

MODULE 2 LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND LEARNING

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UNIT 1 BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**CONTENT**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we will be describing the biological foundations in language development. You will appreciate why psycholinguistics holds strongly that language acquisition and learning has a basis in biology. Do you remember how you learn your own language?

You will realize that many people acquire language spontaneously just as walking and breathing. Human beings have been described as the articulate mammal because we possess an innate capacity for language due to our biological make-up. Since language must be expressed in words which are meaningfully connected together, a mental conception situated in the brain is required. Language has therefore been called a tool for thought. You will study in this unit, the criteria necessary to describe language as having biological foundations and we shall examine to what extent these criteria have been fully met. This will enable us to validate the psycholinguistic basis of language as purely a human behaviour.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the biological foundations of human language;

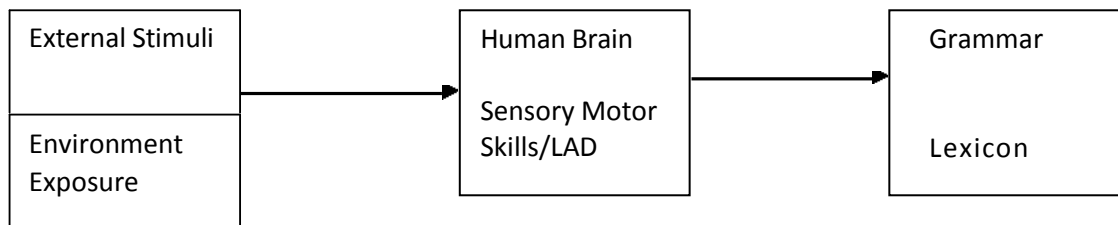
- state the criteria for biological classification of human language;
- describe language as distinctively a human affair;
- distinguish between human language behaviour and animal communication; and
- explain language acquisition and language learning.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Now you are sufficiently informed that part of the concerns of psycholinguistics is the interplay of psychology and linguistics. It also deals with cognitive process involved in the use of language. Do you realize then that you cannot talk of psychology without the human mind, which is centered in the brain? The brain is a biological organism responsible for cognition, memory, thinking and reasoning. The acquisition of language by children consists of the brain becoming organized in a genetically determined manner.

Fernandez and Cairns (2011) argue that just as the biological based system of human vision is already well developed at birth but require visual stimuli for depth perception of the left versus right eye, so also will children's acquisition of language require environmental input to trigger or stimulate language development.



Schema showing input/output relationship between environment and cognitive mental processing of language.

Note that during these active years of language acquisition, children exposed to more than one language will develop lexicon and grammar of the two languages simultaneously. Human language is genetically based in the brain and it is processed biologically and develops as the human infant interacts with the environment.

The biologically based system in the human child will be triggered for language acquisition and development. This has been termed the nativist model of language acquisition. The nativist conception of language acquisition asserts that language is a natural developmental process. All children progress through similar milestones on a similar schedule. This

could not be so were it not for the fact that language is rooted in human biology (Fernandez & Cairns, 2011:98). It is this biological nature of language acquisition that accounts for the properties of Universal Grammar (UG). You will notice that children in all places and climes follow similar acquisition pattern and word order. The phonological, morphological and syntactical components follow the universal principles of language. Crain (1991) submits that child grammar never violates universal principles of language. For instance, they never contain rules that are not structure dependent. Even children acquiring languages that do not follow the general word order of Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) for English and many world languages, still conform to the order of the languages to which they are exposed. Languages like Japanese and Turkish have Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) while some other languages operate (VSO) and (VOS) patterns.

As an illustration, we can have:

Audu ate rice.	(SVO English)
Audu je iresi.	(SVO Yoruba)
Audu ya cishinkafa.	(SVO Hausa)
Audu riri osikapa.	(SVO Igbo)

This is unlike the SOV structure which will give us * “Audu rice ate”. However, children conform reasonably to the various grammatical patterns. Fernandez and Cairns (2011) argue that human biology supplies knowledge of universal principles of organizing language. When children are sufficiently equipped, they take input from the environment to rapidly and efficiently acquire the language or languages around them.

Furthermore, Kisilevsky et al. (2003) observes that infants are attuned to human language from the moment they are born. A growing body of evidence shows that a child’s sensitivity to language predates its birth since the earliest exposure to linguistic input is in the uterus.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Explain the nativist model of language acquisition.

3.2 Biological Foundations

Our possession of language is closely linked with the brain which is the most complex biological organ of the human body. We shall attempt to examine some criteria under which language could be said to have biological foundations. In a seminal work, Lenneberg’s (1967:371-4)

arguments of a biological system fit the human language classification discussed below:

1. Language is Species-specific: That is, only human beings possess the capacity for language. The genetic make-up of human beings makes language acquisition, comprehension and performance unique to man. Pinker (1975) asserts that the shape of the human vocal tract seems to have been modified in evolution for the demands of speech. Also, (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010) says that young children have certain characteristics that predispose them to learn language. These characteristics include the structure of the vocal tract which enables children to make the sounds used in language and the ability to understand a general grammatical principle, such as the hierarchical nature of syntax. Moreover, a look at animal communication reveals a rigid pattern of signs. Chimpanzees used in language learning experience are taught in a contrived way by humans to acquire rudimentary abilities to request for food and to tickle. This contrasts sharply to the natural ability of human children to acquire language in a seamless unencumbered manner. No animal has been trained to learn human language creative system with the recursive mechanism for generating an infinite set of utterances. Animal vocalism remains fixed as it was ages before history.
2. Every member of the species should possess some properties to replicate language. This is the criterion on which psycholinguists based their idea of Universal Grammar (UG). You will realize that all children everywhere, regardless of colour, race or location, are born with a brain which equips them readily for language to take shape. When this language comes up, it possesses universal properties because of its striking similarities to other languages of its kind elsewhere. Just like every person's ability to walk or a fish's ability to swim, language acquisition is natural to the human child. Universal Grammar (UG) has its phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical components and all languages have rules and patterns that conform to the rules of their speakers. Predictably, therefore, the general organisation of all languages is the same. Fernandez and Cairns (2011) posit that if languages were not biologically based, there would be no necessity for children to behave in a similar way of acquiring language. We would even expect great variations from language to language in terms of their internal organisation.
3. The cognitive processes involved in language production will develop with maturation. Researchers have shown that there is a close link between language development and maturation. There is a gradual unfolding of linguistic complexity as the child moves from one-word stage to multi-word level. This follows the

biological process of crawling before walking. All normal children develop unaided in their acquisition of language. Once they are adequately exposed to the language of the environment, the genetic system programs the language for them to be developed in an orderly fashion.

You will be surprised that, contrary to your expectation, language is not taught to children. All they need is to be encouraged to interact with the caregivers or other peers in the environment. It is the interaction input that will engender their linguistic creativity. When you try to correct children's errors it is of little use. The child will gradually learn the correct pattern. McNeil (1966) found out that a child who says 'eated' instead of 'ate' will continue saying 'eated' no matter how many times they are corrected.

