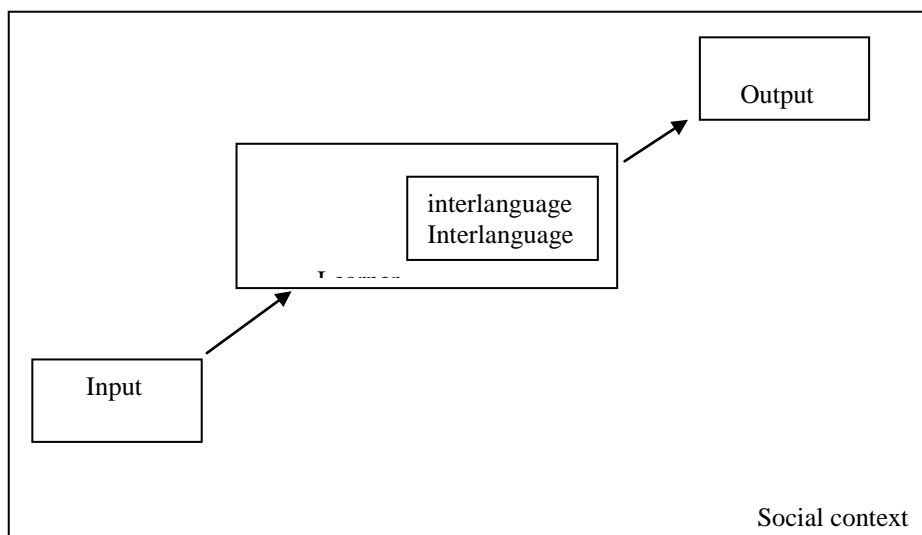


Fig.5.1: Necessary Elements for Learning an Additional Language. [Source-Barkhuizen (2006:556)]

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

What are some of the things you need to take into consideration before writing?

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Mention and discuss some essay writing strategies that have been mentioned in this unit.

3.2.1 The Learner

There are a number of social factors that can be mediated through learner attitudes which affect language learning. Ellis mentioned four factors- age, sex, social class and ethnic identity. Younger learners are generally more successful at learning languages than older learners. Again, men use a higher frequency of nonstandard forms than women. Women might be better at L2 learning than men because they are likely to be open to new linguistic forms in L2 input, and are more likely to rid themselves of interlanguage forms that deviate from target language norms.

The results studied in the field to date suggest that middleclass children achieve higher levels of L2 proficiency and more positive attitudes than working class children when the programme emphasises formal learning. This may be because they are better able to deal with decontextualised language. However, when the programme emphasises communicative language skills, the social class of learners have no effect.

There are different social classes in every community. For example, in Nigeria, being a member of the high class automatically qualifies you for a life of affluence, which includes education in one of the very good schools in the country. Members of the lower class may have to make do with whatever they get from the government schools. It is, however, interesting to note that there are some children from the lower class who attend government schools and come out with distinctions while some of those from the high class have low grades in some subjects. The reasons for this may be partly attitudinal.

In the US for example the social stratification of school children begins in the first grade. Children from highest achieving reading groups are monitored into college-bound course in the secondary school, while those from lower level reading groups are tracked into the industrial and technical classes. The children from the highest achieving reading groups are those from the middle class homes, where storytelling and educational-type toys abound, while the other set are working class children from different ethnic, linguistic and cultural homes. Once

children are placed in their respective reading groups, they experience varying quality of instruction coupled with different sets of expectations. These findings by Wood (200) in Barkhuizen (2006) point to the social influences on language learning of children.

What happens is that some drop out of school while some proceed to college. L2 students may be classified as intellectually deficient because of low English proficiency and could be tracked into inappropriate courses (Barkhuizen 2006:557). You will notice that there is complexity in this issue of social factor in terms of age, gender, social class and ethnicity. These are all interconnected in one way or the other. Ellis (1994) also states that, there is a general agreement that ethnicity play an important role in language learning.

