

**A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF TWO OF THE THEORIES OF  
LANGUAGE ACQUISITION:  
(BEHAVIOURISM AND MENTALISM)**

**BY**

**ABUBAKAR ALIYU  
ADM NO: 1120105468**

**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MODERN  
EUROPEAN LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS FACULTY OF ARTS  
AND ISLAMIC STUDIES, USMANU DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY,  
SOKOTO, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE (HONS) IN ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE**

**NOVEMBER, 2015**

## CERTIFICATION

This project has been read and approved as meeting part of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Arts Degree. (Hons) English Language in the Department of Modern European Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

---

Dr. Shehu Ibrahim Sidi  
SUPERVISOR

---

Date

---

Dr. Muhammad Aminu Mode  
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

---

Date

---

EXTERNAL EXAMINER

---

Date

## **DEDICATION**

This research work is dedicated to my late Parents: Aliyu kaka and Hauwa Aliyu. May their souls rest in perfect peace Ameen.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My profound gratitude goes to the Almighty Allah for his mercy and protection throughout my stay in the University and making this study a reality. To my amiable and understanding supervisor Dr. Shehu Ibrahim Sidi, thanks for the help and advises during the course of this work.

Also to my late parents and of course my super uncle, words can not be enough to express my gratitude.

I really appreciate my siblings Jamila, Saratu, Samira and Shafaa'tu, you guys are great.

To my dearest friends which are too many to mention, I bless the day I met you, thanks for being there, we shall succeed in Allah's Name (Ameen).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	i
Certification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	ii
Dedication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iii
Acknowledgements	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iv
Table of contents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

v

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

1.1	Background Statement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.2	The purpose of study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
1.3	The objectives of the study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
1.4	The delimitation/Scope of the study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
1.5	Methodology applied	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature review

2.1	The theories of language acquisition	-	-	-	-	7
2.2	Jean Piaget's view on language acquisition and cognitive development in children	-	-	-	-	8
2.3	Social Interactionist theory	-	-	-	-	10
2.4	Input Hypothesis or Monitor model	-	-	-	-	11
2.5	Behaviourism Mentalism	-	-	-	-	12
2.5.1	Behaviourism	-	-	-	-	12
2.5.2	Mentalism	-	-	-	-	15
2.6	Hypothesis making Device	-	-	-	-	17
2.7	Linguistic universals	-	-	-	-	17
2.8	Evaluation procedure	-	-	-	-	18

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methodology**

3.0	Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21
3.1	Study population	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
3.2	Sample	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
3.3	Sampling technique	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
3.4	Method of data collection	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
3.5	Method of data analysis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
3.6	Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

4.0	Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25
4.1	Observation of utterances of 3½ years old	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25
4.2	Observation of utterances of 2½ years old	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
4.3	Morphology level of the child's language process	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33

4.4	Syntax level of the child's language	-	-	-	-	33
4.5	Semantic level of the child's language	-	-	-	-	34
4.6	Phonological level of the child's language	-	-	-	-	35
4.7	The difference between the utterance of 3½ - years old and 2½ years old	-	-	-	-	36
4.8	A critical review of the theories of language acquisition	-	-	-	-	37

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

	Summary of Findings and Conclusion	-	-	-	-	37
	Bibliography	-	-	-	-	40

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background Statement**

Language forms the fundamental function of communication. As social beings, we use it as our medium of communication to help us communicate with people that live both within and beyond our regional/geographical locations just as it is the case that other people from within and outside our environment do communicate with us. Language occurs almost wherever we come into contact with other people and will be different according to the nature of the contact. It is noted that our lives take us through a succession of activities requiring the use of language. The activities are very diverse and, what ever dialect we speak, have specific feature of language associated with them. Many activities are connected with our jobs. One may be an engineer giving instructions to a draughtsman; a lawyer advising a client; a trade union official discussing fringe benefits; a bus conductor collecting transport. Fares; A sergeant instructing a soldier; or a scientist reading a technical report. Other activities are part of our leisure. We may be playing tennis, football, or

volley ball. Or relating to our home life, we may be acting as a mother, a father, a husband, a wife, a son or a daughter.

To acquire language in the actual sense seems to depend on the linguistic atmosphere in which the child is brought up. Skinner (1957) stresses that language is not a mental phenomenon but a behavioral one. Alllen and Burren (1971:135) hold the view that language is essentially an adventitious construct, taught by conditioning or drill and explicit explanation,, or by built-up elementary data processing procedures. "language acquisition is controlled by the condition under which it takes place and that as long as individuals are subject to the same conditions they will learn the same way", (Wilkins, 1972:169-4). This might be the reason why a child raised in Hausa speaking community will acquire Hausa language. One brought up in China acquires Chinese and vice versa incase that happens to take place.