4. Certain aspects of language behaviours emerge only during infancy. Studies have shown that there is a general pattern of language development common to all children the world over. Slobin (1972) carried out extensive studies showing that children around the world learn in the same way. Like all milestones in the biological development of infants – rolling over, sitting up, crawling and walking at similar ages – the milestones of language acquisition are also very similar. While babies are generally known to coo when they are six months old and babble around nine months, they all tend to gravitate towards one-word stage at their first birthday. This is followed by the holophrastic two word-level after which early sentences of increasing length become noticeable. With the child's ability for cognitive processing of words, complex sentences begin to take shape and an infinite set of utterances could be made. By the time the child is five years old, the basic structures of the language are in place while fine-tuning continues till late childhood. Fernandez and Cairns (2011) say that children are sensitive to the same kind of language properties such as word-order and inflexion. They make remarkable errors but their errors are of similar type. You need to know here that there is individual variation in the age at which children acquire language which is conditioned by the characteristics of the acquirer and not the language or the culture in which the language is used. For example a Nigerian child acquiring Hausa will not speak such language at one-word stage when they are three years old nor an Igbo child speaks the language when they are four years of age. There is a distinct developmental sequence to language acquisition irrespective of culture or child's ecology. Lenneberg's (1967) assertion that there seems to be a critical period in the acquisition of language

has been described as Critical Age Hypothesis (CAH). While this remains controversial, psycholinguists generally agree that acquirers reach their peak after a certain period. The optimal period for first language acquisition is put at the early teen years after which a fully complex linguistic system will not develop. This has been attributed to the fact that age can contribute to the smooth learning of a language early in life and that at a certain critical period, the brain cannot properly incorporate and process the cognitive properties of language in the same way it would do during childhood acquisition.

5. Spontaneous adaptation of acquirers to the behaviour of other individuals around them. The biological system in individuals requires external stimuli that will trigger them to function. This equally applies to language development which depends on the environment to nurture its growth through interaction input. It will be impossible for the child to develop a language in the absence of any language to stimulate them and nobody to interact or give them access to language. You will appreciate this fact when you realize that it is the language that surrounds the child that such a child grows up to speak. If a Yoruba child is taken to Kano to acquire Hausa language they will speak it flawlessly at all levels of linguistic manifestations. It will interest you to know that Nigeria's first president, Nnamdi Azikiwe was born in Zungeru, Niger State where he acquired Hausa as Language of Wider Communication (LWC) which he used quite dexterously as a politician to warm his way to the hearts of many northerners.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the biological basis of language acquisition.

3.3 Language Acquisition and Language Learning

Children acquire knowledge of language or language around them in a relatively brief period and with little apparent effort. This is possible because they are biologically pre-disposed towards acquiring the language of the environment where they interact with people around them.

Encarta Encyclopedia (2010) holds that whereas children experience little difficulties in acquiring more than one language, after puberty people generally must expend greater effort to learn a second language as they often achieve lower levels of competence in that language. When children are exposed to two languages simultaneously, they acquire the two languages together. However, acquiring another language after the first one is often termed second language learning.

In Nigeria, English is a second language we acquire through formal setting in the classroom. Studies have shown that second language learning tends to follow a similar pattern with that of the first language except that adult learners pick up more slowly compared to children. The reason is simple. In the case of first language acquisition, the child has no other language to function unlike the adult learner who already possesses the L1 but requires the L2 as a backup. However, L2 learners are also able to produce and process simple sentences before complex sentences (Pienemann et al 2005). You will also note some interference problems in L2 learners such as: “They are not at home” when someone asks for the whereabouts of the infant’s mother. The idea of the plural of majesty used to refer to royalties, eminence and elderly ones has been extended to refer to one person.

Sometimes the adult L2 learner deviates from the target language indefinitely in what is termed ‘fossilization’ (Krashen, 1981). Certain errors will continue to feature in the adult speech as if they are permanently embedded like residuals of a rock formation. In the Nigerian environment, errors such as, “Divide it between Ade, John and Dupe,” “I forgot the book at home”, “Speak off head” “Borrow me your pen”, “go to the garage to board a bus”, “I don’t hear Hausa Language”, “Off the light”, “Drop me at the bus stop” etc., have been identified in the language repertoire of the L2 learners.

You will realize now that the older learners are not as proficient as the younger acquirers because language acquisition is subject to age effects and internal changes caused by maturation tend to affect the motivation of the adult learner. Furthermore, the language learning circuitry of the brain is more plastic in childhood. That is why you often hear linguists talk of ‘foreign accents’ when an adult learning a language fails to master the phonology (Pinker, 1975).

Now, are you scared as an adult to learn a new language? You don’t need to, although it is a challenging and daunting task; it is well worth the effort. This writer learnt a smattering of Hausa during the service year as a youth corper in Bauchi State. Expressions such as ‘Yayadeh’, ‘Sannu’, ‘aboki’, etc. often opened many windows of opportunities when we do our shopping as speaking English to our Hausa brothers was usually met with undisguised hostility of ‘baturenchi’

Furthermore, the National Language Policy (NLP) enjoins the learning of another Nigerian language apart from your mother tongue. With the advent of globalization and increasing multilingual needs of the world, it is beneficial to you to learn a new language.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Distinguish between language acquisition and language learning.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The biological foundations of human acquisition and learning of language have shown clearly that language is uniquely species-specific. Attempt to replicate human form of language in other species have failed woefully. The human brain is so complex that its power to process language remains a focus of studies by psycholinguists. When the criteria to show that human language is rooted in biology are closely scrutinized, it is evident that just like a bird's ability to fly and a fish's ability to swim, so also will the human infant acquire language after the initial interaction input has triggered the language development properties.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you were able to study that human language has biological foundations. You also learnt that some criteria are required to properly categorize language as having a basis in biology. These criteria were explained in depth one after the other. A further attempt was made to distinguish language acquisition and language learning so that you too can go ahead and learn a new language. "Parlezvous Francais?"

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What do we mean by language is species specific?
2. Examine the criteria for the biological foundations of human language
3. Explain the Nativist mode of language acquisition
4. Discuss the Critical Age Hypothesis (CAH).
5. Distinguish between language acquisition and language learning.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 THE ROLE OF COGNITION

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 General Overview
 - 3.2 Language, Cognition and Language Development
 - 3.3 The Cognitive Process
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will be examining the role of cognition in language acquisition and learning. We will look at the concept 'cognition', and how it fashions and refashions language behaviour. We shall look at the interface between language and thought and how one complements the other. You will appreciate what goes on in the human mind as children language acquisition process suggests a system of remarkable complexity which has generated high degree of attention in psycholinguistics. What happens when a person begins to acquire language? Is there a black box or a mental organ in what Chomsky (1965) referred to as Language Acquisition Device (LAD)?

The Unit will give you an insight into children's creative input into language acquisition and learning as novel utterances labelled 'child grammar' which characterizes the cognitive and linguistic repertoire of the child will be discussed. The cognitive process in language acquisition will be described and we shall explain to you psycholinguistic terms such as 'competence', 'performance' and 'Mean Length of Utterance' (MLU).

