

**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN**  
**DISTANCE LEARNING CENTRE**

**LIN 101**  
**Language and Linguistics**

**By**  
**Nneya Gerold Okechukwu**  
**Department of Linguistics and African Languages**

## LECTURE ONE

### Definition of Language

*The person who has acquired the knowledge of language has internalised a system of rules that relate sound and meaning in a particular way.*

Chomsky (2006: 23) Language and Mind

### Introduction

We live in a world of language. There is hardly any moment in this life when we are not talking, especially as we are carrying out our daily activities. So, we talk virtually to everybody around us: friends, associates, children, husbands, lovers, teachers and even our enemies and everyone responds by talking. This we do consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, there is the need for us to understand the meaning of language. In this regard, effort shall be made in this lecture to look at different definitions of language as given by scholars from different linguistic background. We shall examine their views about language as to enable us understand what is meant by the term “language”. In addition, we shall examine what it means to have the knowledge of language. This is important because the major preoccupation in linguistics is to study and understand human language.

### Objectives

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

1. define language;
2. critically examine the definition given by Hall (1968);
3. identify the salient features of language expressed by those scholars and
4. explain what it means to know a language

### Pre - Test

Define the term “language”?

### CONTENT

Edward Sapir (1921:8) defined language as ‘purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced vocal symbols.’ In Sapir's definition, the concept of ideas, emotions, and desires are vague because language is not limited only to communicating ideas, desires and emotions. For example, the term 'ideas' is imprecise because there are many systems of voluntarily produced symbols that

communicate, which are not necessarily regarded as language. Examples include eye-gaze and postures.

Block and Trager (1942:5) defined language "as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates". In this definition, emphasis is laid on the social function of language; the role of language is narrowed to human interaction. Also, this definition restricts the scope of language to the spoken form without paying attention to its written form. It also points out the fact that language is systematic. Each language contains two major systems. These are:

- a. The system of sound and
- b. The system of meaning.

More so, the definition refers to the arbitrary nature of language. In other words, there is no one - to - one correspondence between the meaning of a word and the combination of sounds used to represent it. This fact is supported by the different words used in different languages to represent the same meaning. For instance, the terms *owo*, *ego*, and *kudi* are used to refer to 'money' in Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa languages respectively; similarly, the words *enu*, *unu* and *ónū* refer to 'mouth' in Yoruba, Edo and Igbo languages respectively.

Hall (1968:158) defined language as "the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory symbols."

By institution, he means that language is a significant practice in a society or culture. This can be compared with Sapir's assertion that language is 'purely human'. Communication refers to the fact that language is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behaviours. He also uses the word *interact* to indicate that language involves mutual or reciprocal action. 'Oral-auditory' in the definition refers to the vocal production including both the speaker and the hearer, while 'symbols' refer to the vocal signals transmitted from the speaker to the hearer in the process of communication and interaction.

Many other definitions of language have been given by scholars, depending on their perspectives and persuasion. The definitions, so far, point to the complex nature of human language and draw our attention to the fact that there is no single comprehensive definition of

language. For instance, let us look at some other definitions given by scholars below.

Chomsky (1959: 13) defined language as "a set (finite and infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements". Chomsky's definition clearly points out his area of specialization in linguistics. The emphasis in his definition is how a number of words could be used to construct or generate numerous sentences. His approach to language is based on his area of interest in linguistics which is syntax.

Greenberg (1956: I) defines language as 'a system of signals conforming to the rules which constitute its grammar or as a set of culturally transmitted behaviour patterns shared by a group of individuals'. This definition focuses attention on the relationship between language and culture. It reveals the anthropological background of the author.

Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens (1964:4) assert that "language is regarded as a form of activity; specifically, it is a form of activity of human beings in societies". This definition focuses attention on language as a social behaviour. It has a sociolinguistic undertone.

Ladd, R. (1954:32) opines that "language is primarily an instrument of communication among human beings in a community". This definition talks about the communicative function of language in the community.

In the view of Crystal (2008: 265), language at its most specific level may refer to "the concrete act of speaking, writing or signing in a given situation". He points out the complex nature of language as it interests scholars from various disciplines, which in turn have attracted wide range of views about language.

The last definition we want to look at briefly was given by Francis (1968:4). According to him, "to the linguist, language may be a form and not a matter, or it may be a system of hierarchies or even a hierarchy of systems". This definition points to the systematic nature of language. Language is highly systematic from the phonetic to the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels. We shall come back to this in later chapters.

### **Linguistic Knowledge**

How can we claim that we have the knowledge of a particular language? When you know a language, you can speak and be understood by others who know that language. It basically means that you have the capacity to produce sounds that signify certain meanings and to

understand or interpret the sounds produced by others (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams 2011:4). Deaf people produce and understand sign languages just as hearing persons produce and understand spoken languages. Everyone averagely knows at least one language. Our ability to carry out a simple conversation requires a profound knowledge of the language that most speakers are unaware of; this is true of all languages, Nigerian languages inclusive. Therefore, what do speakers of Igbo, Hausa or Yoruba know? According to Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011:4), these are itemised below:

- i. Knowledge of the sound system
- ii. Knowledge of words

### **Knowledge of the sound system**

Part of knowing a language means knowing what sounds (or signs in the case of sign language for the deaf) are in that language and what sounds are not, i.e. knowing the inventory of sounds in the language. One way, this unconscious knowledge is revealed by the way speakers of one language pronounce words from another language. For instance, a speaker who has a singular knowledge of Igbo or Yoruba may substitute an Igbo or Yoruba sound for a non-Igbo or Yoruba sound when speaking English. Igbo people speaking English often pronounce words such as *thing* and *thus* as if those words were spelled *tin* and *tus*. The reason being that the sound represented by the initial letters *th* /θ/ is not part of the Yoruba or Igbo sound system.

More so, knowing the sounds of a language includes knowing which sound may start a word, end a word, and follow each other. For instance, most Nigerian languages have a sequence of *nk* as in *nku* ‘firewood’ in Igbo which occurs word initial and every Igbo speaker is equipped with this knowledge. However, this is not applicable to English especially in word initial but may occur word final in such words as *blank* or *sink*. So children who learn English recognise that *nk* cannot begin a word in English while Igbo children learn that it does in Igbo.

### **Knowledge of words and their meaning**

In addition to the knowledge of sounds and sound patterns in our language, the knowledge of words and what they signify constitutes knowing a language. This implies that certain sequences of sounds signify certain concepts or meanings. Speakers of Yoruba, Igbo and Tiv know that *okurin*, *nwókē* and *nomsu* mean ‘man/male’ respectively, and that they mean something different from *obirin*, *nwàányị* or *kwase mean* ‘woman/female’. When you know a language, you know words in that language, that is, which sequence of sounds are related to specific meanings and which are not. We shall further explore this in later chapters.

## Summary

From the definitions above, one can clearly understand that language is unique to human beings and consists of complex and arbitrary vocal symbol used naturally to communicate ideas feelings, emotions and desires. It basically consists of system of sounds and system of meaning. There are various approaches to the definition of language among scholars based on their interest and the complex nature of human language. Consequently, there is no single comprehensive definition of language. We also noted that knowing a language means knowing the inventory of sounds and sound patterns, as well as knowing the words and the meanings attached to them.

## Post-Test

1. Drawing insight from the different definitions of language; how would you define the term language?
2. Do you agree with Sapir and others that language is purely human? Justify your answer with detailed explanation.
3. Examine the definitions given by Sapir, Block and Trager as well as Hall critically; what are the salient features of language emphasized by these scholars?
4. How would you prove that you know your language?

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## LECTURE TWO

### Universal Attributes of Language

*In a grammar there are parts that pertain to all languages; these components form what is called the general grammar. In addition to these general (universal) parts, there are those that belong only to one particular language; and these constitute the particular grammars of each language.*

CÉSAR CHESNEAU DU MARSAIS, c. 1750

### Introduction

The number of languages spoken in the world is not known precisely. Figures ranging from 6,000 to 10,000 have been suggested. However, language is not static; it keeps changing from time to time. While new languages are evolving from the existing ones, some of the existing ones are dying or endangered. Issues related to this were captured in one of the largest publications on world languages: 'Ethnologue'. Ethnologue was founded by Richard S. Pittman who was motivated by the desire to share information on language development needs around the world with his colleagues in SIL International, as well as with other language researchers. Ethnologue was first published in 1951. The seventeenth edition (17<sup>th</sup> ed.) of Ethnologue estimates that 7,105 living languages exist. These languages are unevenly distributed: 4% in Europe, 13 % in the Americas, 31 % in Africa, 50% in Asia and the Pacific. Despite the diversity of these languages, some attributes are common to them all. It is our aim in this chapter to point out these striking universal attributes.

### Objectives

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

1. list some characteristics shared by all languages of the world;
2. explain these attributes in details and
3. cite copious examples and illustrations from different languages

### Pre - Test

- What do you understand by universals of language?
- Based on the universal attributes of languages, in what ways is your language similar or different from English language or any other African language



## CONTENT

### Language Universals

In the study of languages, it has been discovered that there are rules of particular languages such as Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Tiv, English etc. and there are also rules that hold in all the languages. The rules that pertain to all the languages are generally called language Universals. They are of particular interest because they help us to understand how the human mind works. People attempting to study other languages as second language (SL) focus on learning those aspects that are different from their native language and they often find themselves sceptical of the assertions that there are universal laws of language. Investigations into this claim have, in the long run, accumulated evidence in support of Chomsky's view that there is a Universal Grammar (UG): part of the biologically endowed human faculty. We can think of UG as the blueprint that all languages follow. These discoveries have made us understand that no language is primitive and there is no man or community of men without a particular language. Therefore, all languages are equal since they are equally complex and are capable of expressing any idea in the universe. Every language can be expanded to include new words for new concepts.

### Approaches to Language Universals

There are two major approaches to language universals. These are:

- Chomskyan Approach and
- Greenbergian Approach

**Chomskyan approach:** Chomskyan approach was proposed by Noam Chomsky, one of the top ten most quoted authors in the world and the only one still living amongst them (Carnie (2007)). The major idea behind this approach is that human beings have the innate capability/mechanism of producing language. According to Chomsky, every human being has the language ability innately so that he/she can acquire the large amount of knowledge by hearing just a part of it without enough experience. Therefore, there is a genetic determinacy that makes the phenomenon possible. He claims that our intuitions are due in part to language principles. The term 'universals' allows for many different interpretations, several of which have been used within linguistics. At the most superficial level, but still not without interest, it reminds us that all human languages exploit the same vocabulary or elements: consonants, and vowels, nouns, verbs, and clauses and so on. Linguistic theory must then provide a means

for describing all of these in the form of a universal inventory of possible elements. The inventory is universal in the sense that it is rich enough to allow the universe of languages, not that each language exploits all the possibilities.

### **Greenbergian Approach**

This approach was proposed by Harold Joseph Greenberg after whom it is named. In his view, "language universals" refers to the general principles that govern all the spoken languages around the world. Greenberg in his study examined the grammar of thirty languages from different language families and different parts of the world and has found out that there are some rules which govern the way languages work. These can be classified in different terms such as morphologic universals, syntactic universals, semantic universals, etc. The language universals proposed by Greenberg, in this respect, serve a different point of view from Chomsky's. However, our focus in this section is to point out some of the universal attributes of language to enable you understand that the differences discovered through the study of thousands of languages is actually limited by the attributes they have in common. Our discussion is not based solely on any of the approaches mentioned.

### **Universal Attributes of Languages**

**All languages change through time.** Any language that remains static is moribund, that is to say, no longer effective and valuable. Changes can take place at different levels of representation viz phonological, morphological, semantic or syntactic level. Let us take Yoruba, a language spoken by over 20 million people in Western Nigeria as an example; this language has undergone a lot of changes in terms of spelling. Look at the following examples.

<b>Old Spelling</b>	<b>New Spelling</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
Aiyé	ayé	'world'
Aiya	aya	'wife'
Àiya	àyà	'chest'
Eiye	eye	'bird'
Olórun	olorun	God
Eiye	eye	'honour'

English language, a global language, has undergone a lot of changes. A major change in the history of English that resulted in new phonemic representations of words took place approximately between 1400 and 1600. The seven long vowels of Middle English underwent the following changes:

i: → ai [mi:s] → [maɪs] 'mice'  
 u: → au: [mu:s] → [maʊs] mouse  
 e → i [ge:s] → [gi:s] geese  
 o: → u: [go:s] → [gu:s] 'goose'  
 ε: → ei [brɛ:ken] → [breɪk] 'break'  
 ɔ: → o: [brɔ:ken] → [brɒk] 'broke'  
 a: → ei [na:mə] → [neɪm] 'name'

The Great Vowel Shift exemplified above is a primary source of many of the spelling inconsistencies of English.

**Every known language is arbitrary:** There is no one-to-one correspondence between words and the meanings they express. There is nothing 'dogish' in a 'dog', neither is there anything 'goatish' in a 'goat'. Language is merely a matter of 'convention'. If you like, call it 'agreement' among speakers of the language. Let us look at the following words which stand for the same objects in different languages:

Edo	Igbo	Itsekiri	Yoruba	French	English
Unu	ṣnū	arun	enu	bouche	mouth
Awa/ekita	nkītā	erenja	aja	chien	dog
Obo	aka	ewo	owo	main	hand
Esagien	òbàrà	sango	eje	sang	blood
Ukpokpo	osisi	agin	igi	baton	stick
erhan	òzọ	again	igi	arbre	tree

Why is it that we have different expressions in different languages representing the same object? The point is that the sounds that combine together to form the words do not have anything that has any direct connection with the meanings they express.

**Use of discreet set of sounds:** All human languages attested so far, utilize a finite set of discrete sounds (or gestures) that are combined to form meaningful elements or words, which themselves form an infinite set of possible sentences. If you go back to the definition of language given by Chomsky above, you would understand what we are saying here. Let us take Yoruba as an illustration. There are 18 consonants and 12 vowels with 3 level tones in

this language. This limited number of sounds can be combined together to form an unlimited number of words. What a great mystery!

**Every known language has its grammar.** The grammar of any language contains rules for the formation of words and sentences comparable to what obtains in other languages. This is why linguists agree that language is rule-governed. When these rules are studied comparatively with what operates in other languages, the similarity is astounding. These rules we are referring to may be attested at different levels - phonological, morphological and syntactic. All these terms will be explained in subsequent lectures.

**Every spoken language has a class of vowels and a class of consonants:** Let us look at the sound systems of Yoruba and Igbo languages comparatively:

### Consonants

**Yoruba:** b, d, f, g, gb, dʒ, k, l, m, n, kp, r, s, ʃ, t, w, j.

**Igbo:** p, b, t, d, k, g, kp̄, gb̄, k<sup>w</sup>, g<sup>w</sup>, m, n, ɲ, ɲ<sup>w</sup>, tʃ, dʒ, f, v, s, z, ʃ, h, l, ɾ, j, w

### Vowels

**Yoruba:** a, e, ε, ɪ, o, ɔ, u

**Igbo:** a, e, ɪ, ɪ, o, ɔ, u, ʊ

The example above shows that Yoruba has seventeen (17) consonant sounds, while Igbo has twenty-eight (28) which are phonemic, i.e. significant. Conversely, Yoruba and Igbo have seven (7) and eight (8) vowels respectively. These sounds can be combined together according to the phonological rules of each of the language to form innumerable words.

**All languages of the world make use of similar grammatical categories:** Languages of the world make use of similar grammatical categories such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, articles, demonstratives, interjections, etc. However, the presence of nouns and verbs is mostly attested to in all languages. These different words are used to form different sentence structures, depending on the syntactic rules of the language. This is demonstrated below; employing examples from English and Yoruba and Igbo:

### English:

I	ate	a	plate	of	delicious	rice
Pronoun	verb	article	noun	preposition	adjective	noun

## Yoruba

Mo	lo	si	ile	baba	agba	lale	ana
I	go	to	house	father	old	night	yesterday
Pron	verb	prep	Noun	noun	adjective	adverb	noun

'I went to elder father's house yesterday night'.

## Igbo

Nwoke	ọcha	jèrè	ahia	n'Àbá	ùnyaahù
Noun	Adjective	Verb	Noun	Prep'Noun	Adverb

**All languages show universal semantic properties:** There are semantic universals, such as male/female or animate/inanimate distinctions. Study the examples below:

English	Yoruba	Igbo
King	Oba	Ezè
Queen	Obabinri	Ezènwaànyị
Prince	Dawodu	Òbiēzè
Princess	Omo Obabinrin	Àdaēzè
Ram	Agbo	Èbùlè
Boy	Omokurin	Nwatà nwokē
Girl	Omobinrin,	Nwatà nwaànyị etc

**Every language has a way of referring to time:** Languages of the world have a way of referring to time, viz- Past, Present and Future. This varies from language to language. However, while tense is marked in some languages, it is unmarked in others. Consider the examples below:

<b>English:</b>	I kill- <b>ed</b> a goat (Past= <b>ed</b> )
<b>Yoruba:</b>	Mo pa ewurẹ (Past= <b>unmarked</b> )
<b>Igbo:</b>	Mụ gbu- <b>ru</b> ewu (Past= <b>ru</b> )

You can observe that while past tense is marked in English and Igbo, it is unmarked in Yoruba.

**Every language has a way of expressing both affirmative and negative:** Individual languages have a way of expressing negative and affirmative utterances. While some languages use independent particles, others use affixes often attached to the verb. In some other languages, some items act as both negative and tense markers. Question formation and issuing commands is also expressed in individual languages in various ways. These features

have been found to be common to all human languages. Consider the examples below in regards negation:

**English:** John does *not* speak french.

**French:** Gianni *ne* parle *pas* Francais

**Italian:** Gianni *non* le mangia.

**Yoruba:** Olú kò/ò ní owó

**Igbo:** Àda anaghī èri nrī

Every normal child born in any part of the world is capable of learning any language to which he/she is exposed to. Linguists talk about LAD - Language Acquisition Device, which they believe is a natural endowment given by God to every normal human being. According to linguists, this device enables every normal person to learn any language, however complex it may be.