It is worth to note that there are linguists that do not give much emphasis to the linguistic atmosphere that language learner/acquirer finds himself; but rather stress much emphasis on a learners'/acquirer's innate language learning/acquiring capacity. According to Atchison (1989,p.55) 'Human are genetically imprinted with knowledge about language'. This claim seems to have gone inline with the observation made by Fodor

(1974), Bever and Garrett (1974) who stressed that training a dog to walk on its hind legs does not prejudice the claim the bipedal gait is genetically coded in humans. “The fact that human begins can learn/acquire to whistle like a lark does not prejudice the species-specificity of birdsong” Fodor, Bever and Garrett (12974, p. 451).

With these claims in mind therefore, it might be right to assume that other animals’ inability to talk, acquire or learn language in its actual sense supports the assumption that language is restricted to human race alone.

The aim of the study is to establish the fact that language is so important to human beings that we can not exist without it as the medium through which we transact all our worldly affairs I equally intend to establish that there is a need for all of us (students of English language to realize that there exists distinction between language acquisition and language learning. Then I finally want to state that in this project, I will critically examine some of the theories of language acquisition. The views of mentalists and behaviorists are specifically the ones that will be discussed in this write up.

## **1.2 The Purpose of the Study.**

In this project I intend to explore and discuss, very critically, some of the theories of language acquisition. In essence, particularly aim to critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of behaviorists and mentalists theories before we eventually state our stand. The project topic has been given different titles in different periods, suggesting angles and different foci by different people especially scholars of linguistics and psycholinguistics. However, I am of the view that the plausibility of their words needs to be accepted or rejected on marital basis. It is with that fundamental objective in mind I decided to undertake this project.

I hope among other things that some of the important contributions of this research work would include additional knowledge or all theories of language acquisition, provide additional data on language acquisition research works especially those that's elected and critically examine Behaviorists and mentalists views. I hope it would equally assist towards contributing to the growing literature on acquisition/learning of language generally.

## **1.3 The Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are:

- (1) To critically evaluate two of the theories of language acquisition and learning (Behaviourism and Mentalism).
- (2) To explore the extent to which behaviouralist and mentalist theories of language acquisition influence in acquisition of language.

#### **1.4 THE DELIMITATION/SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The project, due to time and space factors, will only attempt to critically discuss two theories of language acquisition/learning with special attention or contrastive Analysis of the behaviorist and mentalist theories.

#### **1.5 METHODOLOGY APPLIED**

In the course of this project, both primary and secondary source materials would be used. I would mainly make use of fact gathered from text books, periodicals and consultations with the project supervisor, lecturers, colleagues and friends who seem to have got reasonable quality and quality data materials that could help make this project a big success.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW:

#### 2.1 THE THEORIES OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

It has been noted that various contributions have been put forward by scholars of various disciplines like psychology, Science, Psycholinguistics and Linguistics on what the term “Theory refers. With passage of time, advancement in civilization and increasing awareness of the value of research project, each theory is found either gaining more acceptance or suffering hot criticisms and thereby getting condemned because of its proven fallacies. Meanwhile, let us consider how some scholars defined the term in question.

Lawrence P. (1986:68) defines theory as “a system of hypothesis which can be shown to be true or false by process of verification”. On the other hand, Johnson O. (1989:3) gives the meaning of theory as “a way of interpreting, criticizing and unifying established generalizations”. From the above definitions, it is possible to draw conclusion that a theory fundamentally refers to an idea, an explanation or a principle for interpreting a thing. Hence, there can hardly be a theory that is accusation free, in as much as there exist differences amongst human beings

themselves. However, although each theory is subject to dispute when applied and verified, it is worth of note that theories are generally of great significance. After all, theories of language acquisition/learning help us to realize that individuals are to considerable extent, the same in their language acquisition/learning capabilities taking into account that there are some characteristics that are shared by all the acquire/learn language despite some areas of personal variations as determined by heredity and/or environmental influences.