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this Unit you should be able to

- state the meaning of 'cognition'
- describe the relationship between language and thought
- discuss the cognitive process involved in language acquisition and learning
- appreciate the form of language behaviour in children
- explain the nature of language errors of language acquirers

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

‘Cognition’ is the process involved in knowing or the act of knowing, which in its completeness includes perception and judgment. Cognition involves all processes of consciousness by which knowledge is accumulated such as perceiving, recognizing, conceiving and reasoning. It is one of the only words that refer to the brain as well as the mind (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010). This definition underscores the complexity involved in the role of cognition in language acquisition and learning. While we do not know everything about how the brain processes language, much is known and much more is being discovered about the mental faculty that affects language intuition and perception.

Language is the centre of human existence and life without it would be meaningless and inconceivable. In this regard therefore cognition in language acquisition is one of the most fascinating phases of human development. You can imagine how life without language would be.

Language acquisition remains a central topic in cognitive science. Every theory tried to explain it but it is still steeped in controversy. Language is essentially specie-specific to man as all normal human beings speak. Language is the tool for thought and both language and thought are interlinked.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Explain the relationship between language and thought.

3.2 Language, Cognition and Language Development

When children pick up a number of words spontaneously, they combine them in a structured sequence where every word has a definite role, respect the word order of the adult model and use them for a variety of purposes. We consciously know that a sentence like: * “bites the dog man” cannot be correct because we possess an abstract system of unconscious knowledge about English language. When people speak of a red car, it is the outside that is red, not the inside. This presupposes that there is nothing like a blank slate at birth. There is a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which triggers the child’s innateness to process a language and allows for creativity.

This sentence and the preceding paragraphs may probably never have been produced anywhere in the world before. The same is true for much of what we say every day in so many places and contexts. Almost every sentence a person hears or says is a brand new event not previously experienced but understood without much difficulty.

You will realize now that a tacit knowledge of a language is all we need to begin functioning effortlessly in the use of such language. We sometimes know how to do something without knowing explicitly how it happens. When we eat, many do not bother to know about the digestive system and we play football without knowing about the muscles involved in the shot that scores a goal!

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the role of cognition in language acquisition and learning.

3.3 The Cognitive Process

Psycholinguists are interested in the child's linguistic performance after the basic sentences have been processed and put into actual use. This occurs when a sentence stored in memory is combined with others to form conversation and narratives. This is termed linguistic Competence and Performance

When a child possesses the knowledge of the components of language that pair sounds with meanings, whereby the grammar and lexicon of the language is stored in its brain, then we can talk of linguistic competence e.g. Dog = Animal + 4 legs + barking.

Linguistic performance on the other hand is the use of such stored linguistic knowledge in actual processing of words during comprehension and production e.g. "My brother is married to a dog." (Figurative use of 'dog' – flirting is connoted here)

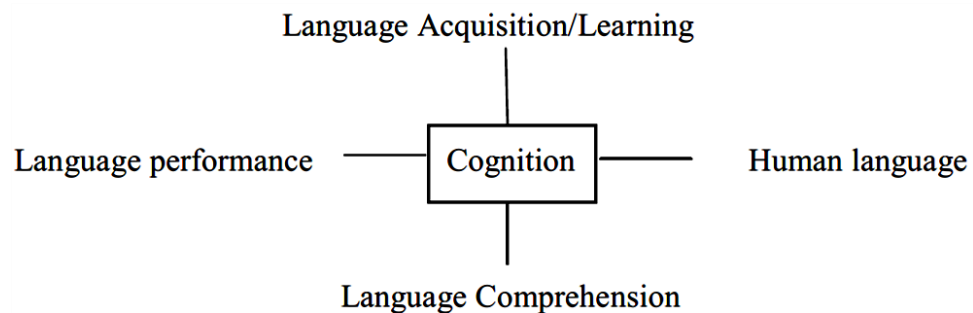


Figure 2: *Schema showing the relationship between cognition and language variables.*

Cognitive process could therefore be described as the interlocking relationship between the language-related variables in the above schema.

This writer has seen some 3-4years old pre-schoolers talk of scenes from pictures, respond to questions and even describe limited events. An intriguing example is the writer's child's report of a friend who slapped

him during a play session. Instead of using the word ‘slap’ still dormant in his linguistic domain, he said “Ibrahim do like this” by repeatedly tapping himself on the cheek. This shows the dexterity and spontaneity in the cognitive process.

Children around 12 months attain one word stage when object naming develops (food, eye, nose, ball, toy, etc.). The child’s first word remains controversial. Male chauvinists among the Yoruba claim that a child’s first utterance is ‘ba-ba’ meaning (father). This is debatable as the mother-child interaction at this stage is so crucial that many children are inclined to say ‘Ma-ma’ (mother). Action words like ‘so’ ‘bia’ ‘wa’ in the three major Nigerian languages, which mean ‘come’ engage the linguistic repertoire of the child. Even modifiers like ‘all gone’, ‘more’, ‘finish’, ‘dirty’, ‘pupu’, etc. are used. Here, they take umbrella or compass dimension as in ‘all gone food’, ‘more more water’, ‘finish bread,’ ‘dirty dirty baby’, ‘pupupupu sister’, etc. You can now appreciate better how the popular advertisement in television stations across Nigeria about “shaky shaky daddy” where the 3year- old child describes the father’s condition who just suffered from a bout of fever comes to mind here. At this stage, one word covers many expressions. The child uses ‘milk’ to say ‘give me milk’, ‘milk has finished’, ‘I’ve spilled my milk’, etc.

Surakat (2009) gives an insight into a Nigerian preschooler’s cognitive process in her acquisition of English at age 47-62 months. In what he termed pedolinguistics (child language studies), audio and video data of a child named Mana were recorded and analyzed. Sample utterances of Mana include: ‘I say I go come back’ when asked for the whereabouts of the auntie. *“It is paiming me” (touching her mouth) when asked what is wrong with her. When Mana scribbled on a paper, she explained ‘I laitepeibi like this’ to mean (I draw baby like this). Our concern here is that intelligibility is possible in the cognitive process of a child acquiring language. The data also shows that children engage in phonological sound redistribution e.g. *‘I want to hear my *noise*’ instead of ‘*voice*’ when a tape recorder was demonstrated for her. ‘Paiming’ instead of ‘paining’ ‘peibi’ (baby) ‘lait’ (like) ‘anytin’ (anything) ‘stomas’ (stomach)

At the morphological, syntactic and semantic levels, a lot of creativity was noticed:

- *Mummy has spoil my toy (absence of tense marker)
- *Dupe has finish his food (absence of tense gender marker)
- *He goed away (inadequate knowledge of irregular verbs)
- *She have two bag (plural morpheme marker is absent)

With age and cognitive maturity, children tend to master the correct forms. But at their level, communication still goes on all the same. It should be noted that even adult learners of a second language in the Nigerian setting make such mistakes like the ones described above because of the morpho- syntactic pattern of the target language e.g. *‘house big’ from a Yoruba/English bilingual because in Yoruba, the modifier is post posed; that is, it comes after the noun ‘ilenla’ unlike English which is pre-posed (big house). At the semantic level, we also have cases like *‘sweet stories’ instead of ‘interesting stories’.