3.2.2 Input and Output

Input is a type of language ‘resource’ received by learners when listening or reading in a target language. This may be in a language classroom, a natural setting or Second Language Acquisition (SLA) laboratory. Input is seen as part of the social context. Ellis (1999), in his research, hypothesised that input and output work together in interlanguage. Swain’s (1985) work on output claims that acquisition may occur when learners have to make efforts to ensure that their output is comprehensible.

Norton (1989) notes that output is not perceived to be merely the appropriate use of linguistic forms; it is rather a source of resistance, a political tool. He notes further that written and spoken input are external to the learner and that access to them is gained through interaction, in modified negotiated or scaffolded forms. Spada (1997) notes that it is not very clear the effect of input on language learning.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

The diagram above shows the relationship between some variables in language learning. Explain it to a friend.

3.3 The Language Learner

One of the specific goals of language learning is to construct a mental system of L2 knowledge; what is referred to in different ways as an interlanguage (IL). One other goal is to utilise this IL for effective communication. A learner's interlanguage system is "neither the system of the native language nor the system of target language, but instead falls between the two" (Brown, 1994, p. 204). It is said to be an independent and thoroughly legitimate system that the learner constructs while actively endeavouring to make sense of (and make sense in) the new language.

William Pellowe (1986) notes that 'errors' and 'strange language' exist, not as bad habits, but as hypotheses within this active process of language exploration and formation. There is an interaction between the language forms in a learner's system: when a learner starts to learn a new form, formerly "mastered" forms will become destabilised. Likewise, seeing a "rule" in a new context temporarily destabilises the learner's understanding of that rule (Nunan, 1995b). The second language learners' interlanguage is not like that of the native speaker. They do not speak or write the way the native speakers do.

3.4 Social Context

There is a social and contextual dimension to every naturally occurring use of language. These social factors determine the choice and form of what is written, said or understood. Sociolinguistics helps us to see the influences of ethnicity, gender, ideology and social rank on language events. Below are a few of the factors that can influence language behaviour.

3.4.1 Gender and power

The notion of gender has been reported to account for some of the apparently systematic differences in the way men and women use language. The differences could be in terms of the way people plan their narratives, discourse organisation, different accents that men and women use from one region to the other- and so on (Cameron, 1995).

3.4.2 Age

It has been noted that older and younger people use language differently. Features can reveal evidence of changes in language use over time. For example, in Nigeria, older people use proverbs more than the younger ones. The young have all sorts of slang language and modern day usage that are not familiar to the older ones.

3.4.3 Audience

Conversations usually have a recipient design. Speakers produce utterances with the listeners in mind. It makes speakers to adjust their tone, accent, style, posture and even their walk at times. Llamas and Stockwell (2002: 159) refer to this as accommodation and note that this can be an important cause of language change over time.

3.4.4 Identity

People are usually aware of their personal, ethnic, political and family identities and this is often a factor in their language use. People pay

allegiance to their family or membership of a particular social group or organisation. This can show forth in their language patterns and use.

3.4.5 Social network relations

The relative strength of the relations between individuals within a social group is also important in understanding how linguistic features are maintained, reinforced and spread. Language use may depend on whether individuals have strong or weak ties with their group. This kind of ties can wield a lot of socio-linguistic influence.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In summary, we have been able to go through the act of learning, second language learning, interlanguage and, social factors that affect language learning.

ANSWER TO SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

These are: age, teacher, audience, social context, etc.

ANSWER TO SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Use the diagram to provide the relevant answer.

5.0 SUMMARY

The summarized statements below are aspects of this unit that you must not forget.

- One of the questions that AL answers is- what are the social influences that affect language learning?
- The word, social, according to Barkhuizen, has different definitions and scholars have reacted to it in different ways; to Ellis, social context refers to different settings in which L2 can take place.
- Language learning takes place in a social context which consists of a number of influential social factors.
- Input is a type of language input received by learners when listening or reading in a target language.
- There are a number of social factors that can be mediated through learner attitudes which affect language learning.
- A learner's interlanguage system is "neither the system of the native language nor the system of target language, but instead falls between the two" (Brown, 1994, p. 204).