## **2.2 JEAN PIAGET'S VIEW ON LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN**

Piaget's adventurous foray into developmental psycho-linguistics began when he worked under the direction of the famous Binet of the Standard Binet intelligence Test. Fascinated by the large proportion of wrong answers at different chronological stages for children, piaget became interested and what children come to know what they know and what it is they know at different stages. This primary objective predisposes him to ascertain the functions of language and the needs its serve for children. In this regard, Piaget notes Kess (p.101), sees two stages in the aspect of the child's development and labels them egocentric speech and socialized speech. The egocentric speech, which lacks any communicative

intent on the part of the child, is addressed to anyone who happened to be within learning range and gave no evidence that the child was attempting to take into account the knowledge or interests of a specific listener. Included in this category are three kinds of speech: repetition of words and syllables serving no obvious social function, monologues where the child talks to himself, as thinking aloud and collective monologues where a second person serves as a stimulus for the child's speech. Piaget explains that the speech is egocentric (i.e. self-centered) not because the child is uninterested in considering the views and needs of other people but because he does not understand that their view and needs are differentiated from his own. This cognitive egocentrism is taken as an indication that the child progresses from one state to the next, he essentially moves through a phase in which he becomes conscious of the other speakers' point of view. At this stage, when his utterances reflect some communicative intent, the child is said to have recorded a triumphant entry into the Jerusalem of socialized speech. In essence, this interpretation of egocentric speech, notes Eliot (p. 40) reflects two characteristics of Piaget's view on child development: that language primarily reflects thought and does not shape it and that the child has to develop into a social being from a stage of being imperfectly socialized.

## **2.3 SOCIAL INTERACTIONIST THEORY**

Social interactionist theory is an explanation of language development emphasizing the role social interaction between the developing child and linguistically knowledgeable adults. It is based largely on the social cultural theories of soviet psychologist, Lev Vygotsky.

Approach to language acquisition research has focused on the three areas, namely; the cognitive approach to language acquisition or developmental cognitive theory of Jean piaget, the information processing approach or the information processing model of Brain Macwhinney and Elizabeth Bates (The competition model) and the social interactionist approach or social interaction model of Lev Vygotsky (social cultural theory). Although the initial research was essential descriptive in an attempt to describe language development from the stand point of social development, more recently researcher have been attempting to explain a few varieties of acquisition in which learner factors lead to differential acquisition by the process of socialization called the theory of ‘social interactionst’ approach.

## 2.4 INPUT HYPOTHESIS OR MONITOR MODEL

This is a group of five hypotheses of second language acquisition developed by the linguist Stephen Krashen in the 1970s and 1980s. Krashen originally formulated the input hypothesis as just one of the five hypotheses but over hypotheses as a group. The hypotheses are the input hypothesis, the acquisition learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis.

The hypotheses put primary importance in the comprehensible input (CI) that language learners are exposed to understand spoken and written language input is seen as the only mechanism that results in the increase of underlying linguistics competence and language output is not seen having any effect on learners ability. Furthermore, Krashen claimed that linguistic competence is only advanced when language is subconsciously acquired and that conscious learning cannot be used as a source of spontaneous language production. Finally, learning is seen to be heavily dependent on the mood of the learner, with learning being impaired if the learner is under stresses or does not want to learn the language. As hinted earlier on therefore, the following are the theories intended to be discussed. (Behaviourism and mentalism.

## **2.5 (BEHAVIOURISM AND MENTALISM)**

### **BEHAVIOURISM**

The theory of Behaviourism has many followers among whom are Watson (1931), Thorndike (1913), Bloomfield (1933) and Skinner (1957). According to Behaviorists view point, no linguistic structure is innate. They claim that language is acquired/learned through experience, because they accept as evidence only that which they are able to observe, so that their data for language acquisition. Learning are those which they hear. For behaviorists, learning/acquiring language is controlled by the condition under which it takes place and that as long as individuals are subjected to the same conditions they will learn/acquire language in the same way (Wilkins, 1972: 161-163). To behaviorists, experience and environmental factors condition the models of behavior. This is supported by Allen and Buren (1971:135) who hold the view that language is essentially taught by conditioning or drill and explicit explanation, or by built-up elementary data processing procedures. They believed stimulus- response mechanism despite the fact that type of mechanism has been views as symbolizing the most elementary kind of acquisition/learning in which a particular stimulus is linked to a particular identifying or recognizing response.

For Skinner (1957), language is not a mental phenomenon but a behavioral one. This is because it is like other forms of human behaviour which have acquired/learned by the process of habit formation. The behaviorists hold that the child/individual imitates patterns and sounds that he hears and listens to (Stimulus and response procedure) and for such achievement people usually offer reward or reinforcement. When a child or an individual notices such encouragement, he repeats the uttered sounds to get more rewards and by so doing his behaviour is conditioned.

