APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Dr. Dara Hamid Mohammed,

Department of Kurdish Language,
College of Education, University of Garmian, Iraq

ABSTRACT

This study, aimed to explain the process of learning as well as its difficulties and problems. As an important topic in applied linguistics, it can be used for both descriptive and synchronic methods. Based on the purpose of study, the descriptive method was used. The importance of study is to examine the issue which professionals in behavioral, cognitive, social sciences, and biology have been busy studying it. This issue is 'learning language'. The study focuses on language learning and the relevant issues. According to the previous studies on applied linguistics, there are various ways of learning languages. The different methods of language teaching are developed based on other sciences such as philosophy and behavioral psychology. This study consists of an introduction and three subsequent sections. Firstly, the overall framework of functional language teaching and the relevant issues will be introduced. Then, learning language will be scrutinized from cognitive and behavioral perspectives. Next, language learning will be discussed based on the principles of applied linguistics. Finally, the major findings will be discussed.

Keywords: Learning, Language, Applied, Principles.

INTRODUCTION:

Applied linguistics includes studies on areas of psycholinguistics, languages, language-learning disorders and so on. The present study focuses on language learning and the relevant issues. According to the previous studies of applied linguistics, there are various ways of learning a language. There are other models of language acquisition based on such sciences as philosophy and behavioral psychology.

This study is devoted to language learning and its obstacles as a fundamental topic in applied linguistics. The study utilizes a descriptive-analytic method, since it mostly focuses on language learning.

The present study is important because it investigates language learning from a new perspective. According to previous studies, behavioral, biological and sociological scientists work on language learning, as well. There are some vital questions that are always addressed by the researchers in those fields: "Is language learning a natural ability or a social phenomenon? What are the secrets of language acquisition? What are the prerequisites for language comprehension? What is the relation between language and thought?

The present study tries to answer the above questions, and to discover the main barriers to language learning. The paper is comprised of three parts:

The first part deals with a background of the subject, and some language-learning topics.

The second part studies language from behavioral and cognitive perspectives.

Third part is devoted to language learning, based on applied linguistics.

Findings will be presented in the conclusion section, and the paper ends in a list of references.

PART ONE: APPLIED LINGUISTICS ALONG WITH RELEVANT TERMS AND DEFINITIONS:

The study of applied linguistics began in the mid 20th century (the term "applied linguistics" was firstly introduced by the Institute of Learning English Language in Michigan University in 1946). That institute was very well-known for teaching English, and it was managed by Robert Lado and Charles Fries. Their works were published in Journal of Applied Linguistics – Language Learning. Later on, the School of Applied Linguistics started in Edinburgh University in Scotland (Abdulrahman, 1995).

Applied linguistics is a part of linguistics which deals with psycholinguistics (Kozmanawane,), language learning, and the barriers to it. According to (Sharif, 2010), applied linguistics is a part of linguistics, devoted to theoretical linguistics, covering such areas as lexicography, language learning, language disorders, error analysis, and acquisition of a second language. Applied linguistics obtains information from other sciences such as psychology, sociology, anthropology etc. "Applied linguistics is a linguistic phenomenon related to a special situation from outside the system of language" (Sharif, 2010).

Ahmad Mustafa Abulkhair states that applied linguistics covers various topics like learning a foreign language, translation, lexicography, language disorders and comparative linguistics which is another branch of applied linguistics (Abulkhair, 2006).

Applied linguistics is one of the new sciences, and based on (Crystal,) covers the following:

1- Teaching and learning first language
2- Learning foreign languages
3- Language planning
4- Sociolinguistics
5- Psycholinguistics
6- Treatment of language barriers
7- Translation
8- Lexicography
9- Comparative linguistics
10- Computational linguistics

It is clear that the above are major branches of science, such as sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics (Crystal, 1981). Furthermore, language learning includes both learning the first language and learning foreign languages. Moreover, applied linguistics amasses information about the nature of language which can be used to investigate the basis of the language (Corder, 1974). Ahmad Abulkhair claims that applied linguistics has two aspects, linguistics and applied linguistics. Linguistics is a scientific study of language, while applied linguistics is the study of solutions to problems in language application in line with research in psychology and sociology (Abulkhair, 2006).

Applied linguistics is an interdisciplinary part of linguistics that investigates and offers solutions to the

problems of language. It also works to find solutions for learning the first language, the second language etc. Noam Chomsky () asserts that humans can learn any languages in different environments of the world. Later, Chomsky's claims and theories were used as essential advices for research into language learning. According to the literature, there are different beliefs about how applied linguistics works. Some believe that applied linguistics is an independent science like other sciences, while others believe that applied linguistics is the connection between those sciences that work on language.