### Summary

All the attributes explained and exemplified above are language universals. It points to the fact that even though each language differs in specific ways from other languages, they all have remarkable similarities which cannot be overlooked. Now, which language do you speak? Examine it closely and you will discover that your language is not an exception.

### Post-Test

1. Explain Six Universal attributes of language using appropriate examples
2. When a linguist says that language is rule governed, what does he mean?
3. “Language is highly patterned”, what does this assertion mean to you?

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## LECTURE THREE

### Unique Properties of Human Language

*All creatures, from apes, bees, cicadas, dolphins, through to zebras, are capable of communicating with other members of their species. The range and complexity of animal communication systems are staggering and we could not hope even to summarize their diversity.*  
(Anonymous)

#### Introduction

The goal of this lecture is to expose certain properties which are peculiar to human language. We shall base our discussions on the unique properties of language following Yule (1996). These properties are said to be unique to human language because they are unlikely to be found in the communication system of other creatures. The following discussion will enable you understand that language as used by human beings is remarkably different from other known methods of communication.

#### Objectives

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

1. distinguish between human language and animal communication or any other system of communication;
2. list and explain the unique properties of human language
3. relate these properties to the language(s) you speak

#### Pre-Test

Discuss three properties of human language.

#### CONTENT

**Displacement:** Human language allows the users to refer to past and future time. In this way, speakers relate events which are removed in time and place. This implies that speakers can discuss events which have taken place in the past or those that will take place in the future. This property of human language is called displacement. It is not a feature of animal communication no matter how sophisticated it may be. For example, the communication system of bees has been confirmed to be one of the most complex and well developed systems of communication among the animals. When a worker bee finds a source of food and

returns to the hive, it performs a complex dance routine to describe to other bees the location of the nectar depending on the type of dance- Round dance for nearby food and tail wagging dance with variable tempo for further away. The other bees can work out where this newly discovered food can be found. Based on this, some scholars have asserted that bee communication possesses displacement. If this is true, it must be in an extremely limited form. Displacement as attested in human language is much more comprehensive, it helps us to talk about things and places the existence of which we cannot be sure of. For example, in the Old Testament version of the Bible, Moses was acclaimed to have written the Book of Genesis. There he was able to narrate events that took place right from the creation of the world, several years before he was born. This is a clear manifestation of displacement. The property of displacement allows human to create fiction and to describe possible future worlds.

**Arbitrariness:** There is no natural connection between a linguistic form and its meaning. We cannot determine what a word means by simply looking at its shape. Therefore, the symbols designed to represent vocal sounds are arbitrary. For instance, there is nothing inherently ‘dog-like’ about the word dog. More so, the same animal is called *ńkítā/ùgòdù* in Igbo, *hund* in German, *Chien* in French, *perro* in Spanish, *ajá* in Yoruba and *anywa* in Tiv. Consequent upon the arbitrary relationship between words and their meaning, there is no limit to the number of words in a language and no limit to what can be talked about. This gives room for the development of languages. However, the only exceptions to this are the onomatopoeic expressions or imitative natural sounds, such as *flash, crash, bang, boom, cuckoo, mew* (in English), *gbam gbam*, (roofing sheet) ,*udu*, (musical pot) *igba*, (drum) *ogba tum tum* (motor cycle) (in Igbo) etc whose sounds suggest their meanings. However, these are very few in languages. The foregoing shows that language is indeed arbitrary. Conversely, animal communication seems to be non-arbitrary because there is a natural connection between the conveyed message and the signal used to convey it. This is attributed to the fact that, for any animal, the set of signals employed in communication is finite (i.e. fixed and limited in number) and are used in specific time and situations (e.g. during mating or establishing territory).

**Productivity:** This is another essential property of human language. It consists in the ability of man to make utterances that have never been made or heard before and still be understood by others who share the same linguistic system. Man has the capability to coin new utterances



with ease by selecting and merging relevant linguistic items according to the rules known to the speakers of the language. This manifests often in the ability of a child learning a language to produce and form utterances which he/she has never heard before. On the other hand, adults manipulate their linguistic resources to describe new objects and situations. In our world today, there has been a lot of inventions too numerous to mention. For instance, a lot new ideas and information is being exhibited on the internet (e.g. facebook, YouTube, Whatsapp, twitter etc) and these are given names arbitrarily across languages to meet the expressive needs of speakers. Now, let me ask you, do you know the number of sentences you have uttered today? How many of them did you utter yesterday verbatim? On the other hand, animal communication is not productive and is incapable of representing new ideas or situations. To demonstrate this, Karl Von Frisch carried out an experiment in which he placed a bee hive at the foot of a radio tower and a food source at the top. Ten bees were taken to the top, shown the food source and sent off to tell the rest of the hive about their discovery. The message was conveyed through a bee dance and the whole gang buzzed off to get the free food. They flew around in all directions but could not locate the food. This is possibly due to the fact that the bee communication regarding location of food has a set of fixed set of signals all of which relate to horizontal distance. Frisch concluded that 'the bees have no word for 'up' in their language and they cannot invent one. This is attributed the fact that animal signals have a feature called **fixed reference**. Each signal is fixed as relating to a particular object or event.

**Cultural Transmission:** Language is passed on from one generation to the next through the process of cultural transmission. It is possible for a child to inherit the physical features such as height, complexion, weight etc from his biological parents, but not automatically possible to inherit their language. Rather, the language is acquired in association with other speakers. Language is a function of genetic inheritance and embodies the culture of the people. Consequently, it enables man to acquire the culture of the linguistic environment in which he lives. Therefore, a child of Igbo parentage (who has never left Igbo land and speaks only Igbo), and is adopted and brought up from birth by Yoruba parents among Yoruba people will inevitably speak Yoruba. Although, we stated earlier in Lecture Two that children are born with an innate predisposition to acquire language. It is obvious that they are not born with the ability to produce utterances in a specific language. Contrarily, animal communication is instinctive and not learned. In other words, animals can produce their signals even without being exposed to it. However, empirical evidence revealed that human infants growing up in

isolation produced no instinctive language.

**Discreetness:** The sounds used in language are meaningfully distinct. For example *t* and *d* are phonetically similar. Both are alveolar plosives (this would be explained further in LIN 141/241). The only difference between them is that *t* is voiceless, while *d* is voiced. Yet when these sounds are part of a language, they would be used in such a way that the substitution of one for the other result in a corresponding change in meaning of the linguistic items involved. For instance:

<b>English</b>	<b>Igbo</b>	<b>Yoruba</b>
Ten	tá ‘chew’	rà ‘sell’
Den	dá ‘warm’	dà ‘pour’
Train	tù ‘throw’	tù ‘pet’
Drain	dù ‘pinch’	dù ‘struggle for something’
Try	átá ‘weed’	ata ‘pepper’
Dry	ádá ‘fall’	adà ‘oil factory’

The changes in meanings observed in the above words arise from the difference in pronunciation of *t* and *d*. This property of human language is called discreetness. It has to be noted that the number of sounds produced by human vocal organs is limitless in any given language but only a few relevant sounds are used and the difference between these sound segments is distinctively absolute. Parrots are called ‘talking birds’ because they mimic human speeches. However, their *speech* cannot be analysed into consonants and vowels, can they?

**Duality:** Language is organised at two simultaneous layers or levels viz-level of sound and level of meaning. At the level of sound, we can produce individual; sounds like /t/, /p/ and /i/. None of these discrete forms has any meaning in isolation. Conversely, when they are ordered in particular combination as in *tip*, *pit*; it results to another level producing a meaning. The property of human language manifests the economical nature of human language since it enables man to make use of limited number of sounds to produce a very large number of sound combinations. Conversely, animal communication lacks this feature. For instance, a cock might be able to produce *kokorokoo* (Igbo), but this can neither be analysed as a feature of any specific organ of speech nor be separated out as a distinct level of production as in *k o r o k oo*. If the cock could operate with the level of duality, you should expect to hear *rokoko* or *ookorokok* with different meanings.

## Other Properties of Human Language

Human language has other properties which are not peculiar to human or does not generally account for human language. These are briefly discussed below:

**Vocal Auditory Channel:** This is the ability of the human language to be produced via the mouth (vocal) and perceived through the ears (auditory). However, this feature is not recognised as a defining characteristic of language since language could also be in writing or signs in which case sounds are not involved. This property is shared by animal communication.

**Reciprocity:** This implies that a speaker can as well be a listener.

**Non-directionality:** Linguistic signal can be picked by anyone with the hearing zone.

**Rapid Fade:** When linguistic signals are produced, they have the tendency to disappear quickly. The above mentioned properties are somewhat restricted to the spoken language and are present in many animal communication systems. They are recognised as ways of describing human language but not as a means of distinguishing it from other systems of communication.

### Summary

In this lecture, we discussed the six properties which distinguish human language from animal communication system. These are displacement, arbitrariness, productivity, cultural transmission, discreteness and duality. These properties show that language is exclusively the property of human beings. We also identified other properties shared by human and animal communication systems. These we noted are employed solely to describe human language and not to distinguish it from other communication systems.

## Post Test

1. With reference to any language of your choice discuss the six unique properties of human language
2. Identify other properties of language shared with animal communication.
3. Compare and contrast animal communication such as the mewing of the cat, the neighing of the horse and the barking of the dog with human communication.

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## **LECTURE FOUR**

### **Animal Communication**

*No matter how eloquently a dog may bark, he cannot  
tell you that his parents were poor but honest  
(Bertrand Russell)*

#### **Introduction**

Whether language is the exclusive property of the human species or not is an interesting question. The idea of talking animals probably is as old and as widespread among human societies as language itself. No culture lacks a legend in which some animals plays a speaking role. If language is viewed only as a system of communication, then many species communicate. The question is whether the kinds of grammars which represent linguistic knowledge acquired by children with no external Instruction and which are used productively rather than as responses to internal stimuli, are unique to man. It is our aim in this chapter to critically examine animal communication vis-a-vis human language without necessarily drawing any conclusion. The reader will be left to judge whether animals do 'speak' or not.

#### **Objectives**

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

1. Compare animal communication with human language;
2. Say whether animal communication is a language on its own; and
3. Discuss the communication systems of birds, bees, and chimpanzees.

#### **Pre-Test**

Do you regard animal communication as language in the real sense? Why and how?

#### **CONTENT**

Most animals possess some kind of *signalling* communication system. Among the spiders, there is a complex system of courtship. The male spider before it approaches its lady to love, goes through an elaborate series of gestures to inform the she-spider that it is indeed a spider and not a fly to be eaten. A similar kind of gesture is found among crabs. There are forty different varieties, and each variety uses its own particular claw-waving movement to signal to another member of its 'clan'. The timing, movement and posture of the body never change

from one time to another from one crab to another within the particular variety. Whatever the signal means, it is fixed. Only one meaning can be conveyed. There is nothing like an infinite set of crab "sentences".

The imitative sounds of talking birds' have little in common with human language, but the calls or songs of many species of birds do have a communicative function, and they resemble human languages in that there may be "dialects" within the same species. Bird calls (consisting of one or more short notes) convey messages associated with danger, feeding, sting, flocking and so on. Bird songs (more complex patterns of notes) are used to "stake out" territory and attract mates. There is no internal structure to the songs, nor can they be segmented into independent meaningful parts as applicable to words of human language.

### **The Bee**

One of the most closely investigated forms of animal communication is the 'dance' performed by a honey bee when it returns to the hive, which conveys precise information about the source and amount of food it has discovered. Several kinds of movement pattern have been observed. In the 'round dance' used when the food source is close to the hive, the bee moves in circles alternately to left and right. In the 'tail wagging dance' used when the source is further away, the bee moves in a straight line while wagging their abdomen from side to side and later return to their starting point. The straight line points in the direction of the food, the liveliness of the dance indicates how rich a source is, and the tempo of the dance provides information about its distance. For example, in one study, an experimental feeding dish 330 metres from the hive was indicated by 15 complete runs through the patterns in 30 seconds, whereas when the dish was moved to 700 metres distance, only 11 runs were carried out that time. No other animal communication was able to provide such amount of information - except human language. (After K. Von Frisch 1962).

### **The Chimp**

Early experiments to teach chimpanzees to communicate with their voices failed because of the inadequacies of their vocal organs. For instance, the vocal tracts of primates are very different from that of man. They have lung, flat, thin tongues, which have less room to move. The larynx (voice box) is higher, and there is little sign of a pharynx. There is no evidence of ability to change the configurations of the vocal tract, to produce the range of sounds required in speech.

When attempts were made to communicate with them using the hands, by teaching a selection of signs from American Sign Language (ASL) dramatic progress was made. The first subject was a female chimpanzee named Washoe, whose training began in 1966 when she was less than a year old. It took her roughly four years to acquire 132 ASL signs, many of which bore striking similarities to the general word meaning observed in child language acquisition. She also began to put signs together to express a small set of meaning relations, which resembled some of the early sentences of young children.

Since then, several other chimpanzees (and also gorillas) have acquired a vocabulary of signs, and alternative teaching procedures have been tried. For example in the case of the chimps Moja and Pili, sign language teaching began soon after birth, and training was carried out by native signers. Both of them began to sign when they were about 3 months old, and had over a dozen signs by the age of 6 months a marked contrast with Washoe, who had only 2 signs after 6 months of training.

A quite different way of proceeding was introduced in the case of a 5 year old chimpanzee called Sarah, in a research programme that began 1954 (D. and A.J. Premack, 1983). She was taught a form of written language - to arrange and respond to vertical sequences of plastic tokens on a magnetic board. Each token represented a word, e.g. small blue triangle = apple, small pink square = banana. The trainer eventually succeeded in teaching Sarah to respond correctly to several basic semantic sequences (e.g. 'give Mary apple'), including a number of more abstract notions such as 'same/different' and 'if/then' (e.g. ? apple different banana).

From the above reports, it is evident that chimps can learn to imitate signs, combine them into sequences, and use them in different contexts; however, they cannot be trained to speak human language. The implication of this is that the animal system of communication cannot be referred to as language except we are using the term in an elastic sense.

### **Summary**

In this lecture, we have examined some communication methods found among animals, such as birds, spiders, crabs and bees. We have also made it clear that attempts to teach monkeys to speak like man have failed, but some monkeys have succeeded in learning American Sign Language. The implication of this is that animal communication differs in significant ways from human language because it has what Yule (1996) termed fixed reference.

### **Post-Test**

1. Is animal communication a language in the real sense? Support your answer with concrete evidence.
2. Discuss any one of the following briefly: (a) Bee language (b) Bird language
3. Some chimpanzees have been trained to use American Sign Language, discuss at least two of them.

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## LECTURE FIVE

### Functions of Language

#### Introduction

Language is indispensable to man, taking a man's language from him is tantamount to maiming or incapacitating him. The role played by language in the life of man cannot be overemphasized. Generally, our daily interactions such as exchange of ideas, feelings, information etc. whether by speaking or writing often involve the use of language. We can also conceal ideas in the process of communication. In this lecture, we shall explore some of the functions performed by language among speakers in a speech community.

#### Objectives

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

1. List at least five functions of language; and
2. Give a detailed explanation on the listed functions.

#### Pre – Test

Discuss some functions of language known to you.

#### CONTENT

**1. Expressive Purpose:** Language, either in the spoken or written form is a tool of expression. Utterances such as: 'I love you', 'you are beautiful', 'you have done very well', etc. are expressions of emotion addressed to a particular person. Interjections such as *damn it*, uttered by a man who has just hit his thumb against a stone is a form of expression directed towards no one in particular. Yusuf (1998:4) describes instances like these as 'letting out steam; releasing pent-up emotion'. Crystal (1987:10) views language as 'a means of getting rid of our nervous energy when we are under stress'. According to him, the commonest expressions of emotion consist of conventional words or phrases (such as 'Gosh', 'My', 'Dam it', and 'what a sight' and the semi-linguistic noises often called interjections (such as Tut-tut, Ugh, Wow, and Ouch)". Therefore, with language one can express feelings of happiness, anger, joy, indifference, jealousy, praise etc. People around us can also determine of feelings through our utterances.



**2. Communication of Ideas:** Language is used as an instrument of communication. It is the most important and obvious use of language. Through it, people tell others about their desires, exchange ideas and impart knowledge. For communication to be effective, two parties or individuals must be involved otherwise one would be soliloquizing (i.e. 'talking alone' in which communication has not taken place). Teachers perform the task of teaching with the aid of language; Priests, Pastors, Imams and Evangelists perform the task of preaching or prophesying through the use of language. Before you gained admission into the University of Ibadan as a student, a lot of exchange of information must have taken place, contacts were made through the spoken or the written form of language, and eventually, you found yourself here. This book you are reading is written in a language and you have access to it because you have learnt how to read and write in that language. Sometimes, when people exchange greetings among themselves, they wish one another well. All these are evidence in support of the fact that language is a wonderful medium of communication.

**3. Instruments of Thought:** Language is a tool for thinking. It is observed that when somebody is thinking, he makes use of language in his thought. This idea is evidenced in the observation made by Crystal (1987:13) as follows:

*A man sits alone at a workbench, staring at a piece of equipment with a puzzled frown. He says: 'so, if I put red four there, and link it to blue three, that'll leave blue six free. Then I can use that for green four. Right!' He sets to work.*

The above extract shows that language is actively involved in our thoughts. Every human being thinks in a language he understands most. May I ask you, which language do you think in? Why is it that people soliloquize (talk to themselves)? The simple answer to this question is that they are thinking aloud. If you ask people why they think aloud, they are likely to tell you that it helps their concentration.

Perhaps the most common use of language as an instrument of thought is manifested when people perform mathematical calculations 'in their head'. Most of the time, this 'mental act' is accompanied by a verbal commentary. Have you ever counted money before? How did you do it? Did you count it aloud? Why did you do it that way?

**4. Instrument of Socialization:** Every relationship in human society is initiated, consolidated and sustained through the use of language. School girls may gossip on their way to the classroom, or boys who have just left the football field boast of their exploits on the

field, adults discuss politics at the national or international level while linguists may debate over certain linguistic phenomena. These are instances of the use of language as an instrument of socialization. This is why a prominent anthropological linguist, Malinowski, (1923) described language as a 'social lubricant'. Do you have any friend in your class? How did you start your friendship when you first met? Malinowski described the use of language to establish ties of union as 'emphatic communion'.