Moreover, a useful index of language development in cognition is the Mean Length of Utterance (MLU). This is computed by adding bound and free morphemes in a language sample. There is a high degree of correlation of MLU and age because the child’s sentences become longer with age. The child’s working memory allows the child to plan and execute longer sentences. Several utterances are considered and calculated based on the number of individual morphemes in each utterance. Let us take a particular child who may say the following:

- (i) I+ like+ toy = 3 morphemes
- (ii) Mummy+ like +s+ to+ sing = 5
- (iii) Give+ me+ food = 3 morphemes

These morphemes give a total of 11 which you can now divide by the total number of utterances. These are three. $11/3 = 3.2$. $MLU = 3.2$

Normal children may differ by a year or more in their rate of language development but the stages they pass seem generally the same despite varied exposure. The role of cognition is natural and developmental in language acquisition as all children progress through similar milestones in a similar fashion.

The general trend in the cognitive process of a child’s acquisition of language could not explain fully how children succeed. The role of cognition is so complex that psycholinguists agree that more studies are required to fully comprehend the phenomenon of language acquisition and learning.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What cognitive processes are involved in the useful index of language?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The role of cognition in language acquisition and learning has enabled us to appreciate how psycholinguistics tries to explain the complexities of language behaviour as well as the psychological mechanisms responsible for them. We now know that a child’s production of speech

is not a blind imitation of the adult model. There is a recursive structure in the acquirer's sentence that can generate an infinite set of utterances. As a child increases in age and maturity, the cognitive level increases significantly. The linguistic system also seems to work so seamlessly with the rest of the cognitive architecture.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, attempt has been made to explain the role of cognition in language acquisition and learning we tried to show that a child's mind at birth is not a linguistic tabula rasa (blank slate) and that children possess innate capacity for language. You have also seen how the interrelationship between language and thought is brought to the fore with the underpinning that language is a tool for thought and not totally dependent on it.

You have also learnt that the environment in which a child acquires language also plays a crucial role in the cognitive process of language as they require sufficient linguistic stimulation to perform optimally in language proficiency.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the role of limitation in language acquisition and learning.
2. What role does environment play in language behaviour?
3. Distinguish between linguistic competence and performance.
4. Describe the nature of language errors of language acquirers.
5. Explain the Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) in language development.

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UNIT 3 CAREGIVER LANGUAGE

CONTENT

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- 2.0 Objectives
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 - 3.2 The Importance of Caregiver Language
 - 3.3 The features and Characteristics of Caregiver Language
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Unit will be pre-occupied with the discussion of caregiver language. You will learn about who a caregiver is and their role in language acquisition of the infant. This Unit will explain that the interactions children have with caregivers in their early years will profoundly affect their language behaviour and development. From the time a child is born, they are highly motivated, curious and capable learners as they explore their surroundings cognitively and linguistically. It is the caregiver's duty to provide the required motivation that will encourage the infant to develop optimally his aptitude for speech. When the caregiver provides a threat-free relationship, the young learner will feel free to key in into all aspects of growth and development.

When you realize that language competence is one of the most amazing developmental accomplishments of early childhood, then an examination of caregiver language will not be out of place.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this Unit, you should be able to

- define what is meant by a caregiver
- state the role of caregiver in language acquisition
- explain the importance of caregiver language
- describe some features and characteristics of caregiver language
- exemplify some utterances of Child Directed Speech (CDS).

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Language development in children remains an important milestone of their personality. Caregiver language has been noticed in many languages of the world. It is a necessary aspect of the emotional, social and cognitive development in the child's ecology. Now you need to know who a caregiver is. The World Health Organization (2004) explains that "the word caregiver denotes people who look after infants or young children". This term is preferred because many young children are not looked after by their biological mothers. In the Nigerian communal setting, the care of young children is not limited to a person or a child's natural parents. There are several caregivers as relatives, siblings and friends who actively participate in taking care of the young ones. When it is time for the child to acquire language, it is tied up closely with the child's experience in relation to the caregiver. The linguistic exposure emanating from the interaction between the child and the caregiver is termed caregiver language. Long before the child is able to speak, the caregiver attributes meanings to the utterances, gestures and actions of the infants and responds accordingly. It is the caregiver's concern to extend and complement the child's linguistic capabilities.

Caregiver language has been described in various ways depending on the focus and the function being emphasized. Wikipedia (2012) explains that the term "baby talk" could be used invariably to mean caretaker speech or caregiver language. Other definitions include Infant Directed Speech (IDS), Child-Directed Speech (CDS) and informally as 'motherese'. This is a language in a non-standard form used by adults in talking to toddlers and infants. In other words, caregiver language could be described as a universally understood kind of language which is fashioned for an efficient communication between adult and infant. Have you watched a child less than two years being addressed by a caregiver? Perhaps you yourself have tried to cajole, pet or entice a child using baby talk in a way to get their attention. You will observe that you need to relax your pattern of speech and deliver it in a cooing manner, with raised intonation characterized by simple words and expressions. Through caregiver language, a child increases the pace of language acquisition because such language has been shown to be more effective in getting a child's attention. As children continue to grow, parents who are natural caregivers adapt their speech to suit the child's growing linguistic skills.

You need to take note that when a caregiver gives responsive care and encouragement to the infant, they are ready to develop more confidence and joy in acquiring language. A linguistically deprived child will suffer

in their ability to learn a language with reasonable proficiency. Here, you will recall the popular classic *Oliver Twist*, who was raised in an orphanage without much affection and care. When he dared to ask for more after exhausting his ration of food, he was seriously beaten. Such a hostile attitude of care giving will stifle whatever linguistic creativity a child acquiring language may possess. Basic communication and language development skills are very critical and they lay the foundation for verbal aptitude of toddlers. Nicholas et al (2001) reports that the average child from a family of professionals learn 11 million words per year; a child from a working class family hears 6 million words per year and a child from a family receiving welfare benefits hears 3 million words per year.

The implication here is that the caregiver language of the last set has suffered a deficit which will take those children a long time to regain. Sometimes the gap is so wide that it is less likely for these children to ever catch-up with their more advantageous peers.

It is obvious from the illustration above that early language development is sequel to the quality of the social interaction a child has with the caregiver and other peers in his life. Talking to children could be seen as fundamental to language development because it opens the door for the child to build their linguistic proficiency so that they can independently create their own sentences.

Caregivers often engage in Infant Directed Speech (IDS) during gestures and mimicry. The speech is characterized by demonstration and repetitiousness so that the infant can recognize the necessary requirements for discovering systematic association between sounds and reference (Smith & Yu, 2008).

Vocabulary and gestural social interaction between caregiver and the child is a way to establish better attention and eventual development of language. The moment a caregiver recognizes that a child is responding to their voices by kicking, jerking, cooing and gurgles, they begin taking turns with the child. The caregiver talks, pause for the child to respond, then speaks again.

Karmiloff and Karmiloff-Smith (2001:48) note that these 'conversations' that are initially one-sided linguistically may actually constitute an important preparation for taking part in later dialogue when the toddler will be capable of using language to replace the primitive kicks and gurgles.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Describe the role of caregiver in language development.