It is worth that Wilkins (1972;125) stresses that for reinforcement to be effective it has to follow the responses as quickly as possible. For instance, a language acquirer/learner feels satisfied when he realizes that his response is approved.

The approval could be in form of gift, attention or praise for correct utterance or performance as the situation dictates. After all, feedback/reinforcement does not only inform the acquirer/learner of his progress of being on the right track it tells him whether a pronunciation is acceptable or not but also serves to maintain motivation by keeping a concerned individual at it. It is noted however, that there is a delicate balance which depends on the learner's previous experience of success. For instance, people with successful history of learning behind them have

the confidence to keep on slogging because they boot themselves to succeed sooner or later in life. But on the other side of the coin, those learners that are either young children or older people that have experienced failures need to be given quick and regular reinforcement to let them encouraged all along. For behaviorists therefore, repetition plays a very significant role in the sense that language learner/acquirer usually learns or acquires better what has been uttered many times than that which is said once or just a few times.

### **MENTALISM:**

The followers of mentalism theory hold that language is acquired/learned by human beings, to a great extent, in the same way not because they are necessarily put in the same situation but because they have an in born(Innate) (Chomsky1996) mechanism for language acquisition/learning. The possessed innate capacity in question helps them to acquire/learn language as a normal maturational process. Thus capacity is innate universal and species-species-specific to human beings alone. According to (Wilkins 1972:168-171), language is far too complex a form of behaviour to be accounted for in terms of external features of an individual. Furthermore, the linguist and mentalist scholar-Noam Chomsky (1959), stresses that behaviourism theory is quite incapable to explain our ability to

acquire/learn and use our mother-tongue. He condemns the idea of behaviorists, pointing out that language responses are under the control of internal stimulus. Chomsky argues that fundamentally only human beings use language as it were. All other animals do not in the actual sense. He maintains that since all actual human beings learn/acquire their language successfully, they should have got internal capacity for language that other animals also do not get. And since this capacity can not be acquired socially, then it should be fundamentally innate.

In Chomsky's contribution to the hypothesis of innateness, he proposed the existence of language acquisition device-the means that is usually abbreviated as "L.A.D" for short. This device/means according to Chomsky, has the capacity/power to make hypothesis about the structure of language to which it is exposed. For Chomsky, L.A.D has three (3) components or elements namely: Hypothesis making device, linguistic Universals; and evaluation procedure as could be seen discussed below:

## **2.6 HYPOTHESIS MAKING DEVICE**

According to Chomsky, it is this device that helps language acquires/learners to formulate hypothesis to their language structure as evident in the example below:

Talk - Talked

Look - Looked

Tell - Telled \* instead of told

Take - Taked \* instead of took

Pay - Payed \* instead of paid

## **2.7 LINGUISTIC UNIVERSAL**

Presumably, this guides the child's hypothesis because there are obviously distinct features that are common to all languages. With Chomsky's most recent work in mind, linguistic Universal could be subdivided into two types namely formal and functional universal. The formal Universals. The formal Universals specify the form of rules in grammar, the vocabulary in which they are stated and the way in which they operate. For instance. For formal universals might define a class of phonological distinctive feature as voiced and devoiced 'th' as in 'This' and 'Thin'. The theory might also define a class of syntactic category such as Noun phrase (NP) that may be used in the formation of syntactic rules. In the case of semantic too, the feature might be defined as Animate or Human, Male or Female and so on as is available of the formulation of semantic rules.

Functional universals on the other hand, specify the way in which the rules apply to the actual linguistic data meant to describe. These universals are those that state how the grammar fits the data and how the particular rules of grammar apply in the analysis of any given sentence.

## **2.8 EVALUATION PROCEDURE**

This helps a child to choose from a number of possibilities. Chomsky maintains that it is these three elements – (Hypothesis making device, linguistic universal and evaluation procedure) that constitute the internal language acquisition device with the help of which any child learns/acquires any language without much difficulty and without which hardly there can be a child that can learn/acquire any language. Furthermore, Chomsky stresses that the brain of a child is programmed with an outline of the structure of language in general. He adds that man is biologically programmed to speak a language and can do so in what ever language environment he is put into.