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss some practical ways in which you think the social context of a nine year old Nigerian girl can affect her language behaviour in modern day Nigeria. The girl could be from any of the geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

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UNIT 6 INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Level of Success
 - 3.2 Methods Used to Investigate Individual Differences
 - 3.3 Factors Responsible for Individual Differences
 - 3.4 Propensities for Language Learning
 - 4.4.1 Learning Style
 - 3.5 Motivation
 - 3.6 Anxiety
 - 3.7 Personality
 - 3.8 Willingness to Communicate
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In unit 5, you learnt about social influences in language learning. You also learnt that one of the assignments of the applied linguist is trying to examine or determine what goes on in the mind of the learner in relation to the environment. In this unit, you will learn a few things about how people learn languages and the kinds of things that can be responsible for success or failure in language learning.

We shall discuss in the unit, the factors responsible for different levels of attainment or success in language learning. These are methods used to investigate language learning, factors responsible for individual differences, propensities for language learning, motivation, anxiety, personality and willingness to communicate.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the factors responsible for individual differences
- discuss briefly what is meant by propensities in language learning.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

3.0 HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

As a distance or ODL student, you should read this unit with careful application of the content to yourself. What level of success do I have in learning English? What is my attitude and aptitude in English? Am I really motivated and willing to communicate in the language? What is my language learning style? These are the questions that should be agitating your mind as you read the unit.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT**3.1 Level of Success**

The level of success that an individual attains in language learning differs in both first and second languages. Scholars have noted that even children vary in their rate of acquisition but, in most cases, they achieve full competence in their mother tongue. With adult learners of L2, only a few achieve a native-like competence. Ellis (2006) notes the following as being responsible for the different levels of attainment – social, cognitive and affective. Many scholars or researchers in language studies have worked on individual differences in language teaching and learning. Some of these are Horwitz, Carroll and Sapon etc.

There are changes in labels used to refer to individual differences. The terms like good and bad, intelligent and dull, motivated and unmotivated were used in the past for learners but have now given way to terms such as integrative, instrumentally motivated, anxious and comfortable, field independent and, field sensitive, auditory and visual. All these terms are said to reflect a radical shift in the way learners are viewed.

Also in the past, the primary concern of individual differences in applied linguistics was to determine which learner should be selected for foreign language instruction. This is another way of predicting which learners would succeed if there were language aptitude tests. Ellis (2006) notes the growing interest in individual differences since 1970s and concludes that the task facing researchers is not just to identify the psycholinguistic processes involved in L2 acquisition or what motivates the individual

learner selectivity but how selectivity and processes interact in the performance of different tasks.

3.2 Methods Used to Investigate Individual Differences

Ellis (2000:526) notes that a number of quantitative methods have been used to investigate individual differences and states that the favoured one is a survey questionnaire consisting of scaled items arranged in a questionnaire that learners are expected to respond to. These items enable learners to report on some aspects of their language learning. An example is the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) which is an established test from the field of psychology. The data obtained from the questionnaires and tests are then submitted to correlational analysis (Ellis, 2006:527). Ellis notes the purpose of such tests as “identification of relationships among individual difference variables or relationship between a specific factor such as motivation and a measure of L2 achievement or proficiency.” He notes that much depends on the validity/reliability of such questionnaires. The questions that linguists ask are: do they measure what they purport to measure? And do they do so consistently?

He notes that considerable efforts have gone into the development of questionnaires. Ellis (2006: 529) also reported on the findings of Spolsky (2000) and on Wallace Lambert who originated the use of motivation questionnaires in 1950. Wallace Lambert is reputed to have said that “the best way to learn about someone’s integrative motivation was probably to sit quietly and chat with him over a bottle of wine for an evening.” Ellis notes that the limitations of quantitative approaches have led to the argument in favour of qualitative methods. Spolsky suggests the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods such as interviews and learner’s autobiographical narratives; an example of such is Schumann (1997), but Ellis (2006:529) argues that it is time consuming.