**5. Instrument of Cooperation:** Block and Trager (1942) define language as "A system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates" (p5). It points to the fact that language could be an instrument of co-operation. This idea could further be illustrated using the Biblical story of the tower of Babel. The people were able to work together to erect a monumental building which threatened to 'touch heaven' because they cooperated,

*...Let's build a great city with a tower that reaches to the skies - a monument to our greatness. . . (Gen 11:4)*

This Biblical narrator explains that the people almost succeeded in accomplishing this great task because of the advantage of a common language. Eventually God was reported to have confounded their language in order to prevent them from achieving their set goal. Therefore, individuals or group of persons who do not share a common language would not be able to cooperate even in the smallest task because they would not be able to understand each other. This is a clear indication of the fact that language is a veritable weapon of cooperation.

**6. Language as a means of Identity:** Language is a means of identity. In this case, language is taken as an external behaviour allowing the identification of a speaker as a member of some group. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) in Tabouret-Keller (1998) states that "The language spoken by somebody and his or her identity as a speaker of this language are inseparable: This is surely a piece of knowledge as old as human speech itself. Language acts are acts of identity". The foregoing points to the fact that each time we open our mouths to talk, the linguistic signals we transmit are highly distinctive and discriminating. It marks us out by giving listeners some clues about our ethnic or regional background. The implication is that we are identified by the language we speak. When an Igbo man speaks Igbo, his origin is traced to the Igbo nation by the people around him and his fellow Igbo man may go further to identify the part of Igbo land he hails from through the dialect of Igbo he has spoken. Thus, speakers give away their identity through their language.

**7. Recording of Facts:** When a solicitor is preparing a case for his clients, he goes through records of similar cases tried in the past in order to establish a premise for his argument. Language is used in this way to keep records of events and cases in the past which can be used to proffer solutions to present problems. All forms of record keeping, such as historical records, geographical surveys, business accounts, law reports, etc are essential because they guarantee the knowledge base of subsequent generations, which is a necessary prerequisite for social development. This function of language is enabled by the property of displacement which is the property of language that enables speakers use language to discuss events or actions which are removed in time and space.

**8. The Control of Reality:** Language is used in the religious setting for prayers and supplications. The traditional worshipper uses language to invoke the spiritual powers, the Christian uses language to solicit for divine intervention, the Muslim prays to Allah sometimes in Arabic or any other language. All forms of supernatural belief involve the use of language as a means of controlling the forces which the adherents feel affect their lives. Let me ask you this question pointedly, do you pray? If 'yes', how? So you make use of words in prayer?

**9. Language as a means of Entertainment:** Adults and children play with language. In loneliness and solitude, people occupy themselves by singing tunes. Children excite themselves by singing nursery rhymes. People read novels which are written in languages understood by them. Some watch films/videos to cool tension. Some delight in attending weekend parties where they listen to music with songs and dance away their sorrow. Crystal (1987) captures this dimension of the functional use of language in the following words:

*There are many situations where the only apparent reason for the use of language is the effect the sounds have on the users or listeners. We can group together here such different cases as the rhythmical litanies of religious groups, the persuasive cadences of political speech making, the dialogue chants used by prisoners or slaves as they work the various kinds of language games played by children and adults (P. II).*

**10. Transmission of Culture:** language and culture are somewhat related in the sense that language is a part of culture while culture is expressed through language. The culture of a group of people is transmitted from one generation to the next via language.

### **Summary**

In this lecture, we were able to adumbrate the functions of language. We noted that language could be used for expressive purposes, communication of ideas, instrument of thought, socialization and cooperation, means of identity, recording of facts, control of reality, entertainment and transmission of culture. These might not be exhaustive but they constitute the major functions of language.

### **Post-Test**

1. List ten functions of language.
2. Comment briefly on five of them.
3. Apart from the functions of language discussed above, mention some other functions which language performs in a society.

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## LECTURE SIX

### Origin of Language

*Nothing, no doubt, would be more interesting than to know from historical documents the exact process by which the first man began to lisp his first words, and thus to be rid forever of all the theories on the origin of speech.*

Max Muller, 1874

#### Introduction

There have been many speculations on the origins of human language. Questions such as: what is the world's oldest spoken language? How many languages are there? Have all languages developed from a single source? What was the language spoken in the Garden of Eden? How did words come to be in the beginning? Questions like these and several others sound fascinating and they have provoked several experiments and discussions whose history dates back 3,000 years. However, the quest has been a futile and fruitless one due to lack of direct physical evidence. It is our aim in this lecture to review some of the theories that have been propounded on the origins of language, the experiments that have been carried out to support them and the arguments against the theories respectively.

#### Objectives

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

1. List the theories of the origin of language
2. Explain the theories of the origin of language
3. Discuss some of the popular experiments carried out to support arguments on the origin of language and
4. Discuss arguments in support or against the respective theories

#### Pre - Test

Discuss briefly your belief about the origin of language

#### CONTENT

##### Early experiments

An Egyptian Pharaoh named Psammetichus 1 who reigned in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC was reported to have carried out an experiment around 600 BC. He instructed a servant to isolate two babies, a set of twins in the company of goats and a mute shepherd (cf. Yule 1996:2).

According to record, when the children spoke, the first word they uttered was *bekos*. It was then confirmed that the word means 'bread' in Phrygian, a language spoken in west Persia. The king then exclaimed that Phrygian must have been the original language from which other languages evolved. Both his conclusion and methodology were found to be faulty. For instance Crystal (1971:47) feels that *bekos* was in fact the sound made by sheep and the children most probably heard it from the sheep. However, it is difficult to believe that a sheep even Phrygian one can produce such sound. Nevertheless, it is believed that the experiment was not properly controlled.

King James IV of Scotland (1473-1513) was said to have carried out a similar experiment. The king took a dumb woman and put her in an isolated place and gave her two young children. He equipped them with the basic necessities of life i.e. food, drinks, fire, candles clothing etc. According to the narrative, when the children attained speaking age, they "Spak very guid Ebrew". As a result of this it was assumed by the king that Hebrew must have been the first language ever spoken. (Yule 1996:2)

The Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1194-1250) was reported to have carried out another experiment with children. According to the chronicle of a Franciscan friar, Brother Salimbene: he made linguistic experiment on the vile bodies of hapless infants, bidding foster-mothers and nurses to feed, bathe and wash the children, but in no wise speak with them; for he would have learnt whether they would speak Hebrew language (which was assumed to be the first), or Greek, or Latin, or An or Perchance in the tongue of their parents of whom they had been born. But he laboured in vain, for the children could not live without clapping of hands, and gestures, and gladness of countenance, and blandishments.

Non experimental theorizing has also given us a number of supposed origins of language. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a Swedish philologist Andreas Kemke claimed that in the temptation scene in the Garden of Eden, God spoke Swedish, Adam spoke Danish and the serpent spoke French.

Darwin posited that speech was in origin nothing but mouth pantomime (the use of movement and the expression of your face to communicate something or tell a story) in which the vocal organs unconsciously attempted to mimic gestures by the hands.

Lastly, at a first linguistic congress held in 1934, it was seriously argued that Turkish is at the root of all languages, all words being derived 'gunes' the Turkish word for 'sun', the first word

to strike human fancy. These are all expressions of sentiments which do not have any scientific proof. The foregoing reveals that several theories have been propounded as to the origin of language. None of them has been found completely satisfactory and without questions.

### **Theories of the Origins of Language**

In the sub-section that follows, we shall make effort to give a brief account of the several theories on the origin of language and the shortcomings resulting from the claims respectively. The theories below have been suggested by various writers to account for the origin of language.

#### **The 'Bow-Wow' Theory**

This theory holds that speech arose through people imitating the sounds of the environment or natural sounds such as cries of animals. Proponents of this theory drew their evidence from the use of 'onomatopoeic' words. (Refer to Lecture Three under arbitrariness of language). However, only few of these exist in languages and as languages vary so much in the way they represent natural sounds. In addition, the theory does not account for the arbitrariness of human language. Therefore, it holds little support.

#### **The 'Pooh-Pooh' Theory**

This was propounded by Jean Jacques Rousseau in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to him, speech arose through people making instinctive emotional cries caused by pain, anger, and joy. The main evidence came from the universal use of sounds as interjections such as *Ah! Hey! Wow!* etc; but no language contains many of these, and in any case the clicks, intakes of breath, and other noises, which are, used in this way bear little relationship to the consonants and vowels found in phonology. It does not explain the symbolic nature of language and why animals could not develop speech since they can produce such instinctive cries. It fails to properly account for the source of sounds since it is not able to establish the relationship between the expressive cries and sounds of language.

#### **The 'Ding-Dong' Theory**

This theory opines that speech arose because people reacted to every external stimuli and spontaneously and produced sounds (oral gestures) which in some way reflected the environment. In other words, the theory proposes relationship between physical gestures and orally produced sounds. The main evidence would be the universal use of sounds for words of

certain meaning, but apart from a few cases of apparent sound symbolism, the theory has no justification. Some examples have been cited-'mama' is supposed to reflect the movement of the lips as the mouth approaches the breast and 'bye-bye' or 'ta-ta' show the lips and tongue respectively waving 'good-bye'.

### **The 'Yo-he-ho' Theory**

This theory was put forward by Noire, a 19<sup>th</sup> century scholar. The theory claims that speech developed from the sounds accompanying peoples' effort as they work. As they were working together, their physical efforts produced communal, rhythmical grunts, which in due course was developed into chants, and later language. The main evidence would be the universal use of prosodic features, especially of expression and what we find in language as a whole is so immense that an explanation for the latter would still have to be found. The theory places the development of human language in some social context. Anagbogu, Mbah and Emeh (2010:6) note that the advantage of this theory is that it explains why plosives occur first in human speech during child's language acquisition. However, it fails to explain how such vocal sounds developed into human speech.

### **The 'La-La' or Musical Theory**

Jespersen himself felt that, if any single factor was going to initiate human language, it would arise from the romantic side of life-sounds associated with love, play, poetic feeling, or even song. But again, the gap between the emotional and the rational aspects of each expression would still have to be accounted for. Philosophers like Aristotle, Democritus and the Epicureans believed that Philosophers originated by 'convention' or agreement. However, they fail to explain how people who had no previous means of mutual understanding could have reached agreement.

### **The Contact Theory**

The proponents of this theory hold that language arose from the need to make contact. In the process contact sounds are produced, followed by cry and finally call which later led to the production of word. The claim sound very weak because it raises questions. For instance, why haven't animals developed speeches since most animals make noises to establish contact?

### **Gesture Theory**

Gesture theory claims that language metamorphosed from gestures. In other words, gestures preceded speech. One of the evidence in support of this theory is that speakers of many different languages make use of gestures tremendously. For instance, a hungry beggar would easily signal a passer-by to give him/her money by simply touching his mouth and rubbing



his stomach to signal hunger. The stone-age men thus communicated amongst themselves. The claim of this theory was rejected on the grounds that it could not prove how gestures developed into speech. However, it seems to be the theory with the most significant evidence in support of the origin of language. Anagbogu, Mbah and Emeh (2010:7) assert that it is a more plausible theory of the origin of language than the other theories for the following evidence:

- The clue from the study of the fossils of the Neanderthal (primitive) man
- The ability of the linguistic chimps to master the use complex gestures for communication
- The clue from the behaviour of higher animals, (like Chimps and other primates) and deaf mutes.

In conclusion, these theories are mere speculations because they present unconvincing and unsatisfactory evidence in support of the origin of language except for the gesture theory. However, the inability of the theories to trace how language is articulated from the claims they make makes the search for the origin of language an illusion.

#### **Summary**

In this lecture, we have been able to explore the origin of language by highlighting the various theories propounded to support the origin of language. These are the bow-wow theory, the pooh-pooh theory, the Yo-he-ho theory, the ding dong theory la-la/ music theory, the contact theory and the gesture theory. We noted the laps in the respective theories and concluded that the theories were not able to provide convincing and satisfactory evidence to support their claims.

#### **Post-Test**

1. Discuss some of the experiments carried out in the effort to understand the origin of language.
2. Many theories have been propounded on the origin of language. Discuss at least three of them.

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## LECTURE SEVEN

### Definition of Linguistics

#### Introduction

There are some misconceptions about who a linguist is. For instance, after graduating from the University of Ibadan in 1999, a man was looking for job as English Teacher in a government secondary school. His friend took him to the chairman of the Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM) in his state, who happened to be a friend of his. The man asked him what he read in the University and he told him linguistics. To that he said “well, we only need an English Language teacher, we are not interested in Greek, Latin, French or German”. I told him I actually came to apply for English, but he was not very sure that I would be qualified since I did not study English Language in the University. Eventually, he told me that he would not be able to recommend me. He advised me to attend the interview, the following day and if he was able to convince the panel of interviewers, he would be considered. In fact, he asked him how many languages he could speak and he answered two: Yoruba and English. The man was surprised.

The understanding of many people is that once you are a linguist, then, you must be a ‘polyglot’- somebody who is fluent in many languages. This may not necessarily be so. There are linguists who are monolingual (speak only one language). So, this lecture is aimed at clarifying issues on the question of who a linguist is and what linguistics is all about.

#### Objectives

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

1. Define linguistics;
2. Explain who a linguist is; and
3. Discuss certain misconceptions about the subject matter of linguistics.

#### Pre-Test

What is Linguistics?

Explain the features that qualify linguistics as a science.

## **CONTENT**

Linguistics has been defined in general dictionaries as ‘the science of language’ or ‘the scientific study of language’. In the view of Akmajian, Demers, Farmer and Harnish (2008:5) linguistics...“is concerned with the nature of language and (linguistic) communication”. Although, linguistics is the only academic discipline that deals with language alone, and there are aspects of language that it alone is concerned with, its practitioners cannot claim a monopoly of the whole of the subject matter. A range of other disciplines, such as literature, Anthropology, sociology, even computer science, deal with language in one way or another and the boundaries between them and linguistics are not fixed.

Crystal (2008:283) defines linguistics as “the scientific study of language also called linguistics Science” He notes that the development of linguistics as a discipline has been relatively recent and rapid”, Atchison (1972:3) explains that linguistics tries to answer the following questions: what is language and how does language work? How does human language differ from animal communication? How does a child learn to speak? How does one write down and analyze an unwritten language? Why do languages change etc. The linguist is thus interested in how language works and he does this by studying specific languages, as objectively as possible, while avoiding the misconceptions of the nature of languages which have been so dominant.

### **Linguistics as a Science**

Since we have defined linguistics as the scientific study of language, we need to explain what makes linguistics scientific. The linguist in his study of language tries to probe into various aspects of the subject matter of language by asking questions, such as: what do all languages have in common? What are specific to individual languages? To what extent are social class differences reflected in language? Linguists who subscribe to the definition of their discipline as the scientific study of language do so because they know the difference between a scientific and non-scientific way of studying language. Every well established science employs the following procedures:

- a. Observation
- b. Report of observations
- c. Statement of hypothesis (intelligent guesswork)
- d. Calculations
- e. Predictions
- f. Testing of predictions by further observations.

Furthermore, the communication of scientific results consists of records of speech utterance, such as tables of observed data, and collection of ill predictions and formulas for convenient calculation.

A scientific investigation must be observable as in the pure sciences; the data with which the linguist works must be observable, representing the current speech situation. A linguistic investigation like a biological investigation is empirical, rather than being speculative or Intuitive. It operates with publicly verifiable data obtained by means of observation or experiment. Linguistic study is characterized by four phenomena as in other sciences. These are:

- a. **Explicitness**
- b. **Systematicity**
- c. **Objectivity**
- d. **Economy**

**Explicitness** implies that linguistic analysis should be clear and exact. Procedures, conclusions and rules should be clear, straightforward and experimentally verifiable. Therefore, in the study of linguistics, the terminologies employed are well defined, rules are clearly stated, the criteria used are overtly accounted for and the underlying assumptions or generalizations are clearly indicated. Traditional grammar was abandoned because of the absence of explicitness and consistency of data across languages. For instance one does not fully understand how words are divided into parts of speech.

**Linguistics is systematic** in the sense that there is a network of patterned relationships that make up the organization of language. In other words, linguistic analyses should follow a specific method and descriptive framework. Language itself is characterized as a system, and often as an hierarchically ordered arrangement of systems. Our beliefs, guesswork and assumptions should be tested rigorously and in a logical sequence to avoid contradictions.

Another characteristics shared by linguistics and other physical sciences is objectivity. **Objectivity** simply implies that procedures and results are verifiable and the techniques used are valid such that results emanating from a linguistic research should survive the most rigorous scrutiny. In that case, the result will remain the same each time the experiment is repeated.

Finally, linguistic description is expected to be **economical**. This is the major driving force of modern linguistics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It simply implies that linguistics analysis should select the most economical path to solving problems when there are alternatives. In other words, if two options are available, the shorter and simpler alternative should be preferred since it is often economical in terms of time and space. However, it has to be pointed out that clarity should not suffer in the process. The principle of economy manifests in the speech patterns of individual languages and the current linguistic theories. For instance, the Minimalist Program propounded by Noam Chomsky is based on three economy principles: **Economy of Representation, Economy of Derivation and Economy of Grammar**.