It is worth noting that Chomsky and other Linguists or Scholars of his type argue that if not because of an innate mechanism for language learning/acquisition what can be the reason for other animals not speaking language like that of human beings? With this in mind therefore, the fact

that animals do not speak a language and that any normal, healthy human child can acquire a language in spite of its complexities, does so with perfect ease in the absence of any overt or explicit instructions lends support for an innate mechanism for language learning/acquisition. After all, a child comes into the world with very specific innate endowment not only with general tendencies and potentialities, but also with knowledge of the nature of language. This shows that therefore, children are born with knowledge of grammatical relations and categories. For instance, subjects verbs and objects. Nouns, determiners and auxiliary elements which are universal. In addition also, the child has a hypothesizing and testing device which helps him to determine from very small amounts of experience with language of all possible languages regardless of which ever he is exposed to.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The chapter highlights various methods used in the course of this study. The methods were carried out in stages, since language acquisition advances past a number of milestones.

It should be noted that learning a language is knowing about language formally. This is because, it seems to be a “conscious” or “explicit” knowledge of rules, as the learner is aware of what he is learning, and is able to talk about them. Over the years, some theories of language learning have been developed and a lot has been said about them. Some of these theories with regard to this research project are behaviorism and mentalism. With the above in this research project fundamentally aimed at studying the theories in question and coming out with some linguistic criticism of the theories. The major sources of our research data are the libraries and consultations with resources persons deemed appropriate. For instance, in the course of our data collection, we found it necessary and important to base our research on some selected text books and periodicals that we felt were relevant to our topic of research.

We carried out consultations with our project supervisor, lecturers, students of psycholinguistics and students of linguistics. This method of data collection introduced us to the problems of finding relevant texts, analyzing the facts found, summarizing and para-phrasing the quotations used in the project.

However, at the end of the research project, the impact of this method of data collection to the reader(s) of this research project can not be over emphasized.

### **3.1 Study Population**

The population of this research work covers children between the ages of two and a half and three and a half years respectively, which were observed within two weeks (17<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> August, 2015).

### **3.2 Sample**

The research sample involves two children in which the two and a half years old is a female by name sayyida while the three and a half year old is a male named sadiya.

### **3.3 Sampling Technique**

The children from our house have been observed under the stages of language acquisition. Children are known for imitation of adult speeches during the telegraphic stages but with this research work the children are observed critically and also used for comparative study with reference to the other works of a psychologist, and linguists who have contribute immensely to the study of language acquisition in children.

### **3.4 Method of Data Collection**

In the course of this research work the following methods was used to collect data from children.

**(i) Observation**

**(ii) Interview**

In the light of the above, it is expedient to use observation as a method of data collection because children tend to imitate adult speeches during the telegraphic stages. Therefore, the best option is to adopt the observation method where the children are monitored closely and any of their action relating to language acquisition recorded.

### **3.5 Method of Data Analysis**

Attempt is made to present the data as it was collected and also analyse the data presented. The data is presented on children's language acquisition in Hausa translation and their morphological, syntactic and semantic variations. The analysis is in such a way as to enable the researcher to get a comprehensive result.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The chapter has described the general methodology for the study including how the data of this research is collected, methodology used in collecting it and the sampling techniques adopted.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### 4.0 Introduction

The chapter presents and analyses what the researcher observes from the children utterances with some relevant examples and also a comparative study of how children use language and various views of discerning scholars such as Jean Piaget a cognitive psychologist who provided some valuable insight on children developmental processes including that of his daughter-Jacqueline.

#### 4.1 Observation of Utterances of 3½ Old

The true speech stage; (3-6 years) from this stage a normal child is already attempting to use the speeches that are syntactically complex. He uses various transformation rules he has internalized to generate complex sentences, although he sometimes over generalizes the rules.

According to Jean Piaget, a cognitive psychologists in his stage of child cognitive development, a child at this stage is classified under pre-operational state. At this stage, Piaget said they possess images, words and concepts but they can't do anything with them. He also uphold the view

that language development is related to cognitive development, that is the development of the child's thinking determines when the child can learn to speak and what the child can learn to speak and what the child can say. For example, before a child can say "this care's bigger than that one" he/she must have developed the ability to judge differences in size. In Piaget's view, children learn to talk 'naturally' when they are 'ready' without any deliberate teaching by adults.