3.2 The Importance of Caregiver Language

You will realize that the role of caregiver language in the language development of a child could not be overemphasized. In this respect, we need to discuss the importance of caregiver language. This is to underscore the assertion that there is a close relationship between a child acquiring language and their caregiver.

Firstly, caregiver language forms an importance part of the emotional bonding between parent and child so as to help the child acquire the language without inhibition. Since studies have shown that Infant Directed Speech (IDS) is most preferred by children, caregivers resort to it to further cement their relationship with children under their care.

Secondly, caregiver language enables children to pick words faster than usual. Have you ever wondered how a child with a Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) of 3.2 at 15 months old suddenly began to produce full sentences and countless number of words after a few years later? Mark (2009) asserts that by the age of four months, infants are able to discriminate sounds and even read lips. However, by the time a child reaches age three, he or she will have a vocabulary of approximately 3,000 words.

Moreover, the use of caregiver language ensures more attention on the part of the acquirer. When the caregiver interacts in a slower and more repetitive tone than the one he used in the regular conversation, the cognitive awareness of the child is better enhanced thus sharpening linguistic proficiency.

Caregiver language also triggers off the onset of speech, while contributing to a regular and more stable pattern for language development. It equally serves as a powerful tool in providing a base for language acquisition. The caregiver-child interaction enables the infant to apply the principles involved to formulate larger words and sentences as they learn to process language.

Studies also reveal that caregiver language increases a child's worth in social partnership. The social situations in which an infant and other peers share the same focus on an object will be rewarding enough to hone them for better interaction. Karoly et al (2005) argue that language and literacy acquisition happens best in the context of caring and attentive relationship which invariably influence other critical components of language development: expressive language, receptive language and social engagement.

The mental development of infants can be aided through the use of caregiver language. This occurs when they process word forms and they remember those words when they need to recall them in future. When caregiver language is used as a priming tool by the children to recognize

the faces of caregivers especially when speeches directed at them are accompanied with smiles and friendly gestural postures, their mental awareness increases. Child Directed Speech (CDS) teaches the child the basic structure and functions of language. As the caregiver responds to the infant's babble with meaningless murmurs, the child's cognitive sense develops. Though no logical meaning is attached, the verbal and emotional interaction shows the bidirectional nature of speech and the importance of feedback (Fernard, 1991).

Karoly et al (2005) emphasize that caregivers should model effective interactions and practice basic communication skills: notice, comment and invite. They should notice what the child is interested in, comment on the object or activity of interest and invite the child to think and talk about it. When the caregiver demonstrates such an engaging interest in what appeals to the child, the child finds learning to be fun. We therefore realize that caregivers language provides children with the clues needed to help them develop their own language skills. Through Child Directed Speech (CDS) children are given the linguistic tools to help them identify sounds, syllables and finally words and sentences

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Explain the importance of caregiver language.

3.3 The Features and Characteristics of Caregiver Language

Child Directed Speech (CDS) or Caregiver Language is characterized by shortening or simplifying of words. Children like to imitate adults and by so doing love to do things repeatedly. Elgin (2000) reports that children begin to produce familiar sounds of their social environment during language acquisition. Some of you will recall that basic sounds like 'ma', 'da', 'ba', 'fa', are noticeable in the early life of the infant.

Celebration and approbation will greet the child's first utterance of 'mama' or 'baba'. Spender (2006) gives an insight into the characteristics of the caregiver language.

1. Lowered speech tempo: This is to create a friendly conversational tone that appeals more to the child for bonding and intimate attention.
2. Clearer articulation. The caregiver should enunciate his word to give a model for the child to imitate.
3. Higher pitch: This equally secures the child's attention as he can get easily distracted.

4. Nouns are used instead of pronouns: Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith (2001) exemplify in their studies of a caregiver who interacts with a child as follows:
 - “Aren’t you a nice baby?”
 - “Good GIRL, drink all your Milk”.
 - “Look, look Doggie. Did you see the Doggie?”

The caregiver makes sure that the child understands who and what is being referred to. They therefore use proper names instead of pronouns. They also make use of basic vocabulary to encourage the child to learn easily.

5. Concrete references to here and now: The caregiver does this by emphasizing new information through gestures and demonstrations. They call the children’s attention in a way to give them special focus e.g. “Look at daddy. He is eating ba-Na – na.” The syllabic pronunciation of banana is deliberate to give a child another vocabulary.
6. Use of simple sentence structure: This is a central feature of caregiver language as Child-Directed-Speech must be devoid of any complication. Instead of the caregiver to say “let’s go home” we usually get expressions like “Go bye bye”
7. Few incomplete sentences: This is the caregiver style of following the child is pattern of behaviours. Since Child-Directed-Speech reflects developmental nature from one word to two and later to sentence level, it is desirable for the caregiver to encourage the natural flow of the child’s language behaviour. Fernald (1991) reports that caregiver language may skip out small words by imitating young children who can make little sense of sentence composition, such as “to” “at” “my” ‘so’ and ‘as’ and articles (the, a ,an). A sentence like ‘I want you to play your ball’ may become ‘Daddy wants Dayo to play ball’.
8. Many repetitions: Children are gifted imitators. Their curiosity to learn is well endowed such that when a caregiver does anything, the inquisitive child imitates them. This facility can best be used for language development when caregivers frequently repeat words and sentences to sharpen the child’s acquisition of language. For example, a sentence like, “that’s a bag, Alaba” could be repeated by a follow up “yes, it is a bag” until the child’s response is deemed positive by the caregiver.
9. Spender (2006) also describes some features of caregiver language from one word stage to sentence level. During the one word stage, the child indulges in overextension by generalizing a word inappropriately to other objects with similar characteristics as in ‘daddy’ used to refer to all men and ‘doggy’ referring to animals on four legs. The infant at the same time indulges in over- restriction by using a word only for a very specific instance

of the usage as in ‘muffin’ for ‘blackberry muffin’. During the two-word stage, words are strung together as in “all broke’ all done’ ‘all gone’, ‘want food’, ‘want ball’ ‘mama take’. Shortly after this, the child graduates to telegraphic speech which is the onset of the sentence level. Expressions such as ‘see ball mama’ ‘Push door open’ ‘Good bring book’, etc. dominate the speech repertoire of the child. Please note that the caregiver will always attempt to guide the child to produce meaningful utterances but the development stage of the child will determine how he moves from one caregiver language stage to another. The following exemplifies a typical rapport between a caregiver and a child.

Caregiver

Pupupupu Ade
 You are a good boy
 I want to pee pee
 Eat eat food
 Drink, drink your
 Take; take your toy
 Bring, bring your ball

Child

Pupu Ade
 good boy
 Peepee
 food
 Water/drink water
 take toy
 bring ball

An interesting feature of the caregiver language is the singing of lullabies and playsongs to convey meaning that is emotional rather than linguistic. However, the acoustic aspects of lullabies are significant enough to assist the child language development. A caregiver in the Yoruba Nigerian setting often sings as follows:

Omo ta lonsukun o?

Whose child is crying?