3.3 Factors Responsible for Individual Differences

In the language aptitude review of the factors responsible for language learning, it is noted that age is not included. Ellis (2006) argues that it is probably because ‘age’ does not belong to any of the categories listed for differences by the researchers but it is seen to potentially affect learner’s abilities, propensities, cognitions and actions as do other factors such as previous learning experiences and learning situations. Age is also seen to affect the actual psychological processes involved in learning. Younger learners are able to access a language acquisition device while older learners rely on general cognitive learning strategies. Ellis notes that the role played by age in L2 acquisition demands an

entirely separate treatment, which should be handled on its own. You will find discussions on age in some other units in the course.

Three basic things have been highlighted by earlier scholars under cognitive abilities for language learning. These are intelligence, language aptitude and memory. Skehan (1990) administered language aptitude tests on children in the Bristol language project and found that language aptitude was strongly related to measures of foreign language ability. Skehan explained that the aptitude tests measured an underlying language learning capacity. Sasaki's (1996) also suggests that language aptitude- i.e. ability to analyse linguistic structure and intelligence are related. The work of Sparks, Ganschow and Patton (1995) also suggests that language aptitude was one of the best predictions of the grades achieved by school foreign language learners. Carroll (1995) identified four aspects of language aptitude as follows:

- Phonemic coding ability (i.e. the ability to code foreign sounds in a way that can be remembered later)
- Grammatical sensitivity (i.e. the ability to recognise the grammatical functions of words in sentences)
- Inductive learning ability (i.e. the ability to identify patterns of correspondence and relationships involving form and meaning)
- Rote learning ability (i.e. the ability to form and remember associations between stimuli).

Some other scholars such as Skehan (1998), Grigorenko, Stenber and Ehrman (2000) have called for the modifications to Carroll's four part model. Stenberg (2002) however suggests that theory of successful intelligence which though developed through general research on native speaking students could also be applicable to L2 learning. In his theory, he distinguished between three types of aptitude: analytical intelligence, creative intelligence and practical intelligence.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

What are the factors responsible for individual differences in language learning?

3.4 Propensities for Language Learning

Ellis notes that the major difference between abilities and propensities is that ability is a matter of innate endowment, which is relatively fixed, but propensity involves personal preference. Ellis notes that propensity is more fluid.

3.4.1 Learning style

Willing (1989) notes that learning style is both cognitive and affective domain. This refers to the individual's preferred way of processing information and of dealing with other people. He notes that the field dependent people see things 'holistically' and so have difficulty in identifying the parts that make up a whole. They find social interaction easy and pleasurable. On the other hand, field independent people see things analytically by distinguishing the parts that make up a whole (Ellis 2006:565). The hypothesis advanced for these two types of L2 learning are that the field independent learners will do better in informal language learning because of greater interpersonal skills while the other will do better in formal learning because of their enhanced analytic skills. Some other scholars have made use of other models of learning styles, which involve more than a single dimension of style.

3.5 Motivation

Ellis (2006) notes that motivation is more of an affective domain than a cognitive factor; teachers recognise the independence of motivation. Garder (1985) differentiates between orientation and motivation. Orientation, he notes refers to the long-range goals that learners have for learning. There are two broad types of orientation—'integrative orientation' and 'instrumental orientation'. Integrative orientation involves a wish to develop and understand the target language and culture. Instrumental orientation involves a felt need to learn the target language for some functional purpose (e.g. obtaining a job).

Motivation could be defined in terms of motivational intensity, that is, efforts learners are prepared to make to learn a language and their persistence on learning. This strategy notes that teachers might show some orientations but be weakly and strongly motivated to achieve their goals (Elli, 2006).

3.6 Anxiety

There is this tendency to feel anxious when learning a new or another language. Ellis sees the foreign language classroom as constituting a particular kind of anxiety, which he terms situational anxiety. He distinguishes this from the classroom anxiety in general because of the kind of pressure that the learner of a language experiences, especially when proficiency is limited. This he says constitutes threat to learner's 'language ego'. Learner's diary studies were examined while carrying out research on learner's anxiety.

