

# Learning & Acquisition

Language Acquisition is the process through which learners understand and comprehend the language, they acquire the ability to understand the words, produce meaning out of the words and frame sentences to communicate. Learning of language requires the understanding of vocabulary, syntax, phonology, morphology, and semantics.

Krashen (1981) who has defined acquisition as "the subconscious process of picking up a language through exposure." There are various theories of language acquisition-

**Cognitive Theory:**

The cognitivist proposed that learning is a meaningful process of relating new events to the already existing ones, it includes the procedure of selecting the most appropriate grammar rules for language usage, the correct vocabulary and pragmatic conventions. Language learners pay attention to any aspect of language that they are attempting to understand and produce. Then they become able to use certain parts of their knowledge through experience and practice.

**Discourse Theory:**

This theory emphasizes that the language development of a learner should be viewed based on how the learner discovers the meaning of a language through communication. The discourse theorists argue that a learner is able to use language at various settings if he/she cognized 'various forms of competence such as grammatical competence, speech competence. Then only language acquisition will take place'. Therefore, children should be encouraged to deal with accomplishing actions so that it will help children acquire language. Communicative language teaching is the best example of discourse theory. In communicative classes, students are expected to learn by doing. They are expected to acquire language through presentation, practice, and production.

**Chomsky's Universal Grammar Theory:**

It states that language makes use of structure-dependent operation and he believed that humans may have an innate knowledge of this phenomenon. Chomsky defines Universal Grammar as a system of principles, conditions, and rules that are elements or properties of all human languages (Chomsky, 1976). In other words, it comprises a set of linguistic universals. Subsequently, Chomsky (1981) characterizes these universals as consisting of principles and parameters. The term 'principles' stands for highly abstract properties of grammar underlying the grammatical rules of all specific languages. The term 'parameter' refers to principles that vary in certain restricted ways from one language to another.

Creativity is a fundamental aspect of language. Humans have the ability to understand and produce anything that they want to communicate. The creative aspect of language is sometimes referred to as "rule-bound creativity". A child has access to a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that maps experience into the "steady-state".

Experience \_\_\_\_\_ LAD \_\_\_\_\_ Grammar

LAD is a mental capacity which helps the infant to acquire and produce language. It is a component of the nativity theory of language. This theory asserts that humans are born with the instinct or "innate facility" for acquiring language.

**Difference between Language Acquisition and Language Learning:**

<b>Language acquisition</b>	<b>Language learning</b>
The process is rapid	The process is relatively slow
Language is 'picked up' with no formal attention to language study	Language is studied in the language classroom in a formal manner
Subconscious process	Conscious process
Generally effortless	Requires sustained efforts
Follow normal stages of development generally	Follows the stages of language development but it is highly differential owing to individual variations (age, context and so on )

Exposure to spontaneous speech ( corpus) is adequate	Besides exposure to spontaneous speech, focused instructions on language system are required
Promises adult-like mastery over the different aspects of language	The outcome of language learning is not always native speakers mastery owing to fossilization of errors and influence of mother tongue.
Abundant exposure to the language	Limited exposure to the language
Communication in the language is meaningful, real-life based as it is context-embedded	Communication is often artificial, limited in contrived situations which are often devoid of context
Available for ` spontaneous ` use	Generally not readily available for `spontaneous ` use
Anxiety-Free	Filled with anxiety
Roughly tuned input	Finely tuned input