OmoIbiloyeni.

It is Ibiloye’s child.

Ode mi mokoto.

Someone caged me.

O so mi di adie.

He treats me like a fowl.

Mo bomo de.

I’m around, I’m here.

The maternal vocalizations above soothe, tickle and alert the child to stop crying and at the same time increase linguistic awareness socially and poetically. Some caregivers substitute a particular word in a sentence with a sound that gives the sense of the word being discussed. Instead of ‘look at the ram’ you can hear ‘look at meh meh’ which is the sound the animal makes. During the sallah festival, many children are thrilled to see many rams being pulled around and you often hear “mummy see meh meh’. The onomatopoeic nature of these words simplifies the language for the infants. These could also be found as ‘moo ‘moo’ in a cow and ‘baa’ ‘baa’ for sheep.

Pinker (1994) talks of semantic mapping whereby infants could infer the semantic meaning of syntactic categories from the context in which they are heard. For example in a sentence like “the man is patting the cat”, the child should be able to conceptualize what ‘man’ and ‘cat’ mean before he can analyze the sentence grammatically when this is seen in action as demonstrated by the caregiver. Please note that caregiver language is perceived both visually and aurally by the infants. The essence is to assist the child to know that ‘pat’ means caressing a part of the animal’s body. He would then be able to know that ‘pat’ is a transitive verb which requires a direct object.

A caregiver may also use language to signal approvals and prohibitions. The mother may praise the child raising her voice ‘bravo’ ‘good boy’ ‘brave’ to express positive feelings by rewarding and encouraging the child. She might also use a deep sound to interrupt and prohibit a bad behaviour displayed by the infant.

Kayami (2001) looks at structure of the caregiver language by describing some as having short and grammatically correct sentences. Examples include:

All dry. All wet
 I sit. I shut. No bed
 See baby. See pretty
 More food. More hot
 Mail come. Airplane gone
 Bye Bye car. Papa away.

In the same vein Phillips (1973) gives an insight into the vocabulary of the caregiver language in a compendium. This includes:

blankie(blanket)	
dada	(dad, daddy)
dindin	(dinner)
peepee	(Urinate, penis)
poopoo	(defecate)
potty	(toilet)
sissy	(sister)
tummy	(stomach)
wawa	(water)
weewee	(urinate)

Diminutives include:

horsey-	horse
kitty	- cat, kitten
doggy	- dog
milky	- milk

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Illustrate with examples the features and characteristics of caregiver language.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The foregoing has demonstrated the importance of caregiver language in the language behaviour of the child. We have tried to explain that basic communication and language development skills are a crucial part of the foundation for language production which should be formed in the early experiences of an infant. It is these first building blocks of language that will strengthen the child's experience as a communication partner in their cognitive, social and emotional realities. Caregivers are enjoined to create a linguistically stimulating environment to nurture the onset of language by positive interaction and reinforcement through Child Directed Speech (CDS). In this way children discover easier linguistic patterns and begin to understand word order which later manifests into a deeper understanding of sentence as a whole.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this Unit, you learnt that caregiver language is crucial in the child's language acquisition process. You also learnt that Child Directed Speech (CDS) is used by the care giver to enable the child process word forms and remember words when asked to recall them in the future. Caregiver language help babies pick up words faster and secure more attention so that they can learn the basic functions and structure of language. When positive interaction occurs between the caregiver and the child, it will be possible to attain high cognitive developments which enhance linguistic competence.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is caregiver language?
2. Explain the importance of caregiver language.
3. Examine the features and characteristics of caregiver language.
4. Discuss the role of interaction in Child Directed Speech (CDS).
5. Provide 10 examples of 'baby talk' in your own language.

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UNIT 4 PHONOLOGY, SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS

CONTENT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 General Overview
 - 3.2 The Speech Phenomenon
 - 3.3 Syntax and Semantics
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we shall look at Phonology, Syntax and Semantics as an integral part of language development. One of the main concerns of Psycholinguistics is to determine what knowledge of language is needed for us to use language and identify the cognitive processes involved in the ordinary use of language. You will realize that a look at the three broad areas of language knowledge will assist us to understand the issues in language processing and production. Phonology is an area in language study dealing with the system of sounds in a particular language while syntax looks at the grammatical arrangement of words within sentences. In semantics, we want to look at lexical components that form the meanings of words and sentences.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- explain phonology, syntax and semantics and their relationship
- describe the organs of speech.
- state the place and manner of articulation of some consonant sounds.
- appreciate syntactic relationship of sentences.
- Explain semantics and the levels of meaning.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 General Overview

Phonology is used to refer to the sounds and the intonation patterns associated with spoken language. For typically developing children, sensitivity to language form originates in the womb. Golinkoff and Hirshpasek (1999) reveal that the growing foetus can hear a number of sounds generated in the mother's abdomen. As a result of this, infants at birth are already familiar with some of the phonology of their language including its intonation patterns. Young infants are able to discriminate between most of the sounds that are used in language, including those in language to which they have never been exposed to.

By about six to seven months, a child develops language-like sounds called babbling. These are consonant sounds and vowel syllables e.g. tata, dada, mama. Though, babbling seems meaningless it is a significant milestone in phonological development of the child's language. Infants' ability to hear their own vocalization and those of the people around them become increasingly important for speech production.

Phonology is the study of the sound system of language. Perhaps, you already know the root word 'phone' from telephone meaning (carrying sound). Other words like microphone, gramophone and xylophone are all related to sound producing items. Phonology will therefore be looking at the anatomical and physiological aspects of sound production.

Psycholinguists have described man as the only articulate mammal because he has the apparatus to make the sounds of speech. We learn to speak without knowing much about those organs. However researchers have shown a detailed understanding of how human body produces the sounds of speech. In phonology, we can see how our lungs breathe out air, produce vibrations in the larynx and with the use of tongue, teeth and lips we modify the sound that translate into speech as shown below:

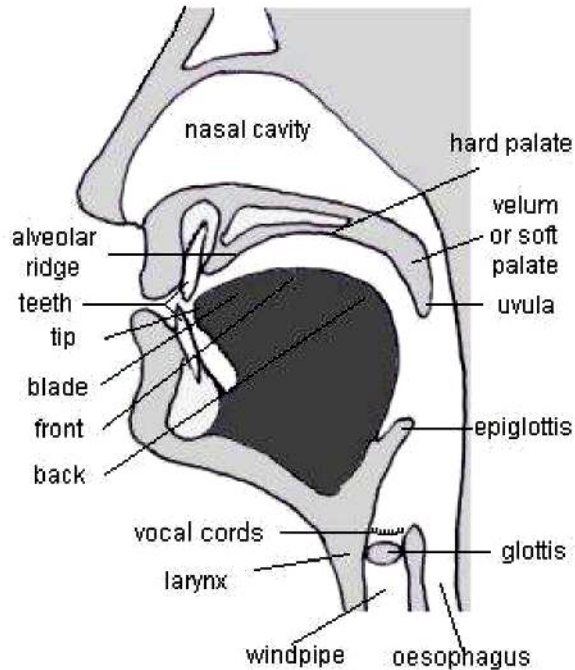


Image credit: Moore, A. (2001)

Snyder and Anderson (2010) hold that speech is a learned system of communication requiring the coordinated use of voice, articulators and language skills. Although many animals are physiologically able to use the voice for communication and convey a wide range of simple messages to other of their species, only humans are able to produce true speech. In aboard sense, speech is synonymous with language

Roach (1983) argues for the importance of phonology in language study. It gives us an insight into how the human mind works because a man's word is his bond. It also enables the learner to hear and correct mistakes in such a language while giving us the opportunities to teach the pronunciation of the language to others.