Experimental techniques are widely used in linguistics, especially in those fields that have been influenced by the methods of sciences where experimentation is routine. Phonetics is the branch of linguistic most involved in this approach, with several other areas, such as child language acquisition and speech pathology. In grammar and semantics, experimental studies usually take the form of controlled methods for eliciting judgments about sentences or the elements they contain. Informants can be asked to identify errors, to rate the acceptability of sentences, to make judgments of perception or comprehension, and to carry out a variety of analytical procedures. In sociolinguistics, tape recordings and video cameras are used to obtain data and the data is analyzed in a systematic way. Reconstruction techniques are used in comparative philology. For instance, the forms of Proto-Indo-European and other reconstructed languages have been systematically carried out by researchers. In regard to the discussion so far, Crystal (1987: 412) asserts as follows:

*Linguistics shares with other sciences a concern to be objective, systematic, consistent, and explicit in its account of language. Like other sciences, it aims to collect data, test hypotheses, devise models, and construct theories. Its subject matter, however, is unique: at one extreme, it overlaps with such 'hard' sciences as physics and anatomy; at the other, it involves such traditional 'arts' subjects as philosophy and literary criticism. The field of linguistics includes both science and the humanities and offers breadth of coverage that, for many aspiring students of the subject, is the primary source of its appeal.*

### **Misconceptions about Linguistics**

**1. Polyglotism:** Linguistics is not the ability to speak many languages. Many renowned linguists are monolingual. For example, Noam Chomsky, one of the most popular and the most quoted linguists in the world, speaks only English Language. On the contrary, King

Mithridates of Asia Minor was said to have spoken twenty-five languages (cf. Anagbogu, Mbah and Emeh 2010:22) though he was not a linguist. Today, illiterate traders speak variety of languages to enable them make contact with their customers to be. It is not one's ability to speak many languages that makes him a linguist, but being able to describe a language authoritatively; knowing the principles on which languages work, the kind of differences which exist between one language and another and so on. Linguistics is not synonymous to language teaching or learning. It equips an individual to approach the study of language confidently and, systematically. It also improves one's ability to learn new languages; this ability is just a by-product of the training one receives. However, it is an advantage for a linguist to be a polyglot.

**2. Literary Criticism:** Linguistics is not really concerned with evaluating language in use; this is the preoccupation of literary critics. A linguist, of course may study the kind of language used in literary texts, when he does this, he approaches it objectively. The literary critic on their own approaches the study of language use in texts subjectively. Literary critics are known for prescribing rules of correctness, whereas linguists are known for describing what the language speaker says, rather than telling him what to say.

**3. Philology:** Philology is the scientific study of the development of language or of a particular language. In Philology, an analyst may focus attention on a diachronic study (the study of the historical development of language across time), he investigates how different languages have developed over the years, or how French, Spanish and Italian developed from Latin; Igbo, Yoruba and Edo from Niger-Congo family. The philologist may also preoccupy himself with issues such as the origin of language, the first language ever spoken. Over the years, this profession has been practiced in an amateurish way, so the practitioners were not considered strictly speaking, as linguists. However, towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it became systematic. Thus nowadays we now have philology as part of linguistics. For example, Emeritus Professor Ben Elugbe is a Professor of Comparative Philology. In his Comparative Phonology of Edoid, he made extensive use of sophisticated equipment and experiments.

**4. Traditional Grammar:** Traditional Grammar was the earliest type of grammar that existed. The term is often used to summarize the range of attitudes and methods found in the period of grammatical study before the advent of linguistics. The 'tradition' in question is over 2000 years old; and includes the work classical Greek and Roman grammarians,

Renaissance writers, and 18<sup>th</sup> century prescriptive grammarians. Linguists generally use the term pejoratively (in a negative sense), identifying an unscientific approach to grammatical study in terms of Latin with scant regard for empirical facts.

### **Summary**

In this lecture, you were exposed to the discipline of linguistics as an academic endeavour. We explained that though linguistics is situated in the humanities, it is indeed a science by highlighting the characteristics that qualify it as a science as other sciences. These are explicitness, systematic, objectivity and economy. Finally, some of the misconceptions about the subject matter of linguistics such as Polyglotism, literary criticism, Philology and Traditional Grammar were explained. We believe that this lecture will deepen your understanding of Linguistics as a discipline.

### **Post-Test**

1. How would you define linguistics?
2. Do you agree that linguistics is the scientific study of language? Justify your answer with detailed explanation.
3. There are certain misconceptions about linguistics, what are they?

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## **LECTURE EIGHT**

### **Branches of Linguistics**

#### **Introduction**

In the previous lecture, we explained the concept of linguistics in detail as well as the features that qualifies it as a science like other disciplines in the sciences. In this lecture, we shall go further to elaborate our explanation by looking at the branches of linguistics. As noted earlier, the subject matter of linguistics is widening its scope. As new technologies and ideas are evolving, linguistics analysis become more sophisticated and complex. It keeps developing internally as well as extending its tentacles to other disciplines. Following Crystal (2008:284), we attribute this development to the contributions of Noam Chomsky, an American Linguist and his Associates whose analytical techniques and theoretical claims are more sophisticated and complex and have given linguistics an unprecedented scope and applicability. Nevertheless, we shall make effort to explain the significant ones amongst them.

#### **Objectives**

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to

1. Mention the branches of linguistics
2. Explain the branches of linguistics
3. Identify the yard stick(s) that may be used to make distinction between on branch and the other

#### **Pre-Test**

Explain the branches of linguistics

#### **Content**

##### **Branches of Linguistics**

Linguistics could be divided into eight narrow branches based on focus and interest. But to make our analysis easier, we shall restrict our discussion to four broad sub-classifications as listed below:

- Descriptive linguistics
- General or Theoretical linguistics
- Historical linguistics
- Comparative linguistics



## **Descriptive Linguistics**

This is an aspect of linguistics that attempt to *describe a specific language by giving a comprehensive, systematic, objective and precise account of its patterns and use as it were at a particular point in time*. It is not based on assumptions or prescription like Traditional grammar. The implication of this is that the linguist does not take into account what changes that have occurred or that would occur with any aspect of the language like loss of sound or change in the meaning of a particular lexical item, which may have occurred after data collection. The language is described based on how it was found as at the time of investigation. Without description, it will be difficult to make theoretical claims or generalisations across languages. The emphasis of descriptive linguistics is on ‘a language’

## **General or Theoretical Linguistics**

This aspect of linguistics *attempts to make generalisations about the behaviour of languages*. In other words, it attempts to establish general principles (often called universal principles) for studying all languages and as well determine the features or properties of human languages. It includes both descriptive and comparative analysis of the subject matter. In this case, a descriptive statement is subjected to data collected from different languages such that claims could be made that such statement applies to all the languages. For instance, negation is said to be universal property of languages since all languages have a way of negating affirmative statements. The emphasis of theoretical linguistics is on ‘languages’ contrary to descriptive linguistics whose emphasis is on ‘a language’.

## **Historical Linguistics**

The interest of this aspect of linguistics is to describe *the way a language or languages has developed over a period of time*. It examines the causes and consequences of such development on the language and relates the findings to general linguistic theory. For instance, the studies that gave rise to the classification of languages into various families and the studies that trace the development of modern English from old English are historical in nature. It is noteworthy that the emphasis of historical linguistics is on the development of language.

## **Comparative Linguistics**

This is a major branch of linguistics concerned with *the comparison of two or more languages*. In other words, it makes statements comparing the features of different languages.

The comparison takes different approaches. The languages may be compared historically (i.e. comparative historical linguistics), or typologically (i.e. involving a comparison between certain features of the concerned languages). A lot of work has been done in tracing the language groups in Africa. This could be through the identification of regular sound correspondences across the languages under investigation. Comparative historical linguists draw up lists of correspondence on the basis of which they reach valid conclusions. Comparative studies could be diachronic (if it covers a period of time i.e. historical) or synchronic (if it covers a particular point in time). However, the emphasis is on the comparison of two or more languages.

### **Summary**

In this lecture, we were able to make an overview of the branches of linguistics. We discussed four branches of linguistics based on focus and wide range of interests viz- Descriptive, Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Linguistics. We discovered a network of relationships that exists among the various branches. For instance, to do comparative linguistics, there must be description which may result to generalisation and the description may cover a period of time making it historical. We therefore conclude that the branches are interdependent. However, it is the focus and interest of the branches that distinguish them from other branches.

### **Post Test**

1. List and explain the branches of linguistics
2. Distinguish Theoretical linguistics and Comparative linguistics

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## LECTURE NINE

### Levels of Linguistic Description

#### Introduction

Linguistics has various levels on which analysis is based just like other disciplines studied in schools and colleges. However, the focus or object of study in each level is *language*. According to Yussuf (1996), the levels constitute the different facets (i.e. parts) of linguistic organisation of any given human language. Each of the level has peculiar terminologies and methods of analysis though they must interrelate in a natural way to enable us account for any given human language. In the previous lecture, we discussed the various branches of linguistics and we pointed out that Descriptive linguistics is the central concern of linguistics. The levels we shall discuss here are the levels of linguistic description which can also be called sub-divisions of descriptive linguistics. Therefore, we shall make effort to discuss these levels in detail to enable you understand what each level is all about and how to carry out linguistic analysis based on any of the levels.

#### Objectives

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

1. List the different levels of linguistic analysis
2. Discuss each of the levels briefly and
3. Distinguish between one level and another

#### Pre - Test

1. What is the difference between phonetics and phonology?

#### Levels of Linguistic Description

The five sub-divisions of descriptive or theoretical linguistics are phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. We shall briefly discuss these aspects of linguistics pointing out their focus and interest.

**Phonetics:** is the study of speech sounds used across languages-how these sounds are produced (articulatory phonetics), how these sounds travel from the speaker to the listener (acoustic phonetics) and how the listener hears and understand the speaker (auditory phonetics). According to Akmajian, Demers, Farmer and Harnish (2008: 65), it is concerned with how speech sounds are produced in the vocal tract as well as the physical properties of

the speech sound waves generated by the larynx and vocal tract. In other words, one can say that the phonetician is interested in:

- The organs of speech and their use in articulation of speech sounds
- Features, description and classification of speech sounds (e.g. consonants and vowels)
- Transmission of speech sounds (e.g. through air)
- The physiology of hearing and understanding
- Recording and proper transcription

Our definition above reveals that the unit of study in phonetics is the speech sound. It also reveals the three aspects of phonetics: production, transmission and perception. These make up the three branches of phonetics viz- *Articulatory Phonetics*, *Auditory Phonetics* and *Acoustic Phonetics*. However, recent studies introduced a new branch to the existing three named *Forensic phonetics* (cf. Yule 1996:41). In summary, we have four branches of phonetics briefly described below:

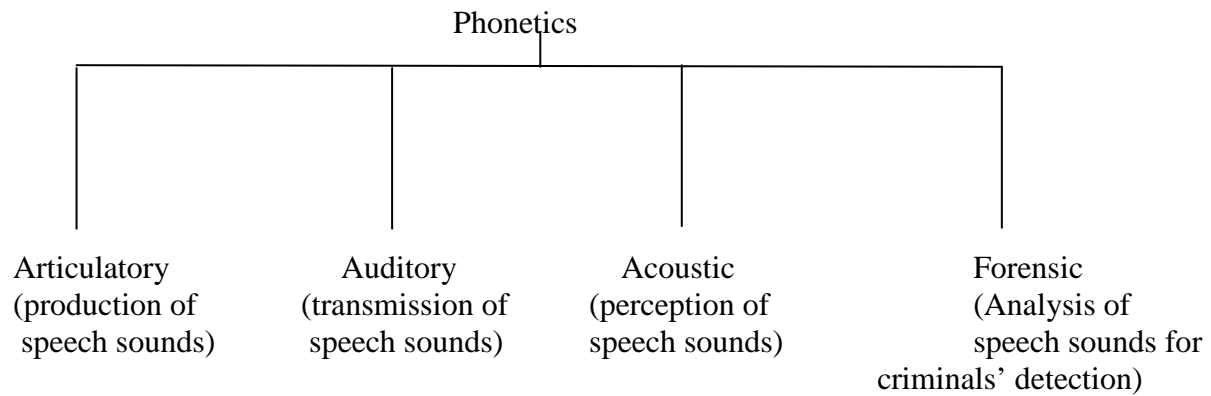
**Articulatory phonetics** studies how vocal organs (organs of speech) are manipulated for the purpose of producing speech sounds. Every normal human being has the ability to produce varieties of sounds.

**Auditory phonetics** is the study of how the hearer perceives and interprets speech sounds. Simply put, it is the study of the perception of speech sounds.

**Acoustic phonetics** deals with the study of speech as sound waves in the air. It involves physics and mathematics. A lot of instrumentation in electronics and computer modelling is involved. Some of the instruments commonly used in acoustics are the oscilloscope and spectrograms. These instruments are found in the phonetics laboratory.

**Forensic Phonetics** specializes in the analysis of speech sounds for the purpose of detecting criminals.

The foregoing is presented in the diagram below:



**Phonology:** studies how speech sounds occur in languages and how these sounds are patterned according to regular rules. The goal of phonology is to study the properties of the sound systems which speakers must learn or internalize in order to use their language for the purpose of communication. In line with our explanation, Oyebade (2008:2) defines it as.. “the scientific study of the arbitrary vocal symbols used in human speech and the patterns into which these symbols enter to produce intelligent, meaningful utterances”; While Agbedo (2000: 59) defines it as functional phonetics in the sense that it is concerned with the ways in which sounds and prosodic features defined by phonetics are used in given natural languages. Therefore, when approaching the sound systems of languages, it is necessary to study not only the physical properties of the attested sounds, but also the grammatical properties of these sounds. Hyman (1975) observes that every language in the world has its own sound system and sound pattern (i.e. the set of sounds that occur in a given language; the permissible arrangements of these sounds in words and the processes that lead to sound change. Our discussion so far shows that there is a relationship existing between phonetics and phonology. This difference, we believe, is a matter of interest and approach. While phonetics deals with the physical production of human speech sounds without reference to a particular language, phonology deals with how the speech sounds described by phonetics can be combined systematically to form meaningful utterances in a particular language. In other words, phonetics and phonology are complementary. Languages have certain constraints on the occurrence of sounds. For instance, Yoruba does not permit consonant clusters (i.e. a sequence of two or more consonants) neither does it allow word final consonants, whereas English does. These issues would be treated in detail in your phonology courses.

**Morphology:** is defined generally as the study of the internal structure of words. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011: 81), define it as “the study of the internal structure of words, and of the rules by which words are formed”. The word morphology literally means ‘the study of

forms'. It was originally used in Biology, but since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has been used to describe the types of investigation which analyse all those basic elements which are used in a language. These elements are technically known as morphemes. The morpheme is a minimal unit of meaning or grammatical function (Yule 1996, Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams 2011). In the mental compartment where all words are stored, there are rules which govern the formation of words in languages. This compartment is known as the *lexicon* or *mental dictionary*. The discussion so far shows that the basic units of study in morphology are *the morpheme* and *the word*. For instance, in the words *undo* and *disobey* there are two morphemes respectively. *Un-* and *dis-* are morphemes meaning 'not' (i.e. they are negative morphemes) while *do* and *obey* are full words which are verbs. The example shows that the forms must have meaning to qualify as morphemes. They merged to derive the new forms *undo* and *disobey*.

**Syntax:** Etymologically, the word syntax could be traced to ancient Greek word *Syntaxis* meaning 'arrangement' or 'setting out together'. Syntax concerns itself with the meaningful organization of words into phrases, clauses and sentences which are larger grammatical units. Chomsky (2002:1) defines it as "the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages." In the construction of sentences, the meaning of a sentence depends to a great extent on the meanings of the words of which it is composed. But the structure of the sentence also contributes to its meaning. Therefore, word order can change meaning. For example, *A lion killed the man* does not mean the same thing as, *The man killed a lion*. The starting point of syntax is the classification of the words in a particular language into grammatical classes or categories, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, propositions, articles, etc. Each language has a way of selecting these different words and arranging them systematically to form grammatically correct sentences. For example Yoruba, Igbo and English active sentences are SVO (i.e. sequence of Subject, Verb, Object) as in the examples below:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Object</b>
Olu	je	iyan (Yoruba)
Olu	rìrì	ńrì jí (Igbo)
Olu	ate	pounded yam. (English)

Therefore, at the level of syntax, words are combined or merged to form phrases, clauses and sentences based on the rules that govern a language. The implication is that the basic units of analysis in syntax are the *phrase*, the *clause* and the *sentence*.

**Semantics:** Semantics is concerned with the study of meaning. In the words of Saeed (2003:3), it “..is the study of meaning communicated through language.” Generally, it studies the meaning of words and sentences in languages. As we are learning a language we also learn the meaning of words and sentences in the language. Studies reveal that meaning across languages is often difficult to pin down, the meaning of meaning, not an exception. Odgen and Richards (1923) gave twenty-two definitions of meaning. This is to show that meaning in itself is illusive and elastic. For this reason, it is common to find cases of lexical and structural ambiguity in languages. For example’, the words *bank* and *foot* have more than a single meaning as illustrated below:

**Bank:** (a) a financial institution, (b) shore (c) do business or transact

**Foot:** (1) part of the leg (b) base or bottom of something (c) unit of length

The examples show that context have roles to play in the interpretation of meaning. In this regard, there is always an attempt, in semantic analysis, to focus on what the words conventionally mean rather than on what a speaker might want the words to mean in a particular occasion (i.e. context). This technical approach to meaning emphasizes the objective and the general. However, speakers of any language know how to combine words to produce meaningful utterances. Semantics unites all other levels of analysis since they all aim to communicate meaning. Simply speaking, semantics is the output or product of all levels of linguistic analysis.

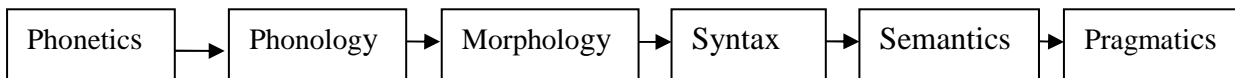
**Pragmatics:** is concerned with the interaction of semantic knowledge with our knowledge of the world, taking into account contexts of use. It is a relatively new branch of linguistics which studies the intended meaning of a speaker. It could be said to be the study of invisible' meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn't actually said (or written). In order for that to happen, speakers must be able to depend on a lot of shared assumptions and expectations. The investigation of those assumptions and expectations provides us with some insights into how more gets communicated than is said (See Yule 1996:127, Griffiths 2006:1). A pragmatic study helps us to make distinctions between sentence meaning and speaker meaning. Therefore, utterances are understood in relation to specific contexts and specific communication purposes. A popular aspect of pragmatics is the Speech Act theory developed by J. L. Austin in 1955 and published in (1975). The theory identifies three types of acts:

- **Locutionary Act** (The act of uttering or saying something that make sense in a language)

- **Illocutionary Act** (the act performed during utterance or the use to which language could be put such as promising, swearing, pronouncing, warning etc.)
- **Perlocutionary Act** (This is the effect of Illocutionary act or its result e.g. persuading)

### Order of Levels

Having discussed the various levels, it is obvious that they take certain order. Therefore, one can analyze linguistic data in the following order:



This does not imply that the levels are totally independent as we earlier mentioned rather it enables one approach linguistic analysis systematically.