In the light of the above Sayyida the 3½ year old from our house was observed as shown below:

Utterances of Sayyida (3½ Year Old)

*What are you dome? lajumpi*

What are you doing? I'm jumping

*Shuhita*

*Suhita*

Letthem go out

*Can zaasuookoota*

*Nan Zaasu dauko shi*

They will bring him from here

*Sun ookootayyanzu*

*Sun dauko ta yanzu*

They have fetched her

*Su sani sun ookotaummikasuwa*

*Wai ciwo gare?*

*Wayyo ciwo garai?*

*Is it painful?*

*Abiba tattaso da jijji*

*Habiba ta taso da jirgi*

*Habiba is on her way on a boarded flight*

*Bakki taka mani takalmi*

*Karki tata mani takalmi*

Don't step on my shoe

*Wai kyaka?*

*Waya kira ka*

Who called you?

*Mashin ina ya lalace nan*

*Mashin dina ya lalace nan*

My bike (toy) broke down here

*Aisha kin gani ko?*

Aisha can you see?

*Kama kabo-kabo machi dinman ko?*

*Kamar kabu-kabu mashindi nnan?*

This bike looks like a commercial one, does it not?

*Na mance da keke ina cici naki*

*Na mance da keke dina cikin daki*

I forgot my bike inside the room

*Bacei nika jewa*

*Bacci nika ji*

I feel like sleeping

*Aya in gani*

*Tsaya in gani*

*Wait, let me see*

*Ina tate?*

*Ina Take?*

*Where is she?*

*Ban gane ta wa*

*Ban gane ta ba*

I did not see her

*Tana dida ko?*

*Tana gida ko?*

Is she at home?

*Bali in hita in dawo*

*Bari in fita in dawo*

Let me go and I will be back

*Towo ki shiga*

*Taho ki shiga*

Come and enter

*Ha 'ima za'a kale min baki*

*Fatima zata fashe min baki*

Fatima is trying to break my mouth

*Ade nan*

*Aje nan*

Keep it here

*Ina data kaijeri*

*Ina gyara kujeri*

I'm arranging the chairs

## 4.2 Observation of utterances of Sadiya the 2½ Years Old Child

*Baba ga mamata*

*Baba ga mamata*

Father here is my mum

*Anwuwa zansha*

*Ruwa xansha*

I will drink water

*Dada dashi*

*Dada gashi*

*Alas, here is it*

*Ufe*

*Rufe*

Close it

*Mama uwo zanyi*

*Mama tuwo zanci*

Mother I want eat food

*Bani*

Give me

*Ingam ummu*

*Cingam ummu*

I want chewing gum ummu

*Ina sha bobo*

*Kina shan bobo*

Will you take 'bobo'

*Mana inani?*

*Mama ina yini*

Mama good afternoon

*Ina na?*

*Menene?*

What is it?

*Ina ci inkaaa*

*King cin shinkafa*

Will you eat rice?

#### **4.3. Morphology level of the Child's Language Process**

At the age of three to four year, the child moves beyond the telegraphic stage. He incorporates some of the inflectional morphemes which indicate the grammatical function of the nouns and verbs used. The *ing* is usually the first to appear "the three and a half year old" in his expression he said; '*What are you dome ala jumping*'. It conforms to Piaget's cognitive development in children; he opined that: a child at this stage acquires the tools of thought but does not possess the skills to use them. Piaget refers to this process as the "process of reflecting abstraction" (Piaget, 2001)

#### **4.4 Syntax Level of the Child's Language**

At this level of the child's syntax at this age or stage is random imitation; it is the basic of a child's expression. The three and a half year old is being asked to repeat what he heard. However, he annexed his

expression by constant and random imitation. According to his expression in Hausa language he said:

*Nan zaa su ookooshi*

*Nan zaasu daukoshi*

(They will bring him from here)

It is very obvious that he understand what the adult is saying. He just has his own way of expressing it. To piaget he called this process ‘empirical abstraction” (Piaget, 2001).

#### **4.5 Semantic Level of the Child Language Process**

At this level children use their limited vocabulary to refer to a large number of unrelated objects. Interm of hyponymy, the child at this level almost and always uses the middle level term in a hyponymous set. The children semantic expressions are displayed below:

*“sun ookootaa yanzu”*

*“su daukota yanzu”*

(they’ve fetched her now)

To piaget, by constant and random repetition of his language, it cuts across a wide range of objects, the child establishes a new level of knowledge and insight. This he terms, the process of forming a “new cognitive stage” to

construct new ways of dealing with objects and new knowledge about objects themselves.

#### **4.6 Phonological Level of the Child's Language**

At this level, children are unable to produce all the sounds of their LI (native language) with equal facility. The expression of the child under study is as follows:-

*Abiba tattaso da jijji.*

*Habiba tattaso da jirgi*

*Bakki taka muna takalmi*

*Karki taka mani takalmi*

*Jijji-jirgi*

*Takam ni-takalmi*

In view of the above, children often substitute one sound in a word for another e.g *ni for mi*

To Piaget, at this level a child forms his own expression by substitution. He opined that children imitate sounds similar to those of adults by differently.