In studying the phonology of any language, we must examine the structure of the segmental phonemes and how they are brought together as meaningful sound units through which the grammar of the language is projected (Jolayemi, 2006).

Let us examine these two sentences:

1. The cat is under the chair.
2. The hat is under the chair.

You will see that the phonemes /k/ and/h/have altered the meaning ascribed to the sentences. These sounds having been realized differently phonologically have conveyed different meanings.

Daniel (2011) submits that /t/ can be realized with aspiration, that is, puff of air, in the initial position of a stressed, syllable as in ‘tape’ but lateralized when followed by a lateral sound as in ‘Kettle’ However, it is nasalized when close to a nasal sound as in ‘Kitten’.

In consideration of syntax, we study the rules that govern the ways in which words are strung together to form phrases, clauses and sentences. Radford (2004) reports that syntax is a word which comes from the Greek. It means “joining of several things together.” Later, grammarians adopt it to refer to those principles and rules which teach us to put words together so as to form sentences. For example: “Chike goes to school” is a sentence that abides by the syntactic structure of English. To say, *‘‘School to Chike goes’’ will be unacceptable.

A basic sentence in English contains a subject and a predicate. The something or someone that the sentence is about is called the subject. Therefore Chike is the subject of our sentence above. The predicate contains information about someone or something that is the subject. In the sentence above “goes to school” say something about Chike. It is therefore the predicate. Syntax goes further to talk about grammatical categories called parts of speech. These include; Nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, preposition, conjunctions and interjections.

Semantics deals with the study of meaning of word and sentences in a systematic and objective way. It is a complex concept because meaning has different perspectives. The old adage of “one man’s food is another man’s poison’ has a basis in semantics. To spit on someone is derogatory in some cultures but the meaning ascribed to it among some African cultures is that elders bless people when they pray for them by using spit to zeal the prayer.

There are levels of meaning in semantics which help us to categorize them in their proper perspectives. We have conceptual meaning which gives the ordinary interpretation of word. Secondly, there is connotative meaning which gives additional interpretation to the word expressed.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Explain the relationship between phonology, syntax and Semantics.

3.2 The Speech Phenomenon

When we speak, we make use of pulmonic egressive air. This is the airstream moving out of our lungs. When such air is expelled; sounds are produced translated to speech. Sometimes, when we pause to breathe in by using ingressive air, we can only produce quiet speech which is unclear to our listeners

A young child acquiring language may not produce exactly the same sound used by adults, not because they are not of the correct sound but because their speech organs have not developed fully. They cannot fully control the flow of egressive air so that they will continue speaking rather than purse briefly while drawing more air.

Moore (2001) exemplifies that children may not articulate a word in full or exactly, they can recognize it as an incomplete or mistaken form when an adult repeats it back to them.

Adult: What do you want to be when you grow up?

Child: A dowboy.

Adult: So, you want to be a dowboy.

Note: here that ‘cowboy’, which contains a consonant sound/k/ is understood by the child to be the correct thing to say but the speech organs are not ripe enough to realize the sound.

A brief discussion of what goes on in the production of speech sounds will be made here. This involves the articulation of vowels and consonant sounds.

English has 12 vowel sounds which are divided into seven short vowels and five long vowels. Vowels are described according to where the production takes places. This could be front, central or back of the mouth and whether the lips are rounded or spread.

The front vowels are: /i: / as in **seek**, **need**

/i/ as in **sick** **wit**

/e/ **bet**, **net**

/æ/ **cat**, **man**

Central vowels are / ə: / **search**, **girl**

/ə: / **teacher**, **clever**

/ʌ/ **but**, **gut**

Back vowels air /u/ **cool**, **blue**

/u: / **full**, **pull**

/ɔ:/ **fought**, **court**

/ɔ/ **cot**, **dog**

/a: / **car**, **far**

This could be diagrammatized thus:

	Front	Central	Back
High	i i:		u u:
Mid	e	ə ə:	ɔ:
Low	æ	ʌ	ɔ a:

Adapted from Moore (2001)

In the production of consonant the sound, there is destruction of the airstream, which could be partial or total as in /f/ and /p/.

Here, you will need a mirror and see how you realize these two sounds. When /p/ is produced, the flow of air is obstructed by the lips but a different situation access when /f/ is produced. This is due to the fact that the flow of air is partially obstructed by the contact of the lower lip and the upper teeth.

In the phonological classification of consonant sounds, three factors are put into consideration:

1. The place of articulation which refers to the point in the vocal tract where the air is interrupted for the articulation of a particular consonant sound.
2. Manner of Articulation: This is described according to the degree of obstruction of the air stream whether total or partial.
3. State of Glottis: explained to show a voiced or voiceless sound. When there is vibration, the consonant sound is voiced and when there is no vibration it is voiceless.

The places of articulation in the production of consonants are:

	Term	Description
1.	Bilabial	Involving 2lips as in/b/, /p/, /m/ (buy, pie, my)
2	Labio-dental	Lower lip and upper front teeth/f/, /v/ (fun, voodoo)
3.	Dental	Tip of tongue with incisors /θ/, /ð/ (think, though)
4	Alveolar	Tongue tip and alveolar ridge /t/, /d/ (tie, dye)
5.	Palato alveolar	Front part of tongue raised towards the hard palate /ʃ/, /dʒ/ (share and jump)
6.	Velar	Back of tongue against soft plate /k/, /g/ (cut, go)
7.	Glottal	Air passes through glottis /h/ (heave, hug)

The manner of articulation are described in this way

	Term	Description
1.	Plosive	/b/, /p/ total obstruction of air
2.	Affricate	/tʃ/, /dʒ/ release of air is Gradual in the air stream partially obstructed.

3.	Nasal	Air flow through nasal cavity /m/, /n/
4.	Fricative	Articulators obstruct flow of air partially with a frictional noise /h/, /r/

The state of the glottis refers to the vocal cords situation when the sounds are produced. This could be voiced or voiceless as explained above, /b/, /d/ are voiced while /p/ and /t/ are voiceless.

You can see from the above that phonology enables us to determine the phonetic realization of sounds of a language in a actual speech. With the use of the articulators speech sounds become the words of the language. The articulation mechanism comprises the lips, tongue, teeth palate and jaw. Speech is produced by interruption or shaping of the vocalized and unvocalised airstream through the movement of the organs of speech.