### Summary

In this lecture, we were able to explain the six major levels of linguistics analysis or description. Though our explanation is not exhaustive, it highlighted the major focus and interest at each level. These levels are phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. The field of linguistics is fast growing, many fields have been incorporated and others are still being integrated. However, the various levels are interrelated and interdependent because the output at one level can serve as input to another level.

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## LECTURE TEN

### The Interface of Linguistics and Other Disciplines

#### Introduction

The subject matter of linguistics is the study of language in all ramifications. However, its scientific nature has attracted interests from other disciplines including pure sciences. The reason is that there has been tremendous interaction and interdependence between linguistics and other disciplines yielding overlapping interests. Recently, this development has continued to widen the scope of the subject matter. As a result, a lot of interdisciplinary subjects have come to existence such as Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics, Applied Linguistics, Computational linguistics, Philosophical linguistics, Neurolinguistics, Mathematical linguistics, Theolinguistics, Biological linguistics, Geographical Linguistics, Anthropological linguistics, Clinical linguistics and Internet linguistics etc. It is the goal of this unit to expose the nature of this overlap as well as the interest and focus of these (sub) branches of linguistics which have sprung up to meet the scientific demands of the present society .

#### Objectives

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

1. Mention relevant disciplines that have interest in linguistics
2. Explain the sub-division of linguistics that have developed from this interest

#### Pre - Test

Linguistics is a versatile discipline which can fit into the humanities and sciences, discuss.

#### Content

**Sociolinguistics:** Sociolinguistics deals with the inter-relationship between language and society. It is a field of linguistics which relates societal problem to language problem. It answers the question "How do our social and cultural backgrounds affect our use of language?" It tries to provide answers to questions like *who*, says *what*, to *whom*, *when*, *where*, *how*, and *why*. It studies the use of language in its social and cultural contexts. It also studies the norms of society at large and examines how the individual exploits his awareness of the society's norms in order to achieve particular effects. Basically, Sociolinguistics is the study of:

- a. language in a society or speech community
- b. language varieties
- c. Language function.

Its subject matter has strong connections to Anthropology, through the investigation of language and culture, and to society, through the crucial role that language plays in the organization of social groups and psychology, particularly with regard to how attitudes and perceptions are expressed and how in-group and out-group behaviours are identified.

**Psycholinguistics:** Originated from the Greek word 'psykhe' 'mind', Latin 'lingua,' 'tongue' and the suffix 'istics' it studies the mental aspect of language, especially its acquisition, storage, comprehension and production. The British psychologist, Francis Galton is usually regarded as the first person to do psycholinguistic experiments, when he tried to probe his own and other people's word association. Psycholinguistics studies how individuals produce understand and acquire language. It is a field in of cognitive sciences that reflects mainly the insights or knowledge of psychology and linguistics, and to a lesser extent artificial intelligence, neuroscience and philosophy. More so, it emphasizes the knowledge of language and the mental processes involved in ordinary language use. Practitioners in the field also examine the social rules involved in language use and the brain mechanisms associated with language. Such areas range from language comprehension, child language acquisition, speech/language disorders, childhood bilingualism, cognitive implications of language development etc.

**Computational Linguistics (CL):** This is a discipline that spans linguistics and computer science and is concerned with the designing of computational models that can capture native speaker knowledge of language so that a human being can engage computer in a conversation. It also involves the use of human linguistic insights into the theory of language structure in the development or writing of computer programmes for automatic or machine translation. McGuigan (2003:1) in Odoje (2010:1) asserts that CL has attracted tremendous research interest in speech recognition, speech synthesis, automated grammar correction system, machine translation, speech interpretation etc. others are speech processing, answering questions and testing grammars. However, techniques and concepts of computer science are used especially with reference to the problems posed by the fields of machine translation, information retrieval and artificial intelligence. Some of these computer applications are briefly explained as follows: *Speech Recognition* codes speech into text. *Speech synthesis* decodes text and turns it into speech. *Automated Grammar Correction*

*System* identifies parts of speech and keeps a comprehensive list of grammatical rules and their exceptions; while *Machine Translation* allows a computer to translate a text from one language to another without any aid, just like a human translator (cf. Odoje 2010).

**Neurolinguistics:** studies the relation of language and communication to different aspects of brain function. In other words it tries to explore how the brain understands and produces language and communication. This involves attempting to combine neurophysiological theory (how the brain is structured and how it functions) with linguistic theory (how language is structured and how it functions) (cf. Ahlsen 2006). Such aspects of human language include speech, hearing, reading, writing or non-verbal modes of speech related to any aspect of the brain or brain function. It therefore studies the structure of the brain and function in relation to language use, acquisition and disorder. It has a close relationship with psycholinguistics, but it focuses more on the study of the brain. The most common type of neurolinguistic studies is the study of language and communication after a brain damage. Neurolinguists examine cases of aphasia, developmental language disorders (e.g. dementia, dyslexia) and measure brain activity in normal and damaged brains. Scholars in this field believe that the field is heterogeneous in theory and topical coverage. In view of this, Ahlsen (2006:4) asserts that the field is characterised by interdisciplinary focus that spans across many disciplines. Such as neuroanatomy, neurology, neurophysiology, philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, speech pathology, and computer science.

**Clinical Linguistics:** This (sub) branch of linguistics studies the application of linguistics to the analysis of disorders of spoken, written or sign language. It is preoccupied with the use of linguistic study of language structure in the description, diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions involving written or spoken language disorder e.g. stuttering, aphasia, psychosis, etc which may occur in educational or clinical setting. Studies in Neurolinguistics, Psycholinguistics and language acquisition are relevant to Clinical linguistics.

**Mathematical or Statistical Linguistics:** This aspect is concerned with the application of mathematical and statistical models and procedures to linguistic studies relating to quantitative counting of linguistic units or items, formulation of grammatical rule patterns, measurement or establishment of the extent to which languages are mutually related, dating different periods in the historical development of mutually related languages. This approach is used in comparative linguistics, general linguistics, and lexicostatistics. In Mathematical

Linguistics, mathematical properties of language, especially, using statistical or algebraic concepts are studied.

**Anthropological Linguistics (AL):** This sub-branch of linguistics is concerned with the study of the role of language in relation to cultural patterns and beliefs of a group of people as examined using the theories and methods of anthropology. AL aims to achieve this by gathering data directly from native speakers through participant observation. This would enable the Anthrologist have a better understanding of the language and its relation to the overall culture in its natural social context (cf. Crystal 2008, Danesi 2004). Therefore, the focus here is the study of language in relation to social or cultural patterns and beliefs. It is otherwise called Anthrologistics. Areas studied in anthropological linguistics include kinship terminology, the Sapir Whorf hypothesis, and linguistic taboo.

**Philosophical Linguistics:** This is the linguistic study of meaning and culture, logic in language, the role of language in the explanation of philosophical concepts e.g. space, number subjectivity, etc, as well as the status of linguistic theories, approaches, methods and observations from the view-point of philosophy. Much of what is studied here could be subsumed under semantics. It studies the role of language in explaining philosophical concepts and of the philosophical status of linguistic theories, methods and observations.

**Geographical Linguistics:** This is the study of the regional distribution of languages and dialects, seen in relation geographical factors in the environment. It studies the geographical distribution of variables. It is sometimes called dialect geography or dialectology.

**Applied Linguistics:** This involves the application of linguistic theories, methods and findings, to the explanation of language problems that arise in other domains. The term is especially used with reference to the field of foreign language teaching, but it applies equally to several other fields, such as stylistics, lexicography, translation and language planning as well as to the clinical and educational fields. Here, attempts are made to find practical applications for the ideas which emanate from theoretical linguistics.

**Biolinguistics/Biological Linguistics:** This is a developing area in linguistics that studies the biological preconditions for language development and use in human beings with reference both to the history of language in human race and child language development. Topics of interest to Biolinguists include transmission of language, neurophysiological models of language production, development of pathological forms of language behaviour etc.

**Theolinguistics:** This refers to the study of the language used by biblical scholars, theologians, and others involved in the theory and practice of religious belief.

**Internet Linguistics:** is a relatively new branch of linguistics that came to existence as a result of language use in the internet. It studies novel forms and styles of language that have arisen under the influence of the internet and other developing media such as Short Message Service SMS. Proponents of this sub-branch believe that linguistics contribute to computer/internet mediated communication in terms of web interface and usability. Studying the emerging language on the internet can help improve conceptual organisation, translation and web usability. The benefit goes to both web users and linguists. It is done in four major perspectives: sociolinguistics, education, stylistics and applied.

### Summary

In this lecture, you were exposed to the nature of the inter-relationship between linguistics and other academic endeavours such as medicine, neurology, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, computer science, mathematics/statistics, and geography. We have also demonstrated the versatility of linguistics. It is also important to note that some other sub-branches are still developing.

### Post-Test

1. How can linguistics be linked to other fields, such as medicine, psychology and computer science?
2. Explain what you understand by the following concepts:
  - a. Neurolinguistics
  - b. Dialect geography
  - c. Psycholinguistics
  - d. Internet linguistics
  - e. Neurolinguistics

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## **LECTURE ELEVEN**

### **Language Acquisition**

#### **Introduction**

Linguists believe that language development occurs in children irrespective of culture, race or general knowledge. Therefore, every human species has the capability of acquiring language. They also unanimously believe that human languages have similar levels of detail and complexity notwithstanding the language differences. However, when one considers the rate and speed with which children learn language, especially their first language, one is forced to think that there must be a device which facilitates easy learning of the first language. To discover this device, or mechanism, many theories have been formulated and tested. Any of these theories must account for what children do and do not do in the process of learning a language. It is obvious that they do not learn by memorising a language or sentences; rather, they acquire a set of grammatical rules that enable them to construct and comprehend sentences they have neither heard nor produced before. Therefore, our goal in this lecture is to look at some of the mechanisms and theories of language acquisition as well as the different stages in the acquisition process.

#### **Objectives**

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

1. Explain the mechanisms of language acquisition
2. mention and explain the four major theories of language acquisition; and
3. explain the different stages of language acquisition.

#### **Pre-Test**

1. What do you understand by language acquisition?
2. Mention three theories of language acquisition.

## **CONTENT**

### **Definition**

Language acquisition is the process of learning a first language in children. The study of how children learn to speak has proved to be one of the most fascinating, important, and complicated branches of language study in recent years. This is connected with the natural interest people take in the developing abilities of young children. Its significance lies in the way language acquisition research can assist our understanding of language in its entirety and

also in the many applications of this research. Detailed systematic study actually began in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Ancient Questions**

Child language study has received intense attention from rulers and scholars alike for over 2,000 years, especially in relation to such questions as the origins and growth of language. Many people thought that the study of linguistic development in the child (language ontogenesis) would provide clues about the linguistic development of the human race (language phylogenies). Some interesting similarities have been observed between the vocal tracts of infants and primates, but there is still a great gap between the emotional expression of infants and the proportional content of adult language, which studies of acquisition have not yet been able to bridge.

One of the people whose views are remarkably modern was the Mogul Emperor of India, Akbar the Great (1542 - 1605). He believed that speech arose from people listening to others, and that children who were isolated from human contact would not be able to speak. Because some deny this fact, he carried out an experiment to convince them. He therefore built a mansion in a place where civilized sounds did not reach. The newly born were put into that place of experiment. Honest and active guards were put over them. Dumb nurses were employed there to take care of the children. The place where the experiment was carried out was called the Gang Mahal (the dumb-house).

On the 9<sup>th</sup> August 1582, the Emperor went out to hunt. The next day (10<sup>th</sup> August) he went with a few special attendants to the house of experiment. No cry came from that house of silence, nor was any speech heard there, even though the children were four years old. Nothing came out except the noise of the dumb. (H. Beveridge, 1897 - 1910, pp. 581 - 2).

### **Parental Diaries**

The earliest approach to the study of child language was to keep a written form of observations about one's own child. Several 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars engaged in this task, including August Schleicher and Charles Darwin. The approach has gradually lost its grip as a result of the advent of audio video-recording techniques, which allow a more systematic, objective and comprehensive analysis. Notwithstanding the situation, it has occasionally been used with good result in recent decades. Notable among those who used approach are: Werner Leopold (1949) and Dietrich Tiedemann (1748 -6), a German Philosopher.

Below are some extracts from Tiedemann's diary which he kept about his son, Friedrich, (when the child was 6 months) in 1784: "On February 10<sup>th</sup> he showed the first signs of surprise and approval; so far his only expressions of pain, anger, impatience and pleasure had been crying, writhing, laughing. Now, when he saw something new and delightful, he greeted it with the exclamation 'ach! 'the natural sign of admiration'.

After all manner of exercise in the production of tones, and after the acquisition of some skill in using the speech organs variously, he commenced, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, to articulate consciously and to repeat sounds. His mother said to him the syllable 'ma'; he gazed attentively at her mouth, and attempted to imitate the syllable...A few words he pronounced clearly on November 27<sup>th</sup> and knew also their meanings exactly; these were 'papa' and 'mama'.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, at the sight of an object, he would repeat it's name if he had frequently heard it, but he still found it hard to pronounce words of several syllables. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, he finally succeeded in uttering complete though short sentences, for example, 'there he stands', and 'There he lies'.

February 14, 1784, this is as far as my observations go. Other business prevented me from their continuation. I greatly desire that others may make similar ones; it will then be possible to determine various things by comparison, and that important branch of psychology, too little exploited as yet, which studies the development of human faculties - the foundation of pedagogy - will make appreciable progress thereby". (From C. Marchison and S.K. Langer in 1927)

### **Theories of Language Acquisition**

Three major proposals or views exist on the theories of language acquisition. These are:

- Behaviourism and
- Innateness Theory
- Cognitive Theory

**Behaviourism:** This view is championed by B. F Skinner one of the founders of behaviourist psychology. He made this proposal in his book *Verbal Behaviour* published in (1957). Behaviourists are of the view that behaviour of an organism can be accounted for based solely on observing its interaction with the environment. In their view, a child is endowed with



general learning abilities but not with any language specific knowledge. Therefore, the child has to acquire language behaviour from the environment. Consequently, early theories of language acquisition were influenced by behaviourism. Behaviourism lays emphasis on people's behaviour which are directly observable rather than on mental systems underlying these behaviours. Language was seen as a kind of verbal behaviour. They proposed some mechanisms through which children learn language such as imitation, correction, reinforcement, analogy etc. We shall refer to these mechanisms as sub-theories of behaviourism.

### i. Imitation

According to this theory, a child acquires his/her first language by listening to adult speakers and copying and repeating the utterances heard around them. But the question now arise 'Do children learn through imitation?' At first, this question seems very easy to answer. Children just listen to what is said around them and imitate the speech they hear. Although imitation is involved to some extent, researches have proved that children do not learn language by simply imitating adult's speech. They try to imitate what they hear but they can't produce rules outside the rules of their developing grammar. For instance, the dialogue below is an effort of a child to imitate what the adult has said:

Child: *Máámá.*

Adult: It's not *Máámá.*, Say *Chíómá?*

Child: *Máámá..*

Adult: No! *Chí-ó- má*

Child: *Má-á-má..* (Nweya, G. O. Personal experience)

Adult: He's going out.

Child: He go out.

Adult: That's an old-time train.

Child: Old-time train.

Adult: Adam, say what I say. Where can I put them?

Child: Where I can put them?

(Adapted from Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams 2009:326)

The data shows that the child could not go beyond the rules of his/her developing grammar. More so, imitation fails to account for the fact that children who are unable to speak for neurological or physiological reasons are able to learn the language spoken to them and understand it. When they overcome their speech impairment, they immediately use the language for speaking. . Other examples are when it comes to rules of past tense formation in English, children confuse regular verbs with irregular ones. They tend to over-generalize. For instance, a child may say 'I goed there yesterday', instead of 'I went there yesterday'. This is overgeneralization of the rule that affects regular verbs. This also is applicable to nouns

where the regular nouns take '-s' or '-es'. Children learning English may say something like: 'I washed my foots', instead of 'feet'.

ii. **Correction and Reinforcement:** Behaviourists also proposed that children learn to produce correct sentences because they are positively reinforced when they make grammatical utterances and negatively reinforced when they make ungrammatical or incorrect utterances. Evidence shows that corrections hardly occur, but when they do, they often concerns mispronunciations or incorrect reporting of facts (cf. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams 2011). Linguists believe that what adults judge is the true value of the utterances rather than bad grammar. Therefore, many ungrammatical sentences are left uncorrected while some grammatical ones are recast. Whatever the case, correction does not explain how or what children learnt from such adult responses or how children discover and construct the correct rules. Our previous examples show that children are unable to make corrections when they are pointed out. The example above demonstrates this fact.

iii. **Analogy:** This mechanism suggests that children put words together to form phrases and sentences by hearing a sentence and using it as a model to form other sentences. For instance: If a child had heard the sentence: *I painted a house white*. There would be a problem if the child chooses to extend the structure to the verb *see* as in *\*I saw the house white*. It gives rise to an ungrammatical sentence. If it is assumed that children learn language by analogy, how do they know that verbs such as *see* cannot be used in this kind of structure since experiments show that children never make mistakes of this sort? The experiments show that children know about the structure dependency rules at a very early age (cf. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams 2009:328). Based on this observation, one is convinced that analogy does not account properly for child language acquisition.

iv. **Motherese:** This mechanism is also called **child-directed speech** (CDS) (or informally **baby talk**). This mechanism focuses attention on the input of adults in language acquisition. As a child is growing up, adults in the environment make efforts to use simplified language while communicating with him/her. They do not talk to the child the way they do to other adults around them. Rather, they are capable of adapting their language to give the child maximum opportunity to interact and learn. Their utterances are considerably simplified, especially with respect to their grammar and meaning. Words are used in such a way that the sounds are repetitive, slow and clear as in *poo poo* 'faeces', *wee wee* 'urine'. Motherese

according to according to Fromkin Rodman and Hyams (2011) is not syntactically simpler since it contains wide range of sentence types ranging from simple to complex sentences which are generally grammatical.