In general, it can be said that applied linguistics practices on the basis of linguistics and it does not have a theory about itself. Applied linguistics is a collection of some academic fields related to this science that work on language. Further, applied linguistics solves the issues of human languages, while linguistics is not the only a source of information and other branches of science are incorporated in applied linguistics, as well. Although linguistics is essential for applied linguistics, language learning is not achievable without applied linguistic. Corder () believes that applied linguistic is the vital code required for learning a language, i.e. applied linguistics plays the main role in language learning, because this science provides appropriate plans and describes the bases of language teaching (Alrabhi, 1995).

PART TWO: LANGUAGE LEARNING:

A major issue in practical linguistics is the process of language acquisition carried out by a child or an adult in order to learn one or more languages (Camry, 2007). There are discrepancies between competing theories regarding this process; but generally speaking, the process of language learning works according to an orderly system. There are different subdivisions for language learning processes:
1. Firth () assigns seven stages to the process of language learning.
2. Geseil () assigns 8 stages.
3. Ysperson () assigns 3 stages. (Musheer, 2014)
There are important theories of learning language such as behaviorism, structuralism and transformation.

BEHAVIORISM AND LANGUAGE LEARNING:

"American structuralism performs its linguistic explorations based on the behavioral psychology, and behaviorism", Watson () says, focusing upon physical existentialism (Hussein, 1983). In behaviorism:
A. All movements, and signals that are seen, felt, and urged can form behaviors (Abdulla, 1989).
B. No idea can become a behavior, unless it is felt. Its appearance and application in language hinge on being seen or felt. That's why some critics call it "behavior of language" (Heshin, 2002).
C. This theory regards the environment as an important basis for human capacity in all aspects of life including language use (Reza, 1993). In this respect, Skinner () believes that a child is a tabula rasa in the beginning, like an unburnt CD, and any idea can be recorded on it.
For the behaviorists, speech is the state in which the speaker is urging and answering in the following ways:
1. Every speech is the reaction of an interior agitation.
2. Producing the first word causes further interior agitation which, in turn, triggers the articulation of more words, and so the conversation continues.
He defines linguistic agitation as the situation in which the speaker speaks and, on the other hand, waits for the answer. In this way, Bloomfield thinks that the speaker agitates the listener to answer through a process of agitation. The speech and answers between people are two different manifestations of what is called linguistic expression (Hammed, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, the behaviorists regard language as an exterior behavior that is the result of stimulus and response. To support this concept, Skinner and Watson's theory will be described below.

Watson, the founder of the behaviorist school, thinks that there is no need to believe in thought in order to explain human activities including language. The behavior of human being can be described through reactions to agitations. He also believes that "thought" is no more than speaking to self. It can be converted into speech whenever desired (Raza, 2012).

Watson () is greatly interested in children's environment and thinks that it plays a great role in building the character of human being. He also pays attention to the role of the agitators in the process of learning. As a *Behaviorist,* he discusses the relation between linguistic behavior and thought and says, "Language is no more than an expressed habit like all the other behaviors of man".

According to Watson, the process of learning a language is as follows:

1. Every speaker learns some words that have forms and are related to concepts, things and events in the environment.
2. Every speaker who learns to speak, learns the connections among the words (Kamal, 2012).

Skinner (), in his comments, tries to connect language to the behavioral motives. Consequently, response to speech is related to the agitators. He provides five situations:
1. Request proves insistence on request.
2. Tact expresses unexpressed requests.
3. Echoism explains learning and repeating; i.e. learning process includes linguistic data and linguistic behaviors.
4. Textual processes insist on answering to written requests.
5. Inter-verbalism: It includes deducing things especially the hidden ones between the speaker and the listener (Kamal, 2012).

LANGUAGE LEARNING BASED ON THE THEORIES OF PRODUCTION AND TRANSFERRING:

After Chomsky's book "Syntactic Structures" was published, a new era of linguistic studies and more strictly syntactic ones started (Gridner, 1973). Chomsky wrote this book to discover and compose a universal grammar useful for the analysis of all languages spoken in the various parts of the world, and each one is characterized by its own characteristics and sentence structures.

Chomsky believes that the main goal of linguistics is to decipher the mechanisms of language acquisition by children. This topic arouses some significant questions which are regarded as the essence and the principles of the theory of production and transferring (Haji, 2009).

Chomsky also believes wholly in human desire to produce language. He states that a child is predisposed to language from its birth. This spontaneous predisposition needs appropriate environment to grow (Nawkhosh, 2005). The Formal Theory, which is formulated by Chomsky in the field of linguistics, is regarded an outstanding study. Chomsky made his main contribution to linguistics by his innate theory of language production in brain, regardless of his major efforts in diverse aspects of philosophy and psychology (Mores, 1988). His theory explains how novel expressions are articulated and comprehend, and how a great number of sentences are generated from a few expressions.