3.3 Syntax and Semantics

3.3.1 Syntax

Syntax is taken from a Greek word ‘arrange together’. It is the study of those rules that govern the ways in which words are arranged to form phrases, clauses and sentences. Chomsky (1965)’s famous sentence “colourless green ideas sleep furiously” though grammatically correct but meaningless is used to demonstrate that the rules governing syntax are distinct from the words conveyed (Radford 2009). In the same vein, Lewis Carroll’s poem ‘Jabberwocky’ contains lines like:

The blithytoves did gyre and gimble
The blithytoves karulized elastically

The way words are strung together is English- like even though the words are nonsensical. We however know that the syntax of English will realize ‘toves’ as plural ‘gyre’ ‘gimble and ‘karulized’ as verb and ‘elastically’ as adverb. When the string is altered, the syntactic order will not be English.

In linguistics, you are therefore expected to be able to identify each of the constituents in the sentences and to say what category it belongs and the function it serves. These constituents are called word orders which are combined together to make sentences.

In English, the general word order is Subject Verb Object (SVO) though this varies from language to language. A sentence like:

The boy hit the girl.

Subject Verb Object

If you reverse the word order to SOV

*“The girl boy hit the”, the sentence will contravene the syntactic pattern of English and therefore not acceptable.

A typical sentence in the English language consists of a subject and a predicate. While the subject is mostly realized by a noun phrase, the predicate is realized by a verb phrase, e.g.

1. The man (NP) became a doctor. (VP)
2. Her son(NP) speaks Hausa very well.(VP)

Grammatical categories, word class or parts of speech are also identifiable in the English language. These are:

1. Nouns: which names a person, place, things or idea and usually preceded by articles. (Alaba, dog, Lagos, beauty, etc.)
2. Adjectives describe the attributes or qualities of nouns, e.g. great, poor, slow, powerful etc.
3. Pronouns: The prefix in pronoun ‘pro’ means ‘for’. We can therefore refer to pronoun as a word used instead of noun. When a noun is used repeatedly, it becomes monotonous. Pronouns are used instead. These are, I, you, she, he, they etc.
4. The verb: - The verb is derived from a Latin word ‘verbrum’ (a word). No sentence can be complete without a finite verb. It is regarded as the most important of the word classes. It is an action word and other word revolve around it e.g. drew, jump see etc.
5. The Adverb: This is a modifier which gives more information or meaning about other parts of speech e.g. He talks slowly when provoked. (greatly, wonderfully, etc.)
6. Preposition: This is a word used to show the relationship between nouns or pronouns and other words that they precede in sentences, e.g. The book is on the table. (under, beside etc.)
7. The conjunction: This is a word that links or joint two word, phrases, clauses or sentence e.g. food and drinks.
8. The interjection: it is an expression of strong feeling or fear, pity or sorrow. Sentence which contain interjections are called exclamatory sentences e.g. what a pity! My goodness! Hurrah!

3.3.2 Semantics

Wikipedia (2012) states that semantics is derived from a Greek word ‘semantica’ (the study of meaning). It focuses on the relationship between signifiers and what they stand for. Linguistic semantics is the study of meaning that is used to understand human experience through language. There is interconnection between semantics and other fields of

language studies like syntax, morphology and phonology. Within the purview of meaning, sounds, facial expressions and body language have semantic content with different implications.

The meaning of a word cannot be derived from their physical properties but it could be derived from relationship with other words, e.g. the term 'dog' in English signifies, Animal + 4 legs + barking but this holds true because it is conventional and acceptable to speakers of English. In Yoruba 'dog' is named 'aja'. The question arises "what is doglike about dog? In other parts of the world, people bear names derogatory in our milieu. A former American president called Mr. Bush was at home with such a name but this will be frowned at in many African cultures where they believe that names have psychic implications. Shakespeare once queried "what is in a name? A rose called by any other name will smell as sweet."

Fillip (2012) remarks that semantics is the study of meaning expressed by element of a language, characterizable as a symbolic element. Through phonology and syntax, we learn the expressive power of language, but semantics studies the meaning of what is expressed by giving the correct interpretation.

Ogbulogo (2004) submits that semantics is associated with different issues related to meaning including naming, concepts, sense and reference. While ascribing labels and names for words because they are concrete, the problem of explaining abstract ideas will arise. You can see here that meanings are easy to ascribe to 'bag', 'table' than to 'love' and 'greatness'. These are difficult to explain. When you check your dictionary you will see different shades of meaning e.g. bank (saving money), bank (river side), and bow (showing respect) bow (device for shooting arrow).

Levels of meaning: In semantics you need to know that meanings are also conceptual or connotative.

1. Conceptual meaning is the primary or denotative meaning of a word. This is the lexical entry you will see in your dictionary. It is not affected by the context or emotional overtones reflected in the utterance. In conceptual meaning, there is a general acceptability of what the term stands for. 'Man' could be signified as Human + male + adult and 'woman' is signified as Human + female + adult.
2. Connotative meaning: refers to how conceptual meaning is coloured to assume a higher meaning different from its ordinary sense.

Alebiosu and Jimoh (2012) exemplify that “my brother is married to a pig” connotes ‘a dirty wife’, and “the company will fire any lazy workers” connotes ‘sack or dismissal’. The language of advertisement is full of connotations. An advertisement in a fuel station which says “put a tiger in your tank” got the attention of more customers than that which says “happy motoring and fast starting”.

Ogbulogo (2004) gives the cultural perspective to connotative meaning. If you describe somebody as a ‘tortoise’ in Yoruba, you mean he is a sly, cunning and tricky person. Hausa will use ‘cricket’ for the same expression while the western world will use ‘the fox’ for the same appellation.

Other shades of meaning in semantics are in terms of sense relations. These include synonyms and antonyms. A word is said to be synonymous with another one when a similar word is used to replace it. E.g. good-kind, forbid- prohibit, etc. The English language is rich in synonyms but there are no perfect synonyms. On the other hand, antonyms are word that express the opposite sense of a given word, e.g. big-small, good-bad etc.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Give detailed explanation of the levels of meaning.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have attempted to look at phonology, syntax and semantics and the relationship between them. While phonology deals with the sound system of a particular language and the anatomical and physiological aspect of speech production, syntax is concerned with the arrangement of words within sentences and their relationship. Semantics talks of the study of meaning of words and sentences. You now know the organs of speech and the area responsible for production of distinct sounds. You can now also explain how the syntactical pattern of a sentence can affect intelligibility. Semantics has shown you the different shades of meaning and how words could be contextually and culturally determined.

5.0 SUMMARY

Our study of the three main components of language; phonology, syntax and semantics has shown the interconnection between them. In this Unit, we tried to establish that phonology and syntax are concerned with the expressive power of language while semantics studies the meaning of what has been expressed. Language acquisition and learning must display a good grasp and use of phonological, syntactic and semantic properties of a language before competence and performance can be attained. While knowledge of grammar is essential for cognitive ability

the knowledge of the organization and production of sounds including the association of meaning with words give a total linguistic proficiency in the language.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain phonology, syntax, semantics and their relationship
2. Describe the organs of speech
3. State the place and manner of articulation of any TEN consonant sounds.
4. Name the parts of speech with two examples each
5. Discuss the levels of meaning in semantics.

7.0 REFERENCES /FURTHER READING

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