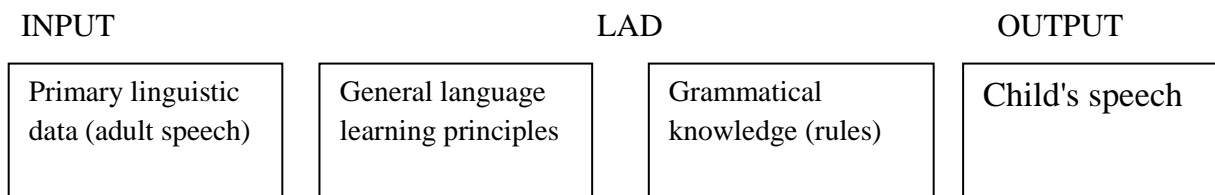
They report that although infants prefer to listen to motherese over normal adult speech, studies show that using motherese does not significantly affect the child's language development. Some of the reasons being that in some cultures, adults do not use a special style of language with children, and there are communities in which adults hardly talk to babies at all. Nevertheless, children around the world acquire language in much the same way, irrespective of these varying circumstances. Therefore, it is adults who are following children not on the contrary. We can conclusively say that motherese helps adults get children's attention but it is not a driving force behind language development.

The foregoing shows that analogy, imitation, correction and reinforcement cannot account for language development because they are based on the assumption that what the child acquires is a set of vocabulary, sentences or forms rather than a set of grammatical rules. They place too much emphasis on environment rather than on the grammar-making abilities of the child. They do not explain the creativity that children show in acquiring language, why they go through stages, or why they make some kinds of "errors" but not others, for example, "Give me other one spoon" but not "Is the boy who sleeping is dreaming about a new car?"

### **Innateness Theory/Hypothesis**

The innateness theory was proposed by Noam Chomsky in (1959) have observed the weaknesses of behaviourism as demonstrated above. His argument in support of innateness theory is called **poverty of the stimulus**. It arose out of the generative account of language. The major support for the innateness theory is that linguistic experience determines very little the grammar a child acquires in the process of learning a language. The linguistic data presented to children are said to be impoverished (i.e. insufficient) to account for the complexity and richness of the grammar acquired by children. Therefore, innateness theory suggests that a normal human child is genetically or naturally endowed to acquire language with a system called **Language Acquisition Device (LAD)**. Noam Chomsky argues that LAD is a device effectively present in the minds of children by which a grammar of their native language is constructed. (This is not to say that children's environment plays no role in language acquisition, rather, its role is to be a source of linguistic data). It was argued that

children must be born with an innate capacity for language development; the human brain is 'ready' for language, in the sense that when children are exposed to speech, certain general principles for discovering or structuring language automatically begin to operate. These principles constitute a child's Language Acquisition Device (LAD). This theory predicts that all languages will conform to the principles of **Universal Grammar** (UG). The sequence of events involved in the principle can be represented diagrammatically as shown below:



However, it has been very difficult to formulate the detail properties of LAD in an uncontroversial manner, in the light of recent changes in generative linguistic theory.

**Cognitive Theory/Cognition:** This is an alternative theory which argues that language acquisition must be viewed within the context of a child's intellectual development. Linguistic structures will emerge only when there is an already-established cognitive foundation. The theory was propounded by Jean Piaget (1896-1980) a Genevan psychologist. Piaget believed that before a child can use structure of comparison (e.g. my ball is bigger than yours), he needs first to have developed the conceptual ability to make relative judgments of size.

### **Stages in the Acquisition Process**

Children do not just come out to speak fully formed grammar like adults. Studies show that they pass through some stages in the process of acquiring their native language. The process of acquisition is often fast but not instantaneous. A given stage may vary from child to child subject to certain hereditary factors. Fomkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011) assert that observing children developing language reveal that the stages are similar, possibly universal. We shall explain briefly some of these stages in the subsection below:

**The Perception and Production of Speech Sounds:** It is no longer held that a child is born with a mind that is empty. Studies show that newborns react to some minute distinctions in their environment but not to others. In other words, the mind is prepared to receive certain information. They show early response to different properties of language as evidenced by the experiments which show that they increase their sucking rate (measured by ingeniously

designed pacifiers) once the visual or auditory stimuli exposed to them are varied. Conversely, the sucking rate decreases when the same stimuli are repeatedly presented. For instance, if the newborn hears [pa] and [ba] or [p<sup>h</sup>a], the sucking rate would change but if he/she hears [pa] repeatedly, the sucking rate would decrease. (See Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams 2011:333-4 for details)

**Babbling:** Children pass through a stage called babbling while developing a language. This stage begins around 5-6 months. The sounds produced include those that are not in the child's household language. Early babbles mainly consist of repeated consonant-vowel sequence such as *mama gaga* and *dada*. This varies more at late babbling. Babbling shows that the child or the human mind is ready to receive linguistic inputs. Earlier view held that babbling is a prelinguistic stage. This view has changed recently for the following reasons: (a) It is generally accepted that humans are born with the ability to discover units that serve to express linguistic meanings, and that at a genetically specified age in neural development, the child will start producing these units (e.g. sound or gestures) depending on the language inputs the child receives. (b) Recent neurological studies link babbling to the language centres of the left hemisphere, providing additional evidence that the brain specializes for language at a very early age. These facts, therefore, suggest that babbling is the earliest stage in language acquisition. It has also been proved that children who are deaf from birth go through babbling stage and make similar kinds of sounds at the same time with normal children. This also shows that children are biologically predisposed to pass through this stage.

**The One-Word or Holophrastic Stage:** Between 12-18 months, children begin to produce a variety of recognizable single unit utterances characterized by speech in which single terms are uttered for everyday objects such as *milk, rice, cat, cup*, etc. while many of these single forms are used for naming objects, they may also be produced in circumstances that suggest the child is already extending their use. This stage is called **holophrastic** or *whole phrase* because these one word utterances convey a more complex message. For instance, a child can use *down* to mean; request to put down something or to say that something has fallen down. A child can also use *come* to mean both come, go, stand and sit. However, it is difficult to determine exactly what the children's early words mean to them. The fact that adults claim to understand children should not be taken as evidence that children's utterance means the same thing as that of adults since adults have strong ability to interpret utterances in terms of the non linguistic context of the utterance. In addition, children cannot be interviewed to know exactly what they mean by those words. However, this issue is controversial among linguists.

**The Two-Word Stage:** This begins around 18 -20 months. The child's vocabulary moves beyond fifty distinct words. By the time the child is 2 years old, a variety of combinations, similar to 'baby chair', 'mommy eat', 'cat bad' would have appeared. The adult interpretation of such combinations is, of course, very much tied to the context of their utterance (e.g. 'baby chair' may be referring to possession 'this is baby's chair' or as a request 'put baby in chair' or as a statement 'baby is in the chair', depending on different contexts. The child does not only produce speech, but he also receives feedback which usually confirms that the utterance is understood. By age two, when the child produces 200-400 distinct words, he or she will be capable of understanding five times as before and he is typically treated as an entertaining conversational partner by the adult.

**Telegraphic Speech:** Between the age of 2 and 3 years, the child begins producing a large number of utterances which could be classified as multi-word utterances. The salient feature of these utterances ceases to be the number of words, but the variation in word-form which begins to appear. The telegraphic speech is characterized by strings of lexical morphemes in phrases such as *Olu drink water*, *cat eat fish* and *John want ball* etc. The child has clearly developed some sentence building capacity by this stage and can order the forms correctly. A number of grammatical inflections begin to appear in some of the words and the simple prepositions e.g. *in*, *on* also appear. By the age of 2½ years the child's vocabulary expands rapidly and the child imitates more talk. By 3, the vocabulary has grown to hundreds of words and pronunciation has become closer to the form of the adult language. The telegraphic speech is characterized by the omission of grammatical words e.g. 'the' and 'is'.

### **Post -Test**

1. What do you understand by 'language acquisition'?
2. Mention four theories of language acquisition and discuss any three of them.
3. Discuss the following stages of language acquisition:
  - a. The Perception and Production of Speech Sounds
  - b. The one-word stage
  - c. The two-word stage
  - d. The telegraphic speech.

### **Summary**

This lecture has expositoryly dealt with the concept 'language acquisition'. First, an operational definition of the concept was given, then an attempt was made to explore questions relating to the origins and growth of language. It was explained that parental diaries, was the earliest approach used in examining the process of language acquisition in children. Three major theories of language acquisition: Behaviourism, innateness, and cognition, were briefly discussed. Lastly, we discussed the stages in the acquisition process which are the Perception and Production of Speech Sounds, the one-word stage, the two-word stage and the telegraphic speech.

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## LECTURE TWELVE

### Second Language Learning

#### Introduction

A language is described as a second language if it is not a native language to a particular society but has an official role in that society. For example, English language is not native to Nigeria, yet it plays considerable roles in the country, thus it is a second language in Nigeria. A second language can also be understood as the language an individual learns after acquiring the first language which is often the mother tongue. In other words, the speaker must have gained a native speaker competence in the first language before learning the second language. As we observed in the preceding lecture, the first language is acquired naturally and unconsciously i.e. without any deliberate effort. The second language however, is deliberately learnt, through conscious efforts. Though some children whose parents speak different languages can acquire a second language in circumstances similar to those of first language acquisition, majority of people learn their second language several years after they have mastered their first language. It is our goal here to examine how the learning of second language differs significantly from the acquisition of the first language.

#### Objectives

At the end of the lecture, you should be able to:

1. differentiate between  $L_1$  (first language) and  $L_2$  (second language); and
2. compare the processes involved in the learning of  $L_1$  and  $L_2$ .

#### Pre-Test

1. As a bilingual, compare your experience in learning your first language with your second language.
2. Which language are you more proficient in,  $L_1$  or  $L_2$ ?

#### CONTENT

##### Definition of terms

Some terms are very important to the understanding of this topic. Hence, we shall briefly explain them below to make the understanding of the topic easier.

**Mother Tongue (MT):** This term is used to refer to the first language one learns to speak. It is otherwise called *first language* ( $L_1$ ), *native language* or even *home language*. It is usually the language the mother speaks but in some cases, it may be the language of the nurse or nanny. In the recent years, the understanding of the concept is changing as the linguistic



situation in societies becomes more complex. For example, a child can acquire two languages at once from his/her parents with the same level of competence (a case of childhood bilingualism). In that case, which of the languages would be regarded as his/her MT judging from the sequence of acquisition? Following this reason Skutnabb-Kangas (2008: 18) notes that MT could be defined based on four criteria: (i) Origin (as the language one learned first); (ii) Identity (as the language one identifies with or the language one is identified as a native speaker of by others); (iii) competence (as the language one knows best); and (iv) Function (as the language one uses most). Therefore, one can select any of the definitions with regards to context. However, the process of learning the mother tongue is so simple and unconscious that linguists do not use the word 'learn' in connection with it, they, prefer to use the word 'acquire'.

**Second Language (L<sub>2</sub>):** Any other language that one learns after acquiring the first language is described as the second language. The second language requires deliberate effort to learn. It is usually learnt formally in schools. Nevertheless, it could be acquired elsewhere. People often learn L2 to bridge language barriers in terms of communication for the purpose of business, learning/knowledge, trade, international diplomacy, acculturation, security etc.

**Monolingualism:** A society is said to be monolingual if only one language is spoken in that society, likewise an individual is said to be monolingual if he speaks only one language. It is very hard in the recent times to see individuals who are monolingual especially in a multilingual society. Bilingualism seems to be the order of the day

**Bilingualism:** is the ability a person to speak two languages. It may be acquired early by children in regions where most adults speak two languages (e.g. Igbo/Yoruba/Hausa and English). It can also refer to the use of two languages in teaching, especially to foster learning in students trying to learn a new language. When an individual has an effective control of two languages, that person is said to be bilingual. In a multilingual country like Nigeria, a reasonable percentage of the population is bilingual.

**Multilingualism:** The term “multilingualism” can refer to either the language use or the competence of an individual or to the language situation in an entire nation or society. However, at the individual level it is generally subsumed under “bilingualism.” This may be because, while there are probably more bilinguals in the world than monolinguals, there are not perceived to be so many people who use more than two languages habitually. However, the general understanding is that a speech community is said to be multilingual if more than

two languages are spoken there. An individual who has the ability to communicate in more than two languages is called a polyglot. Nigeria is a typical multilingual nation where more than 400 languages are spoken.

### **Acquisition Barrier**

Many problems are encountered in the learning of second language which one might not have encountered while learning the first language. This is connected with the fact that many people attempt to learn the second language during their teenage or adult years, in a few hours each week of school time (rather than through constant interaction experienced in the process of acquiring the first language).

More so, many other occupations are combined with the learning of the second language, whereas a child acquiring the first language has little else to do. Some people in fact, claim that the adults' tongues 'get stiff' from pronouncing one type of language (e.g. Russian). Nevertheless, there is no scientific evidence to support this claim. The vocal organs remain able.

### **Acquisition and Learning**

The term acquisition, when used in connection with language, refers to the gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situation; whereas, the term learning applies to a conscious process of accumulating knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of a language. Activities associated with learning have traditionally been used in language teaching in schools, and to result in knowledge when successful. Activities associated with acquisition are those experienced by the young child or by those who learn another language from long periods spent in social interaction (daily use of the language) in another country. Those who acquire their second language in the midst of native speakers are much more proficient than those who learn it formally.

In ideal acquisition situations, very few adults seem to reach native-like proficiency in using a language. Of course there are individuals who have achieved great expertise in writing in a second language. Nigeria is blessed with classic writers like Wole Soyinka (who obtained the Nobel Laureate in 1986), Chinua Achebe (who has been described by the whites as the greatest African novelist), Niyi Osundare, etc. In speech, their accents sometime betray them. This suggests that some features (e.g. vocabulary, grammar) of a second language are easier to acquire than others (e.g. phonology). It has been demonstrated that students in their early

years are quicker and more effective L<sub>2</sub> learners than adult learners. It may be that the acquisition of an L<sub>2</sub> requires a combination of factors.

### **The Affective Filter**

This is an emotional reaction, which may constitute a barrier to the learning of a second language. The term is used to describe a kind barrier to acquisition that results from negative feelings or experiences. For example, if you are stressed, uncomfortable, self-conscious or unmotivated, you are unlikely to learn anything. Children are somehow immune to affective filter. Adults are typically much more self-conscious than children. If there is a strong element of unwillingness or embarrassment in attempting to produce the 'different' sounds of other languages, then it may override whatever physical and cognitive abilities there are. If this self-consciousness is combined with a negative attitude towards a foreign language, then there will be no motivation to learn the language.

### **Methods in Language Learning**

There are variety of educational approaches and methods aimed at promoting the learning of L<sub>2</sub> despite all the barriers. We shall briefly discuss these methods below:

#### **Grammar-Translation Method**

This method is the most traditional approach used in treating second or foreign language learning. Long lists of words and a set of grammatical rules are memorized and the written language is emphasized strongly more than the spoken form. The major weakness of this approach is that those who learn a second language through it may be quite ignorant of how the language is used in different contexts.

#### **Audio-lingual Method**

This method was developed in the 1950 as an alternative to grammar-translation method. The spoken form, which is primary, is strongly emphasized. It involves a systematic presentation of the structures of the L<sub>2</sub> moving from the simple to the more complex, usually in form of drills which the learner has to repeat. This method is strongly influenced by the belief that the fluent use of a language was essentially a set of 'habits' which could be acquired with a lot of practice. Hours are spent in a language laboratory repeating oral drills. Those who are opposed to this method claim that isolated practice in drilling language patterns cannot be

compared with the interactional nature of actual language use. Moreover, the method can be very boring.

### **Communicative Approach**

This approach is connected strongly with the communicative function of language. It is partially a reaction against the artificiality of 'pattern-practice' associated with the audio-lingual method discussed above. It emphasizes the communicative function of language rather than the forms of the language (i.e. correct grammatical or phonological structure) Lessons are organized around concepts such as "asking for thing" in different social contexts rather than "the forms of the past tense" in different sentences. The different methods of teaching applied are supplemented with real exposure to the language in use among native speakers.

### **Focus on the Learner**

Second language learning had focused attention on the teacher, in the methods\* and the textbooks used previously. Nowadays, there has been a shift of attention to the learner. One prominent feature of the communicative approaches is the toleration of 'errors' produced by learners. Traditionally, errors were frowned at, and quick efforts were made to correct them. In recent times, errors are accepted as inevitable in the learning process, just as in the case of children acquiring their mother tongue. When an error is committed, it is regarded as a normal feature in the process of learning the language. L<sub>2</sub> learning is characterized by errors which result from 'negative transfer' (when an L<sub>1</sub> feature that is really different from what obtains in the L<sub>2</sub> is imposed on L<sub>2</sub>). This is called 'interference'; it is more common in the early stages of L<sub>2</sub> learning and progressively decreases as the learner develops familiarity with the L<sub>2</sub>.

### **Communicative Competence**

Communicative competence refers to the ability to use L<sub>2</sub> accurately, appropriately, and flexibly. It has three components. These are:

- a. *Grammatical competence*: this involves the accurate use of words and structures in the L<sub>2</sub>.
- b. *Sociolinguistic competence*: refers to the ability of the speaker to interpret or produce language appropriately. It enables the learner to know how to select appropriate words depending on the social context to achieve the desired purpose.

c. *Strategic competence*: is the ability to organize a message effectively and to compensate, via strategies, for any difficulties. In L<sub>2</sub> use, learners will definitely experience moments when there is a gap between communicative intent and their ability express that intent. Whatever device the learner uses, the goal is to ensure that the intended message is understood appropriately. In other words, strategic competence is the ability to overcome potential communication problems in interaction.