He pinpoints some ability levels necessary for language learning. He defines ability as the capacity and experience of individuals concerning their own language including cognitive information, and innate syntactic rules in mind which form an abstract ability (Radford, 2006). The categories of abilities playing a crucial role in language learning can be stated as follow:
1- Analytical competence: It relates to the appearance of knowledge in mind and how it is collected.
2- Descriptive competence: This takes the process of acquiring and learning a language into account.
3- Expectation competence: It tackles the anticipated ways that affect the learner's behavior and the methodological items for acquiring language in various environmental conditions (Mushir, 2014).
4- Pragmatic competence: It gives the ability to the speakers in different situations and uncovers the hidden capacities of them.

The pragmatic competence relies on the talents of human being. People possess five types of mental skills (Alshahri, 2003):
1- Mental skills that give the ability to produce a large amount of utterances by speakers which suit the environment.
2- Abilities that provides the speaker with extra ability to realize more information.
3- Abilities that help the speakers cognitively to get a good deal of information from the statements, and to use them according to the real needs.
4- Abilities that make speakers capable of understanding the surrounding in a better way.
5- Abilities that give the speaker the social skills needed to address the entire individuals according to their social class and importance.

According to Simon Dick (), the above skills function in different ways to empower the speaker to continuity and create an ability called pragmatic ability.

Chomsky disagrees with inheritance of a particular language. On the contrary, he emphasizes the spontaneous aspects of language, and simplicity of language learning by children. He says, "Children easily get to acquire the language and overcome the complications of any language through the surrounding sources and then, they

arrange them according the rules that they took from the items that they hear and comprehend" (Widdowson, 2008). Chomsky concludes that the children, from the early days of their lives, start acquiring language and they are ready to snatch all the hearing items and reuse them to produce their own expressions willingly and quite easily.

PART THREE: LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH APPLIED LINGUISTICS:

It has been mentioned earthier that some topics in applied linguistics stem from psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, speech problem, translation etc. One of the major issues in applied linguistics is language learning.

Due to the principles of applied linguistics, some steps are taken to learn a language:

1 – Selection: One of the learning strategies is that it could not be completely taught (Al-Rrajihi, 1995).

It is known that every language, expect for the formal and the standard ones, has a lot of dialects and accents which are classified to diverse categories like: legal, professional, etc., and each of the dialects and accents has its one features (Omer, 2006).

The question is which language, dialect or accent is going to be used in teaching someone a language?

The process of teaching a language should target a general form of language which is understood by its users and is less complicated in comparison with other dialects of the same language.

2 – Selection of common linguistic units should be based on linguistic forms and meanings, since a person cannot rely on just linguistic forms to learn a language (Musheer, 2014).

3 – A comparison of learner's native language and the foreign language he is trying to learn reveals similar words in his mental box. Although these similarities can cause learning problems, they can also be helpful if these two languages are from the same language family.

4 – According to the prick of teaching, it is better to start with verbal teaching without any written processes. For those who perfectly know their native languages, the teaching operation is much easier (Raza, 2012).

5 – Determining the mistakes: Making mistakes is quite normal in the process of learning a language. What is important is to define them, and mistake are classified according to the learners as follows:

A) In native language, they may stem from fear, tiredness, psychological, disease, doubt etc.

B) If the learner learns another language, mistakes may stem from teaching methods, and lack of information about the language and its system.

The following procedures should be done to solve the problems:
1) Determining the mistake.
2) Analyzing the mistakes.
3) Solving and correcting the mistakes (Rajihi, 1995).

6 – Teaching: The basic component in process of teaching according to applied linguistics is the "teacher", since the process of learning is implemented by the teacher. There are some prerequisites for a teacher to perform successfully.

A: He must be a specialist in the language he teaches.

B: He must be professional in the methods of teaching.

C: He must participate in teacher training courses from time to time to a aware of the new methods.

CONCLUSIONS:

Although, applied linguistics is a new science, compared to other branches of linguistics, it has remarkably developed in a short period of time by virtue of the importance of the learning a language. Nowadays, it is of a great value, since everyone must at least know another language, as well as his/her native tongue.

All linguistic theories like structural, cognitive, etc. focus on the process of teaching. According to the general theories, there are different opinions concerning language learning.

Based on the principles of applied linguistics, first or mother tongue has a role in learning the second language, especially if the second one belongs to the same family of languages.

Language should be taught utilizing scientific plans and coordinated steps.

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