The research showed that the classroom learners experience anxiety, especially when it seems they are competing with others in the

classroom. Studies have shown that anxiety is related to L2 achievement. There has also been the argument on whether anxiety is the cause of poor achievement.

Sparks *et al.* (2000) found that students' anxiety about learning L2 is a consequence of their learning difficulties. Anxiety, like motivation, is a learner factor that is amenable to pedagogic influence.

3.7 Personality

Personality is a key factor for explaining individual differences in L2 learning. Scholars have examined a lot of personality variables such as – risk taking, tolerance of ambiguity, empathy, self esteem, but Ellis (1994) notes that the aspect of personality that has received the greatest attention is 'extraversion'. He notes that 'extraversion' is viewed as a factor having a positive effect on the development of L2 basic interpersonal skills. He also notes that extraverted learners are likely to interact more and more easily with other speakers of the L2. Introspective learners may find it easier to study L2 and thereby develop their cognitive academic language proficiency.

Ellis reports on Dewaele and Furnham's (1999) review of 30 students on personality and concluded that 'extraverts' were found to be generally more fluent than introverts in both L1 and L2. They also claim that extraverts are less easily distracted when operating from short term memory, and are better equipped physiologically to resist stress, and so have lower level of anxiety. This helps them to pay more attention to learning tasks.

3.8 Willingness to Communicate

This has to do with intention to initiate communication, given a choice (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2001:369). Communicative language teaching places willingness on learning through communicating. MacIntyre *et al.*, (2001) note that learners with a strong Willingness To Communicate (WTC) are likely to benefit more from CLT (Communicative Language Teaching), while those who are not willing to communicate may learn better from traditional, instructional approaches.

Dornyei and Kormos (2000) also worked on WTC on Hungarian children and found that Hungarian students' WTC in the classroom was influenced by their attitudes to the task. Ellis concludes by saying that teachers can enhance their students' WTC by ensuring they hold positive attitudes to the tasks they are asked to perform (Ellis 2006:542).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Describe the characteristics of extraverted and introspective learners and how their learning of language can be facilitated.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have been able to describe what is meant by individual differences in this unit. We have also talked about the methods used to investigate individual differences, factors responsible for individual differences, propensities for language learning, learning style, anxiety, motivation etc.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the following points that you must not forget. Take note of them.

- The level of success that individuals attain in language learning differ in both first and second languages.
- With adult learners of L2, only a few achieve native-like competence.
- A number of quantitative methods have been used to investigate individual differences.
- Ellis 2006 notes that the favoured method is a survey questionnaire consisting of likert-scaled items that will enable learners report on their language learning.
- Ellis notes that the major differences between abilities and propensities is that abilities is a matter of innate endowment which is relatively fixed but propensities involve personal preference and are more fluid.
- Learning style is both in the cognitive and affective domains.
- Personality is a key factor in explaining individual differences.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What are the major propensities for language learning and how can you help a younger sister of yours who is not motivated to learn a second language that is very important for her to do a particular course in a foreign country?

ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

The factors are age, cognitive level, aptitude, intelligence, etc.

ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

- a) Extraverted learners: Interact more easily with other speakers.
- b) Introspective learners: Find it easy to study L2 and develop cognitive academic proficiency.

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UNIT 7 PSYCHOLINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is designed to take you through one of the sub-themes of applied linguistics. The topic is not only important for Applied Linguistics (AL), but also for other areas of language work. As a language student, you need to know this area of language study so that you can be exposed to the psychological processes that take place when people learn a language. Remember that whatever you learn in this course is not only meant to be retained for this course alone, but for use later on in life.

You may come across people who have problems learning a language as you go through life, you will then remember that you did a course related to that and that your knowledge of the course can now come in handy at such a time to help the individual or group. So therefore, I will advise you to go through this unit carefully so that you can benefit maximally from the contents.

The principal concern of this unit is the psychology of language learning. This is the psychological process going on when people produce or understand utterances spoken or text written.