At this stage, their speech organs are still not matured for constant and stable production.

#### **4.7. The Differences Between the Utterances of 3½ Year Old and 2½ Year Old**

At the age of 2 there is a tremendous expansion in the child's vocabulary. In addition, the numbers of words that constitute his utterances have increased to two or three words and most of them are concrete objects. For instance the utterances of the 2½ year old are as follows:

*Ina sha bobo*

*Mama Ina ni.*

The above mentioned utterances show that at the age of two, there is tremendous expansion in the child's vocabulary from one to three. At this stage the child's utterances are usually composed of three words. While at the age of three a normal child is already attempting to use true speeches that are syntactically complex. He now uses various transformation rules he has internalized to generate complex sentences, although he sometimes over-generalizes the rules. For instance the utterances of the 3½ year old is as follows:

*Kama kabo-kabo mashin dinnan ko?*

*Na mance da keke ina cicin aki*

The above mentioned utterances show that at the age of three and a half, there is a tremendous expansion in the child's vocabulary from three to multiple. At this stage, the child uses multiple words.

#### **4.8 A Critical Review of the Theories of Language Acquisition/Learning**

The Behaviorism and Mentalism theories of language acquisition/learning are not criticism-free in the sight of critics especially with a view to helping teachers of language students of psychology, students of psycholinguistics, students of linguistics and the like scholars to get proper understanding and proper sense of direction on how language acquisition/learning procedures operate.

Many linguistics have unveiled the problems of language acquisition/learning theories of a language that is exposed to the target language form four to six hours a week during the school term can not begin to approximate to the amount of exposure experienced all his working hours by a child learning his first language. This shows that Wilkins is comparing language learning school with language learning outside school despite mentalist belief in in-nateness which was shown here to be incompatible. However, until the learner has reached a very high stage or

proficiency indeed, his cognitive abilities and communicative needs far outstrip his means of expressing himself in the second language. For this, the learner is denied, for most of the learning process, the satisfaction of being able to talk about what he wants to talk (Ingrams: 1975:287-8).

It is also worthy of observation that language learners must master at least the basic properties of the linguistic system of the second language. The areas of phonology, syntax, lexicon and the writing system must be learned. These according to Nelson K. (1980):379-80) present particular problems with the target language that differ substantially from the learner's first language. However, though mentalists theory is intended to account for human behaviour, its empirical evidence is very slender indeed.

This rests on the kind of evidence about child language learning which seems to be open to alternative explanations and equally on universal characteristics of language which seems to require a particular kind of mental structure.

On the part of behaviorist, the criticisms have equally been cited. This can be seen from different views. On the various behaviorists theories of how language is acquired/learned, Lawrence, P. (1986) is of the view that they

are similar and based on observable facts and thus inadequate. After all, if the speaker does not speak the language fluently, learner will never learn it unless he is able to find some additional sources from which to learn. Equally, since one can only learn/acquire responses by responding oneself, one would expect a great deal of language activity by the learners themselves. They would be given the opportunity to repeat numerous times each new piece of language that they encounter. But by contrast, little of what they were acquiring/learning would be explained to them. Thus we would notice the absence of formal explanation. However, observation of children learning language also suggests that there are occasions on which pieces of language are learned simply through being heard. A word may be heard once or perhaps more than that, but not produced by the child at the same time it is heard. There is no active responding and consequently no reinforcement and no repetition. In spite of this, the children suddenly produce the word quite correctly in a totally new context.

Furthermore, however useful the Behaviorist notions of reinforcement and repetition may be, they do not relate to conditions that are essential for learning to take place. It is equally argued that carefully planned schedules of reinforcement are necessary, since learning will take place whether or not the individual is reinforced. There could have been

need for the amount of active participation in language production that the behaviorist and others require, take place without repetition and purely active responding. However, this is because experimentation that lies behind behaviorist view is with animals and is obviously not concerned with language behaviours.

In view of the fact that there is no amount of coaching, teaching, practice, advice and reinforcement that can make a person acquire/learn the infinite number of expressions and grammatical constructions that are possible in a language by mere stimulus response (Skinner, 1957) exercises. It is clear, then that both mentalist and behaviorist theorists claims and challenges should be studied thoroughly and carefully.