### **Summary**

In this lecture, an attempt has been made to elaborate the concept of second language learning. We began by giving an explanation of second language or L<sub>2</sub>. In addition we explained concepts such as 'mother tongue'; monolingualism, bilingualism, and multilingualism. The contrast between acquisition and learning was highlighted. We also discussed the expression affective filters as an emotional reaction which constitutes a barrier to L2 learning. Three methods employed in second language learning-Grammar translation, audio-lingual and communicative approaches were briefly discussed. We also emphasized that there is currently a shift of attention from the teacher as well as the materials used to the learner himself in second language learning. The lecture rounded off with a brief discussion on the three components of communicative competence, which are grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competences.

### **Post-Test**

1. What are the four obvious barriers to adult L<sub>2</sub> acquisition?
2. What are the three components of communicative competence?
3. Compare and contrast between acquisition and learning.

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## LECTURE THIRTEEN

### Language and the Brain

#### Introduction

In one of the previous lectures, we made reference to the innate ability possessed by every normal human child to acquire his native language as he grows up. In connection with that, we discussed what scholars have termed Language acquisition Device (LAD). The question then is '*where is this ability to acquire and use language located?*' This takes us to 'neurolinguistics'. I assume you are familiar with the term. Much research work has been carried out by scholars to pinpoint the specific areas in the brain which are related to language functions. It is our aim in this chapter to discuss the involvement of the brain in language.

#### Objectives

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

1. Explain in clear terms the evidence to support the involvement the brain in language;
2. mention the part of the brain involved.
3. state four types of language disorder
- 4 list ten causes of language disorder and
5. explain the methods that could be employed to rehabilitate an aphasic

#### Pre-Test

1. Do you think the brain is involved in language acquisition and language use?
2. Whatever your answer is, justify it with detailed explanation.

#### CONTENT

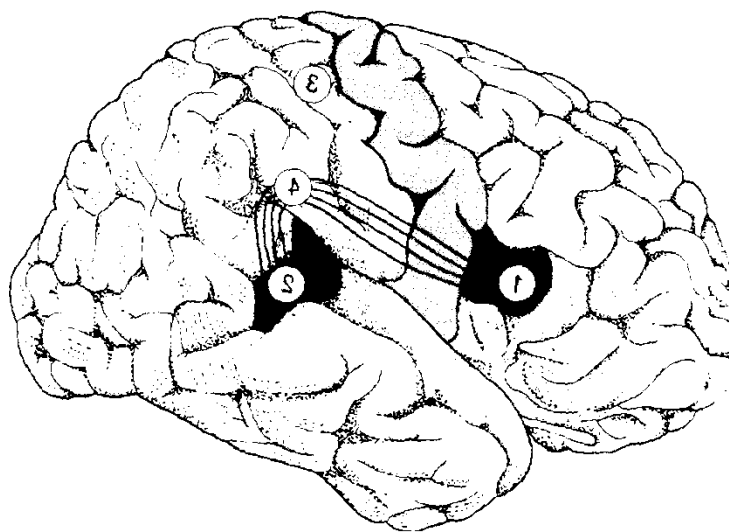
##### The Experience of Phineas Gage

In September 1848, near Cavendish, Vermont, a construction worker called Phineas P. Gage was in charge of a construction crew that was blasting away rocks to lay a new stretch of railway line. As Phineas pushed an iron rod into the blasting hole in a rock, some gunpowder accidentally exploded, and sent the three and a half foot long tamping rod up through Phineas upper left cheek and out from the top of his forehead. The rod landed about fifty yards away. Phineas suffered the type of injury from which, it was assumed, no one could recover. However, a month later, Phineas recovered, without any apparent damage to his sense or his speech.

The medical evidence is obvious. A huge metal rod had gone through the front part of Mr. Gage's brain, but his language abilities were not affected. This clearly proves that language ability is not situated right at the front part of the brain.

### **Parts of the Brain**

Phineas' case provoked a number of investigations to discover specifically the areas of the brain that are related to language functions. This in turn has brought about a number of discoveries. For us to understand the point better, we need to examine the issue involved more closely. So, take a human head, remove the hair, scalp and skull. Disconnect the brain stem and cut the corpus callosum (which connects the two hemispheres). If we disregard a certain amount of other items, we will basically be left with two parts, the left and the right hemispheres. If put we put the right hemisphere aside for the moment, and place the left hemispheres down so that we have a side view, we'll be looking at something close to the illustration below:



*Fig. 13:1 Diagram indicating the general location of language functions*

The shaded areas in the illustration above indicate the general locations of language functions. These areas have been discovered through the examination, in autopsies (an autopsy is an official examination of a dead body by a doctor in order to discover the cause of death) of the brains of people who were known to have some language disabilities when they were alive. In other words, scholars have been able to determine where language abilities for normal users must be, because people who had language disabilities suffered injuries in those specific areas of the brain.

Let us now discuss the relevant areas.

### **Broca's Area**

The Broca's area, technically described as the anterior speech cortex, is shown in the above diagram as (1). It was named after Paul Broca, a French surgeon, who reported in the 1860s that damage to this specific part of the brain was related to extreme difficulty in producing speech. It has been noted that damage to the corresponding area on the hemisphere has no such effect. This discovery was first used to argue that language ability must be located in the left hemisphere. It was also argued that Broca area specifically is crucially involved in the production of speech.

### **Wernicke's Area**

The Wernicke's area was named after Carl Wernicke, a German doctor, who reported that damage to this part of the brain was found among patients who had speech comprehension difficulties in the 1870s. It is shown as (2) in the diagram above. Wernicke's finding confirmed that language ability is located in the left-hemisphere of the brain and led to the view that Wernicke's area is the part of the brain crucially involved in the understanding of speech.

### **The Motor Cortex**

Shown as (3) in diagram above is the motor cortex which generally controls movement of the muscles (i.e. hands, feet, arms etc). Close to Broca's area is the part of the motor cortex which controls the articulatory muscles of the face, jaw, tongue and larynx. In the 1950s, two neurosurgeons, Penfield and Roberts discovered that by applying minute amounts of electrical current to specific areas of the brain, they could identify those areas where the electrical stimulation would interfere with normal speech production.

### **The Arcuate Fasciculus**

This is shown as (4) in the diagram above. It is a bundle of nerve fibres called the arcuate fasciculus. This was also one of Wernicke's discoveries which form a crucial connection between Wernicke's area and Broca's area.



## **The Localisation View**

The localization view is a way of saying that our linguistic abilities have identifiable locations in the brain. However, it is invariably argued by some involved in the study of the brain that a lot of evidence does not support the view. Any damage to one area of the brain appears to have repercussions (side effects) for other areas. Consequently, we should be very careful about assigning highly specific connections between particular aspects of linguistic behaviour and sites on the wrinkled grey matter inside the head.

## **Other Views**

Have you ever heard about 'metaphor' before? What is it all about? In literature, a metaphor is a direct way of comparing two things; in which rather than saying 'A' is like 'B' you say 'A' is 'B'. For example; rather than saying *Olu is as strong as a lion* you say: *Olu is a lion*. Is the term now clear? We need this explanation because most of the other views we want to discuss are metaphoric. Sigmund Freud, a psychologist employed steam engine' metaphor to account for certain aspects of the brain's activity, by talking of the effects of "repression" "building up pressure" to point of sudden "release". Earlier on, Aristotle's metaphor was of the brain as a 'cold sponge' which functioned to keep the heart's blood cool. We are forced to use metaphors mainly because we cannot obtain direct physical evidence of linguistic processes in the brain. Since we have no direct access, we generally have to rely on what we can discover through direct methods. Some of these methods are discussed below.

## **Tongue Tips and Slips**

There are occasions when we feel that a particular word is just eluding us though we know the word, but it just won't come to the surface. Studies of this concept have shown that speakers generally have an accurate phonological outline of the word, can get the initial sound correct and mostly know the number of syllables in the word. This is very common, especially when we are dealing with uncommon terms or names. It suggests that our 'word-storage' may be partially organized on the basis of some phonological information and that some words in that 'store' are more easily retrieved than others. When we make mistakes in this retrieval process, there are often strong phonological similarities between the intended word and the mistake. For example, somebody may, pronounce 'appointment' instead of 'apartment' or 'emulate' instead of 'emanate', This type of mistake is called *malapropisms*, after a character called *Mrs Malaprop* in a play by Sheridan who consistently produced near-misses' for words, with great comic effect.

A similar type of speech error is commonly described as a slip of tongue. A good example of this is called *spoonerism*, after *Rev. William A. Spooner*, an Anglican clergyman at Oxford University, who was renowned for his tongue slip, which involves the interchange of two initial sounds of adjacent words, such as *You have hissed all my mystery lectures* instead of *You have missed all my history lectures*.

### **Language Disorders in the Brain**

Language disorder can be defined as impaired comprehension and use of spoken, written, and other systems. The disorder may involve the form of language (phonology, morphology, and syntax), the content of language (semantics), and the function of language in communication. The disorders that come under language disorders are Aphasia, Autism, Learning Disability, Mental Retardation, Specific Language Impairment, developmental Phonological Disorders, Schizophrenia, Dysarthria, Dyspraxia, etc. Research in the brain functions as earlier mentioned reveal that serious damage in brain functions could cause some problems which has to do with language production and comprehension.

### **Classification of Language Disorders**

Crystal (1992) classified language disorder into two major types: **developmental** and **acquired** language disorder. He described developmental disorders as arising from abnormal development of some areas or part of human child; as a result of abnormalities of the prenatal neuron system. Language disorders can be classified according to *the aspect of language that is impaired* (phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics, and/or pragmatics), *its severity* (mild, moderate, or severe), and *whether it affects comprehension* (receptive language), production (expressive language), or both (Bishop 1997).

Classification of language disorders focuses on 3 key features:

1. Etiology – evidence for the causes of aphasia. Primary language impairment (language difficulties in the absence of any other disability that can be held accountable), secondary language impairment (language difficulties that are a consequence of another disorder; mental retardation, brain injury etc.), developmental (disorder that is present from birth), and acquired (disorder that is acquired sometime after birth, result of some insult or injury).
2. Manifestation – comprehension and expressive, mixed receptive-expressive disorder, and focal and diffuse disorders.

### 3. Severity – ranges from mild to profound

#### **Causes of language disorders**

Language disorders may be caused by; hearing loss, cognitive disability, emotional disturbance, poor environment, or brain damage. Aphasia is a language disorder caused by damage to the central nervous system. Often the cause of a language disorder in children may be hard to pin down. Some causes of preschool language disorders may include:

- Family history of language disorders – Genetic causes are implicated when members of immediate family and the extended family exhibit language impairment.
- Environment – the external factors i.e. the lack of experiences that stimulate language development. The quality and quantity of early language input has a definite effect on vocabulary development and language development. Others are
  - inability to benefit from language models,
  - lack of stimulation
  - Premature birth
  - Low birth-weight
  - Hearing loss
  - Autism
  - Intellectual disabilities
  - Syndromes, like Down syndrome or Fragile X syndrome
  - Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder
  - Brain injury – Traumatic Brain injury can result in conditions such as aphasia, which interferes with language production
  - Tumours
  - Cerebral palsy
  - Poor nutrition
  - Failure to thrive
  - Neurological disorders

#### **Symptoms**

Symptoms can range from mild to severe. Patient with receptive language disorder have difficulty understanding language. They may have:

- A hard time understanding what other people have said
- Problems following directions that are spoken to them
- Problems organizing their thoughts

Patients with expressive language disorder have problem using language to express what they are thinking or their need. These patients may:

- Have a hard time putting words together into sentences, or their sentences, or their sentences may be simple and short and the word order may be off.
- Have difficulty finding the right words when talking, and often use placeholder words such as 'um'
- Have a vocabulary that is below the age-appropriate
- Leave words out of sentences when talking
- Use certain phrases over and over again, and repeat (echo) parts or all of questions
- Use tenses (past, present, future) improperly.

### **Types of Language Disorders**

The common language disorders include: Aphasia, Cognitive-linguistic disorders; Dysphagia, Dysarthria, and Apraxia.

#### **Aphasia**

Aphasia is the neurological term used to refer to language disorders that follow brain lesions caused by a stroke, a tumour, a gunshot wound, or an infection. It is the commonest language disorder in human beings caused by injury or damage in the brain. The interest in aphasia goes back long before Broca. In the New Testament, Luke reports that Zacharias could not speak but could write after his encounter with the Angel. In 30 A.D. the Roman writer Valerius Maximus describes an Athenian who was unable to remember his 'letters' after being hit in the head with a stone. The classification or types of aphasia is normally based on the primary symptoms of an aphasic who has difficulties with language.

#### **Broca's Aphasia**

This is otherwise called 'motor aphasia'. It is characterized by a substantially reduced amount, of speech, distorted articulation and slow, often effortful speech. What is said often consists almost entirely of lexical morphemes (e.g. nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives). Functional or grammatical morphemes (e.g. articles, prepositions, etc) are frequently omitted. As a result of this, some scholars prefer to refer to this type of aphasia as 'agrammatic'. In Broca aphasia, comprehension is much better than production. Their major problem is syntax. Let us look at the following example produced, by a patient who was asked what brought him to the hospital and he answered:

*Yes -ah- Monday ah - Dad – and Dad -ah- hospital - and ah - Wednesday  
Wednesday - nine o' clock And ah Thursday - ten o' clock ah  
Doctors - two - two - ah doctors and Ah- teeth - yah. And a doctor -  
Ah girl — and gums, and .*

### **Wernicke's Aphasia**

This type of language disorder results in difficulties in auditory comprehension. It is otherwise called 'sensory aphasia'. Someone suffering from this disorder can actually produce very fluent speech which however, often difficult to understand. An extended example of this type of difficulty is provided by Lesser Milroy (1993):

*It's blowing, on the right, and there's four letters in it, and I think  
It begins with C-goes when you start it then goes  
When you start it then goes Right up in the air -I would  
Have to keep racking my brain how I would spell that word  
That flies, that that doesn't fly, you pull it round, you  
Pull it round; it goes up in the air.  
(The speaker here was trying to refer to a 'kite').*

### **Conduction Aphasia**

This type of aphasia is not very common. It is associated with damage to arcuate fasciculus (look at the picture above) and is called conduction aphasia. People suffering from this type, of aphasia generally do not have Problem with speaking. They are fluent, but may have disrupted rhythm use of pauses and hesitations. Comprehension of spoken words is normally good. However, the task of repeating a word or phrase spoken by someone else will create major difficulty.

**Cognitive-Linguistic Disorders** – This is the difficulty in thinking, or a kind of inability to process information and messages accurately and promptly as expected. Cognitive-linguistic communication disorder always results from brain injury or trauma. With this difficulty, the brain in the realm of linguistic functioning will be impaired with evidence of cognitive communication deficits associated with right hemisphere damage.

**Dysphagia** – This is a kind of language disorder as a result of difficulty in swallowing. Dysphagia makes it difficult for people with the difficulty to make use of the articulators and phonatory organs properly in speech production.

**Apraxia** – This is a characterized neurological disorder with evident loss of the ability to perform speech- linguistic functions or produce some words or make gestures. Apraxia can occur as a result of brain damage, tumours or cancer. This condition always results in reading, writing, speaking difficulties as well as in understanding speech of others.

**Dysarthria** – This is a kind of language disorder caused by paralysis, weakness, or inability to coordinate the muscles of the mouth. Dysarthria is characterized by slurring, slow speech, inability to speak louder or with abnormal rhythm of speech as a result of drooling or difficulty to move the tongue, facial and speech muscles. Dysarthria always manifests as an impairment of the ability to make use of speech apparatus accurately as a result of damage to the brain or nerves. It is a motor speech disorder resulting from neurological lesion which involves respiration, phonation, articulation, resonance, and fluency, voluntary and involuntary movement.

## **Rehabilitation**

This is the process returning persons suffering from any kind of language disorder to normalcy by providing training or therapy. The aftermath of brain injury may be loss of consciousness or confusion then follows a profound disturbance of language at the onset of the disorder, with little ability to speak, understand, read, or write. Rehabilitation involves many team members, including Speech Language Pathologists (SLP), Teachers, Paediatricians, Linguists, Audiologists, Psychologists, and Parents and can take the following forms:

- Bedside examination which often reveal the type of disorder (or the type of aphasia in the case of aphasia). E.g. assessment of spontaneous speech, repetition, comprehension etc.
- Cognitive testing by a neuropsychologist or speech/language therapist to determine levels of dysfunction, to plan therapy, and to assess the patient's potential for recovery
- tests of voluntary movement and sensory and perceptual ability to aid in differentiating aphasia from other disorders that may affect communication.

## **Methods of Rehabilitation**

Literature reveals that there is no holistic method for the rehabilitation of the various types and forms of manifestation of aphasia but speech pathologist or therapist have over the years adapted from clinical manifestations and prognosis of administered treatments and therapy to ensure functional rehabilitation of aphasics These methods reflect different therapeutic

philosophies and different therapeutic needs, and they are used together or singly because rehabilitation often involves many team members as earlier mentioned. These methods include:

**Psychotherapeutic control:** once perfect motor control has been established, works on the emotions of aphasic begins in order to reposition the aphasic mind from thinking. This is done by building confidence in the patient

**Structured Language Training:** is a straight forward approach to the teaching of language and appears to be in widest use. Bloodstein (1979), citing a case, notes that the clinician may pick out two new words a day for the patient to learn and may build a lesson around them. The patient repeats after the clinician, "I want a cup of coffee." Immediately imitation may be followed by delayed imitation, and finally by giving the word from memory later in response to the stimulus "I want a cup of \_\_\_\_\_." The clinician not only helps the patient to acquire a useful vocabulary but by the same direct approach also teaches such skills as the alphabet, writing, spelling, grammar, reading, numbers, telling time, and so forth. Recent developments in this approach have given birth to the use of programmed instruction. The use of teaching machines is clearly economical of the clinician's time.

**Stimulation:** To stimulate is to cause physical activity in body part such as a nerve or an organ. Aphasic specialists opine that stimulation with language is more basic to recovery than drill in its use. Essentially, all aphasic patients are impaired in auditory retention of language, and that auditory stimulation is the foundation of all aphasia therapy. As cited in Bloodstein (1979), "the aphasic patient has words; but they are not readily available to him. The process of therapy is not teaching words but stimulating damaged processes to function again." It also suggested that patients be permitted to hear comprehensible speech continually, day after day and month after month. Although stimulation is primary, patients are required to attempt a response to each language stimulus, whether the response was merely pointing to a picture, repeating the clinician's words, or making an independent verbal response.