One way of investigating this is to try and understand how people acquire such ability. This, in essence, has to do with language acquisition. You will remember that in Module 1 unit 4, you were exposed to factors responsible for the rapidity and accuracy of acquisition of a language. You also learnt about the differences between first and second language acquisition. In this unit, you will be instructed on what seems to be going on in the mind of a learner learning a

language. Some of the facts in this unit may sound receptive of what you have learnt before. This is to reinforce your learning of this course.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe language acquisition
- differentiate between language acquisition and learning.

HOW TO STUDY THE UNIT

- a. Read this unit as diligently as possible.
- b. Find meaning of unfamiliar words in the unit using your dictionary.
- c. As you read, put major points down in a piece of paper or jotter.
- d. Do not go to the next section until you have fully understood the section you are reading now.
- e. Do all the Self-Assessment exercises in the unit as honestly as you can. In some areas where it is not feasible to provide answers

3.0 HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

How can this unit be applied to a distant learner like you? You can draw suggestions from the unit on how to learn English as the second language. As an adult English language learner, it is possible for you to borrow ideas from language acquisition process discussed in this unit for learning English as a second language. Think as you read the unit and borrow something for language learning.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Language Acquisition

Acquiring a language has to do with the ability of the learner to develop the knowledge of the basic sound, vocabulary, phrases, questions, syntax etc., of a language. A child acquires a language along with other skills and other things about the world around him. The acquisition of a second language, usually, takes place at a later stage when language performance has already become established and when many other physical and mental processes of maturation are complete or almost complete.

Language performance and language acquisition are two principal concerns of the psychology of language or psycholinguistics. Psychology of language deals with the description and explanation of language in terms of human behaviour. It also explains the relationship between thought and language.

3.1.1 Language Acquisition and Language Learning

Scholars have noted that there are so many differences in the conditions under which learning and acquisition take place. Language acquisition, mental development and physical maturity take place simultaneously in an infant. Scholars therefore concluded that there must be a relationship between language learning and maturation. Lenneberg (1967:178) notes the following as some of the interactions and connections between maturation and language acquisition:

We assume that the child's capacity to learn language is a consequence of maturation because (1) the milestones of language acquisition are normally interlocked with other milestones that are clearly attributable to physical maturation, particularly stance, gait, and motor coordination; (2) this synchrony is frequently preserved even if the whole maturational schedule is dramatically slowed down, as in several forms of mental retardation; (3) there is an evidence that intensive training procedures can produce higher stages of language development

The second thing that scholars like Corder noted was that the motivation for acquisition and language learning cannot be equated. They have not been able to establish whether motivation can adequately be used in language acquisition. Corder mentions the fact that if congenitally deaf children develop a means of non-verbal communication in their earlier stages of life, a conclusion can then be drawn that language acquisition is natural and not because of any practical use to the speaker.

The third thing noted about acquisition is that the infant acquires language from data different from the adult. He/she acquires it naturally. People do not usually address the infant directly or specifically. They expose him/her to the language in an unorganised manner. He/she does not stay in a classroom. He/she does not understand most of what he/she hears and just imitates speakers around him/her. Snow (1972) notes that the utterances he/she is exposed to may be modified or simplified by him/her and he/she learns most things through his/her normal cognitive development.

The fourth thing that Corder noted is visitation to another country. Some people get exposed to the language informally, i.e., no formal organisation of the language data by any teacher. Some others attend school or receive formal instructions for second language learning. Some other people also pick up a foreign language when they decide to visit another country or live there.

Corder notes that in language acquisition, the extent to which the child is exposed to 'teaching', e.g. from the parents and other siblings cannot

be ascertained. Corder goes further to say that parents will try to repeat the correct version of what they feel a child is trying to say. Below is an example:

Child: Table hit head
 Parent: No, the head hit the table
 (Corder 1973:111)

An adult can correct a child by saying the right thing. This is a form of correction. An adult can correct a child in this way by saying the right thing in form of saying the right sentence(s). In this way, the child learns the right thing or the right way to say what he/she wants to say. The adult can even ask questions to make the child repeat what he/she has said so that he/she can be corrected. Below is another example from Corder (1973:111).