After all, it is noted that people in the course of acquiring/learning language, are found playing active role and not just passive recipients of specially accepted patterns. They actively strain, filter and recognize what they are exposed to and by so doing, their imitations are not photographic reproduction of language being acquired/learned but artistic recreations.

For the reasons above coupled with the fact that learning/acquiring a language is not a process of learning/acquiring or memorizing an infinite set of sentences. This is an artistic language learning/acquiring process

which enables the learner or acquirer of language the ability to creatively use the learned/acquired language in different contexts to generate a variety of sentences. We are of the view that neither behaviorism nor mentalism can comprehensively account for language acquisition/learning. For that reason therefore, we are of the view that a combination of the two theories, behaviourism and mentalism, can quite reasonably and comprehensively account for language acquisition/learning. Further supportive reasons for our discussion would be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

It has been noted that the contemporary study of the acquisition of language by children has arisen out of the overlapping interests of psychologists and linguists. The role of language in relation to child development and cognition has always been recognized as one of psychology's prime concern.

What has seemed to have been found in the assumptions of both theories (behaviorism and mentalism) could be summarized as follows:

- (1) The work has established that Imitation obviously plays an important role in the development of pronunciation but it is not the whole story.
- (2) The work has been able to demonstrate that a pattern even though presented with the correct adult model several times. A child begins to say "nobody don't like me" the mother corrected with No, say "Nobody likes me" but the child ignores.
- (3) Another finding is that, when the child is exposed to language, certain language structuring principles automatically commences to operate. The model that is used to indicate what is going on is

that of the (L.A.D) this device is essentially a hypothesis about those features of the structure of language which are progressively used as the child matures.

- (4) In as much as the fact remains that every normal human child is born with a built in language-learning mechanism (Chomsky, 1966) that enables him to pick up the speech of his people unconsciously, that human beings are not born with a kind of predisposition to learn/acquire any one language rather than any other.
- (5) That almost every normal human being can acquire/learn any language in the world regardless of race and parentage, that the actual acquisition of a particular language fundamentally depends on the linguistic atmosphere in which the individual is brought up.
- (6) That language in the actual sense seems to be restricted to humans species alone and that language in the actual sense seems to be having certain attributes found in other language and that the ability to talk and understand language is genetically but the particular language that human beings speak is culturally and environmentally transmitted to them.

(7) Neither behaviourist nor mentalist theory in isolation seemed to have effectively accounted for language acquisition.

Having found that there is no way we could reasonably depend on any of the above theories to account for language acquisition, I conclude by admitting that, the Krashen, theory of language acquisition could be viewed as the solution to the puzzle. In other words, the Krashen theory is not only the latest of them but also seems to have been able to incorporate the basic elements that are found in both behaviourism and mentalist theories.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adesanoye, F.I (1979), "*Patterns of Deviations in Written English in Nigeria*" Journal of language Arts and communication. 1:1.
- Adjemian, C. (1976) *On the Nature of Inter language Systems*; language learning. 101
- Aleen J. P.B. (1971).And Bureen Van P. (Eds): *Selected Reading* (London, Oxford University Press,
- Bloomfield, L. (1931).*Language* New York: Henry Holt
- Chomsky, N. Review of skinner, B.F(1959) "*Verbal behaviour* (Language 35).
- Crystal, D.(1987) *Child Language, Learning and Linguistics*. An over view for the Teaching Therapeutic Professions, (Second edition).
- Dennis, (1977) *Reading in Psychology for the Teacher*. London: Holt, Rinchart and Winston.
- Hatch, EV (ed) (1978) *Second Language Acquisition*, Raw lay Mass.
- Ingrams, D. (1975) *If and When Transformations are Acquired by Chidden*; monograph series on Language and Linguistics. George town University.
- Jakobavits,L.A 'I (1968).implications of Recent Psycholinguistics Development for the Teachings of Second Language"  
Language learning 18,
- McNiel, (1966) *Mother Child Dialogue, the theories of second language learning*.

Milanghlin, B. (1987) *The Theories of Second Language Learning*.

Nelson, K. (1980) *Children's Language*. Vol 2. New York, Gardener Press.

Peter, H. (1970) *An Introduction to the Psychology of Language* Methuen and Co, Ltd, London.

Piaget, J. (1962) *Comments on Ygotsky's Critical Remarks Concerning 'The Language and Thought of the Children and Judgments and Reasoning in the Child'* Cambridge, mass. MIT Press.

Krashen, S.D. (1987) *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*