**Melodic-Intonation Therapy (MIT):** This method uses style of singing called melodic intonation to stimulate activity in the right hemisphere of the brain in order to assist in speech production. However, recent evidence suggests that it may not be singing itself that aids speech production and speech recovery in non-fluent aphasic patients, but rhythm and formulaic language. One study using PET (Positron Emission Tomography) scans found that areas controlling speech in the left hemisphere were 'reactivated' by the end of Melodic-

Intonation Therapy (Berlin *et al.*, 1996). Patients that would benefit from Melodic-Intonation Therapy typically suffer from non-fluent or Broca's Aphasia. As suggested by the name, the damage to the brain in this category is mostly in the Broca's area and thus speech production is affected. Criteria to achieve positive results with Melodic-Intonation Therapy;

- Good auditory comprehension
- Facility for self correction
- Markedly limited verbal output
- Reasonably good attention span
- Good emotional stability

### **Summary**

In this lecture, we have discussed the involvement of the brain in speech/language. We made specific reference to the fact that it has been proved through scientific investigations that the left part of the brain is directly connected with language functions. We have also examined some types of language disorders, such as tongue tips and slips, spoonerism, and aphasia, dysphasia, apraxia and dysarthria, all in an attempt to prove that language disorders are almost always the result of injury to the left part of the brain. Finally, we highlighted the some ways of rehabilitating persons with language disorder.

### **Post-Test**

1. How would you justify the assertion that the brain is involved in language functions?
2. What do you understand by the following terms:
  - a. Wernicke area
  - c. Broca's aphasia
  - c. Spoonerism
3. Mention five causes of language disorder
4. Explain three methods of rehabilitating an aphasic

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## LECTURE FOURTEEN

### Language Attitude

#### Introduction

Every issue in life provokes a particular attitude. The attitude could be sensitive or negative; it may even be that of indifference. By language attitude in this lecture, we refer to the reactions, dispositions, or feelings of people towards a particular language. With reference to Nigeria, there are three categories of language, these are:

- a. English language
- b. Indigenous languages
- c. Foreign languages

These three categories of languages are reacted to in different ways. It is our aim in this lecture to discuss the attitudes of Nigerians towards them.

#### Objectives

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

1. explain language attitude;
2. discuss the linguistic situation in Nigeria; and
3. explain the attitudes of Nigerians towards English Language vis-à-vis the indigenous languages.

#### Pre-Test

What is the linguistic situation in Nigeria?

#### A Survey of the Linguistic Situation in Nigeria

According to Oyetade (1993) "The language situation refers to the total configuration of language use in a community or a polity. This involves the identification of the languages and their varieties in the linguistic repertoire of the community, their distribution in terms of use and user, as well as community attitude to them. It also refers to the contact and conflict existing between the different categories of language being utilized for different purposes in a given country."

Nigeria is extremely multilingual in nature. The number of languages spoken in the country cannot be given with any degree of certainty. This arises from different factors. First, each of the languages spoken in Nigeria has different varieties called dialects and in some

cases, scholars are not in agreement about which speech form should be regarded as language and which ones should be regarded as dialects. Second, some of these languages bear different names. For instance, the name the speakers call their language and the name others call it. The language of the Fulanis is an example here. Some call it 'Fulfulde' others call it 'Fulbe' yet some others call it 'Fulani'. Also, there are cases where a single language is spoken in two or more communities and each community has a name for the language different from what the other group calls it. Finally, in some cases, languages that are different, but are closely related are regarded as the same by the speakers for political reasons. All these factors combined together make it difficult for scholars to be categorically sure about the number of languages spoken in Nigeria. However, there is enough evidence to lend credibility to an estimate of about 400 indigenous languages (Stanford, Bendor-Samuel and Hansford, (1976), Bamgbose (1971) and Osaji (1976).

Among these, only three are recognized as major: Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa. The choice of these languages was neither arbitrary nor political. They are far more developed in linguistics and literature than the rest and they are more widely used across the country than the rest. It is in addition to the already existing multiplicity of languages that English language, Arabic and some foreign languages, such as French, German, a, Portuguese, etc. were introduced to Nigeria. English language is Nigeria's official language and in addition, it is a lingua franca among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. A language is said to be an official language in a country when it is the language of government business and administration. On the other hand, a language is said to be a 'lingua franca' if it makes communication possible among people who do not speak the same language. For instance, an educated Hausa man who does not speak Yoruba can communicate with an educated Yoruba man who does not speak Hausa. This is possible because the two of them speak English language. In that sense, we can say that English language is a restricted lingua franca in Nigeria.

### **Factors that determine people's attitude to a language**

According to Babajide (2001), people tend to be more favourably and positively disposed to using and tolerating a language that has:

- a. a considerable national and/or international coverage of users
- b. a metropolitan or cosmopolitan status (that is spoken by people from different social, political, geographical and linguistic backgrounds)
- c. a considerable numerical strength and some measure of economic and political power

- d. a sufficiently reliable codified form (that is 'orthography or written standard).

He observes further that if a language does not possess the instrumental and integrative forces as highlighted above, people's attitudes towards it are bound to be negative. In his own words, "it is, therefore, devastating' for a language to be:

- a. Restricted in use to a few native speakers
- b. a mere vernacular; not yet codified
- c. Associated only with rurality
- d. Irrelevant to the socio - economic and political needs of the people.

Earlier on, Ferguson (1966) recognizes seven functions which language can perform in a country to attract people's attention.

These are:

- a. Group function
- b. Official function
- c. Language of wider communication
- d. Educational function
- e. Religious function
- f. International function
- g. School subject.

To the above, Stewart (1968) adds three functions - provincial, capital and literacy, thus making ten functions altogether. Nida and Wonderly (1971) assign three functions to language in consonance with the three levels at which communication is required in a country. These are *in-group*, *out-group* and *specialized information*. Oyetade (2001) believes that the proliferation in these terms give rise to considerable overlap, e.g. the group function of Ferguson (1966), is much the same as the *in-group* function of Nida and Wonderly (1971). So also, his *language of wider communication* (LWC) is equivalent to their *out-group language*, while their *specialized function* is synonymous to Ferguson's *education and international functions*. Dirvin (1991) distinguishes two domains or spheres of activities where languages are used. These are:

- a. The primary domains, involving family, kinship, friendship networks, local markets, cultural life, etc.
- b. The secondary domains, which involve advanced areas of life where issues like education, science and technology, government administration judiciary etc, are prominent.

### **Attitude towards English**

English language has been with us in Nigeria for a very long time. In fact, the exact date of its advent is not known. However, Nigeria has been in contact with Europe as early as 1472. Ajayi (1965:89 - 90) reports as follows:

*Hope Waddel found very intelligent journals of the affairs of this country kept by its rulers, written in English, of so old a date as 1767.*

As a result of this historical background, coupled with the fact that the Language was inherited from the colonial masters at independence, the language enjoys a prime of place in Nigeria's linguistic firmament (Babajide (2001)). It is widely used in metropolitan and cosmopolitan cities Nigeria. It is the official language of government administration. It is the medium of instruction in schools as well as a subject taught from the pre-primary level to the tertiary institutions. It is the language of judiciary. It is the language of business and commerce. It is the language internal and international communication. It is an instrument of participation in local, national and international political affairs and economic enterprises. For anybody to be relevant to his social, economic political and intellectual environment in Nigeria, he must learn and have some appreciable knowledge of English language. Based on these factors, every Nigerian (literate/illiterate) respects anyone who is proficient in English. In fact, some illiterates make frantic efforts through private tuition to learn English. It is common nowadays to find Nigerians from the upper socio-economic backgrounds that are monolingual and monocultural in English.

### **Attitude towards Foreign Language**

As stated above, English language cannot be said to be a foreign language in Nigeria. The least we can say about it is that it is a second language in Nigeria. Therefore by foreign languages here, we are referring to languages like French, Russian, German, Portuguese and Arabic. Of all these, French is the most widely learned and used by Nigerians. It is taught in all private schools at the pre-primary and primary levels. In public schools, it is introduced in J.S.S.1 and its teaching continues through colleges to the university level. Many Nigerians have great zeal to learn French because of its instrumental factors. For instance, Nigeria is surrounded by francophone (French speaking) countries. It is bordered on the west by Benin Republic, on the North by Niger and Chad, and on the East by Cameroon. This factor inspired

the introduction of French into the school curriculum shortly after independence. French is used for some radio and television programmes in Nigeria.

Russian, German and Portuguese Languages are studied in a few Nigerian universities, but the number of students who apply to study it is very small. Some of them change their courses along the line. Arabic goes with Islamic religion because it is the language of the Holy Koran. The Muslim majority in Northern Nigeria have positive attitudes towards the study of Arabic.

### **Attitudes towards Indigenous Languages**

Babajide (2001) asserts that Nigerian indigenous languages draw positive attitudes only from their native speakers who were born or have lived long enough among the native speakers of such language in their land as to have 'fallen in love' with it. According to Bamgbose (1985), the attitude of the Nigerian elite to indigenous language reflects that they are plagued by *linguistic imperialism* (Ansre 1975)-an attitude that recognizes as normal the continued use of European languages in all advanced sectors of life. This attitude manifests in many ways. Many parents, especially the elite send their children to fee-paying primary schools where the medium of instruction is English and the indigenous languages which are derogatorily referred to as *vernaculars* are 'prohibited'. In fact, some parents go to the extent of banning their children from using their mother tongue at home even though the parents themselves speak the same language.

### **Provisions in the National Policy on Education**

With respect to pre-primary education section two, paragraph 2 of the National Policy on Education (first published in 1977, reprinted in 1981 and 1998) states that the government will ensure that:

*The medium of instruction will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and to this end will develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages.*

With regards to the primary level, in section three, paragraph 15, it also declares that Government will see to it that:

*The medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community*

*(i.e. from primary 1-3) and at a later stage (i.e. primary 4-6) English.*

With respect to secondary education, the document states that:

*In addition, to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process and as a means of preserving the peoples culture, the government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.*

In spite of these prescriptions on local languages in the National Policy on Education, the idea of implementation has generated heated controversies in linguistic conferences and the society at large. In conclusion, Oyetade (2001: 25) asserts as follows:

*It is obvious from the above discussion that the extent to which one language or type of language is favoured or preferred depends on the community's perception of the role or status of that language or language type in the context of the prevailing linguistic attitudes in the society.....*

#### **Summary**

This lecture discusses the different attitudes manifested towards the different languages that are spoken in Nigeria. It started with a brief survey of the language situation in the country (Nigeria). It pointed out that Nigeria is a thoroughly multilingual nation. The people's attitude towards a particular language or languages was examined. Nigerians attitude towards English language was also discussed; this was followed by the discussion of attitudes towards foreign language. Lastly we looked at attitudes towards indigenous languages. The lecture was concluded by an examination of language provisions in the national policy on education.

#### **Post - Test**

1. Why is it that English Language cannot be considered as a foreign language in Nigeria?
2. Explain the following terms briefly:
  - a. Lingua franca
  - b. Mother tongue
  - c. Indigenous languages
  - d. Official language
3. Why is it difficult to give an accurate number of languages spoken in Nigeria?

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## LECTURE FIFTEEN

### Writing Systems

*The palest ink is better than the sharpest memory*  
(Chinese Proverb)

#### Introduction

The creation and development of writing systems is one of the greatest inventions of man. Human memory is short-lived, and the brain's storage capacity is limited. Writing overcame such problems and allowed communication across the miles and through the centuries. By writing, we learn any of the many visual (nongestural) systems for representing language, including handwriting, printing and electronic displays of these written forms.

#### Objectives

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

1. discuss the origin of writing; and
2. explain the different types of writing that have been attested.

#### Pre-Test

Discuss the different types of writing that exist.

#### CONTENT

##### Preamble

Writing is secondary whereas speech is primary. Speech had been in existence several years before writing was invented. Many languages of the world only exist in speech up till this moment. Writing is the graphic presentation of language which has numerous advantages. It is a device for convenience because it makes recording and preservation of messages possible, hence it heralds technological civilization. The technology responsible for electronic communication systems could never have been developed if man had not first learnt the art of writing. Writing makes possible the accumulation of a large body of scientific and technological knowledge. Writing promotes a language from mere vernacular or dialect to a standard form.



## History of writing

The origin of writing is very controversial. Human attempts to represent information visually could be traced back to cave drawings made at least 20,000 years ago, or to clay tokens from about 10,000 years ago. These could be described as ancient precursors of writing. Writing based on ionic type of alphabetic script can only be traced back to inscription dated around 3,000 years ago. Some regard the Sumerians as the first to invent writing system. Others believe that writing should be traced back to the Chinese. Egyptian writing system evolved under the influence of the Sumerians. It was part 'word-writing' part 'syllable-writing'. From the Egyptian writing system evolved various syllabic ones used by the West Semitic peoples from the second millennium B.C. Hebrews, Aramaic and Phoenician, etc were written with syllabic systems. English owes the principle of alphabetic writing to the ancient Greeks. All writing systems, except the Chinese can be traced back to Greek invention. The Latin Alphabet itself developed from the Greek model and was modified in minor ways.

## Types of Writing Systems

The technique of writing developed from pictorial art. The earliest known pictures and cave drawings date back to 20,000 B.C. However, writing as attested to today developed about five to six thousand years ago. It was popularized by the invention of the printing press about 500 years ago. The difference between a pictorial representation and writing is that former is direct while the latter represents a situation through the medium of language. A pictorial system is cumbersome and inadequate to handle various communicational aspects of language. Writing has the distinct advantage that anything that can be said can be written with little deficiencies. Below is a brief explanation of some writing systems.

**Logographic system:** This writing system developed from pictographs. Pictographs provided more pictorial representation of concepts, whereas many of the symbols used in logographic system bear little resemblance to the objects they are meant to represent. A good example of logographic writing is that used by the Sumerians in the Southern part of Modern Iraq between 5,000 and 6,000 years ago. Chinese, writing with the longest continuous history of use as a writing system i.e. 3,000 years is another example. In this system of writing, a symbol represents a word. For example, represents

X represents "man"  
X represents 'woman'  
↓ represents 'mountain'

The major advantage of this system of writing is that it makes it possible for different speech forms which are mutually unintelligible to adopt the same set of symbols mutually intelligible to all the speakers. For example, different dialects of Chinese which are mutually unintelligible do communicate through logographic writing. It has the main disadvantage of being very tasking and cumbersome. It presents a substantial memory load since one has to learn an enormous number of symbols before being able to use logography. Also the problems of printing and typewriting exist. However, basic literacy is possible with knowledge of only 2,000 characters. To be able to read a newspaper one needs to learn about 5,000 of them.

Most writing systems make use of some logographic characters. For example numbers: 1, 2, 3 etc. Also &, %, +, =, N, \$, etc are logographic. The Nsibidi writing system of the Igbos discovered by MacGregor (1906) Belongs to logography. For example, > / C represents a man and his wife who are divorced.

**Syllabic System:** When writing employs a set of symbols which represent the pronunciation of syllables, it is described as syllabic writing, that is, each symbol represents a syllable type. Examples are *Hindi* and *Sinhalese* writing systems. Each symbol in the system has a particular phonetic value and is used in a word that contains the phonetic sequence it stands for. Thus, it is possible to guess the pronunciation of a word from the way it is written and vice versa. The system is simpler than word-writing because it will be counted in the dozens and not in the thousands. Egyptian hieroglyphs were originally logographs but later evolved syllabic symbols. The *Kana syllabaries* of Japanese are another good example of a syllabic writing system. There are no purely syllabic writing systems in use today, but modern Japanese can be written with a single symbol which represents spoken syllables and consequently, often described as having a (partially) syllabic writing system, or a syllabary.

**Alphabetic System:** The word alphabet is derived from the first two letters of the Greek alphabet, *alpha* and *beta*. Alphabetic system developed from syllabic system. Greek traders in the second millennium B.C. had contacts with North Africans and Near Eastern groups who are descendants of early Egyptian. The Greeks took their scripts and adapted it and later developed it into symbols for consonants (that is system which involves the use of consonants only). The Romans adopted and adapted the consonantal system and added vowels. The Western world borrowed their alphabets from the Romans.

The principle of alphabetic writing is that each letter represents a particular spoken sound of the language. Thus each symbol in an alphabetic system represents a single sound segment. For example the word 'cat' in English has three sound segments e.g. /k/, /æ/, /t/. The alphabetic system is simpler than the other systems mentioned since only a relatively small number of sound types are systematically distinguished in every language, the number of symbols required in the system is comparatively small. However, spelling problems abound as a result of the inconsistent relationship between letters and sounds occasioned by the dynamic nature of language. Modern English spelling is about 400 years old whereas pronunciation has changed considerably since then.

### **Rebus Writing**

A rebus is a representation of words or syllables by pictures of objects whose names sound like the intended syllables. Thus, an eye might represent 'eye' or the pronoun 'I'. In this process, the symbol for one entity is taken over as the symbol for the sound of the spoken word used to refer to that entity. That symbol then comes to be used whenever that sound occurs in any words. One symbol can thus be used in many different ways, with a range of meanings. What this process accomplishes is a sizeable reduction in the number of symbols needed in a writing system.

### **Mixed Writing Systems**

Most languages of the world use mixed writing systems. Hardly can we come across any language that uses only one system. English is a combination of alphabetic and logographic systems. It has twenty-six letters of the alphabet, which are: a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z.

These letters form the basis for the spelling systems of the language. In addition to this, the symbols used for numbers are logographs, so also are -, N, \$, =, +, X, etc.

### **Summary**

This lecture focuses attention on writing as an invention. In it discussed the benefits offered by this system. The origin of writing was traced back to cave drawings which had been in existence for thousands of years before modern writing eventually evolved. Finally, five major types of writing are discussed. These are: Logographic, syllabic, alphabetic, rebus and mixed systems.

**Post - Test**

1. What are the advantages of writing?
2. Discuss the types of writing that you know.

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