Mother: Did Billy have his egg cut up for him at breakfast?
Child: Yes I showed him
Mother: You what?
Child: I showed him
Mother: You showed him?
Child: I seed him
Mother: Ah, you saw him
Child: Yes I saw him

In language learning, practice and imitation are very important. At infancy, the child tries to imitate but his/her imitation is not a perfect imitation. Scholars in language acquisition have debated on whether imitation and practice are part of the processes of language acquisition. Corder notes that the process of learning verbal responses which was incorporated as a specific language learning theory sees 'imitation as acquisition of a response and the function of practice is to strengthen it'.

In their study of infants' imitation of adult utterances, Ervin (1964) and Slobin (1966) note that the child does not acquire new language forms by imitation and that, where imitation occurs, it fulfils some other function than learning. Is it possible for you to use imitation to master second language? Yes, you can imitate sentence patterns in the manual you are reading.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

When does language learning and language acquisition take place and how does this happen?

3.2 Arguments for and against Language Acquisition Learning

Corder (1973:113) observes that the main argument against language acquisition and second language learning having anything in common is that language learning normally takes place after language acquisition is largely complete. The language learner has already developed considerable communicative competence in his/her mother tongue and already knows what he/she can or cannot do with it. This means that the circumstances – i.e. the learner, teacher, and linguistic data in which learning takes place are different. This difference can be noticed in the physiological change in adults and children learning a language. These changes may inhibit using same strategies to learn a language.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

According to Corder (1973), what are the four things to note in language acquisition and language learning?

3.3 The Critical Period

In his explanation of the ‘critical period’, Lenneberg (1967:158) notes the fact that language cannot begin to develop until a certain level of physical maturation and growth has been attained. In Lenneberg’s view, ‘language emerges as an interaction of maturation and self programmed learning between the ages of two and three while the possibility for primary language acquisition continues for good between the ages of three and the early teens’. The individual is said to be most sensitive to stimuli at this time. Commenting on how the brain functions, Lenneberg notes further that between the ages of three and early teens, the individual has the ability to also- preserve some innate flexibility for the organisation of brain functions to carry out the complex integration of sub-processes necessary for the smooth elaboration of speech and language.

After puberty, the ability for self organisation and adjustment to the psychological demands of verbal behaviour quickly declines.

The brain behaves as if it had become set in its ways and primary, basic language skills not acquired by that time, except for articulation, usually remain deficient for life.

Lenneberg (1967:158)

This means that we acquire language when our brains are in a particular stage of their development. If language is not acquired then, it becomes a little difficult at a later age.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit has exposed you to some of the psychological processes that take place when people learn a language. It is noted that there are many differences in the conditions under which learning and acquisition takes place. There is a critical period when language can be best learnt and that a certain level of maturation and growth is required for language development.

5.0 SUMMARY

The major points that you should note in this unit are present in a summary from below.

- Language acquisition takes place in the infant simultaneously at the time that he is acquiring other skills and other things about the world around him.
- When an individual wants a second language, it usually takes place at a later stage when language performance has already become established and when many other physical and mental processes of maturation are complete or almost complete.
- There are so many differences in the conditions under which learning and acquisition take place.
- Language acquisition is natural and not because of any practical use to the speaker.
- There must be a relationship between language learning and maturation.
- The main argument against language acquisition and second language learning having anything in common is that language learning normally takes place after language acquisition is largely complete.
- The language learner is a different sort of person from the infant; that there has been some qualitative change in his/her physiology and psychology at some point in his/her maturation process.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What are some of the main arguments for and against language acquisition and language learning? How many languages do you speak? Did you experience the same things expressed in this unit while learning your second language? Discuss.

ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Language acquisition takes place in the infant simultaneously at the time the child is acquiring other skills. Language learning takes place at a later date when the second language learner needs the language.

ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

- 1) Capacity to learn the language.
- 2) Motivation to learn the language.
- 3) Form data different from adult.
- 4) Visitation to another country.

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