References:

Brown, D. H. (2000). *Principles of language learning & teachin*g. (4th ed.). New York: Longman. (pp. 1-19)
Lightbown, P.M. & Spada, N. (1993). *How Languages are Learned*. Oxford University Press. (pp. 2-4 , pp. 21-22 , & p. 26)

*Core Linguistics (general/theoretical/pure/mainstream)***:**

General (or theoretical) linguistics encompasses a number of sub-fields, such as the study of:

- grammar (language structure)
- semantics (meaning)
- phonology, the study of sound systems and abstract sound units
- phonetics, which is concerned with the actual properties of speech sounds (phones), non-speech sounds, and how they are produced and perceived

The study of grammar encompasses:
- morphology (formation and alteration of words)
- syntax (the rules that determine the way words combine into phrases and sentences)

*Applied linguistics***:**

- Theoretical linguistics are concerned with finding and describing generalities both within particular languages and among all languages. Applied linguistics take the results of those findings and *applies* them to other areas.

- Applied linguistics is an interdisciplinary field of study that identifies, investigates, and offers solutions to language-related real life problems.

- Some of the academic fields related to applied linguistics are education, linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology.

- As a consequence, applied linguistics research tends to be interdisciplinary in practice and as a result many linguists have expanded the frontiers of their enquiry beyond the traditional three areas of core linguistics to include many areas.

- Major branches of applied linguistics include bilingualism and multilingualism, computer-mediated communication (CMC), conversation analysis (CA), language assessment, literacies, discourse analysis, language pedagogy, sociolinguistics, second language acquisition (SLA), language planning and policies, pragmatics, forensic linguistics, and translation.

Is there one definition for language? NO

Different definitions of *Language*:

> *Concise Columbia Encyclopedia* (1994, p.479): "systematic communication by vocal symbols"
> Pinker's *The language Instinct* (1994, p.18): Language is a complex, specialized skill, which develops in the child spontaneously without conscious effort or formal instruction, is deployed without awareness of its underlying logic, is qualitatively the same in every individual, and is distinct from more general abilities to process information or behave intelligently.
> Standard definitions in introductory textbooks (as cited in Brown, 2002, p. 5): Language is a system of arbitrary conventionalized vocal, written, or gestural symbols that enable members of a given community to communicate intelligibly with one another.

Other definitions (as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 2)

> Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols, which permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture to communicate or to interact. (Finocchiaro, 1964, p. 8)
> Language is a system of communication by sound, operating through organs of speech and hearing, among members of a given community, and using vocal symbols possessing arbitrary conventional meanings. (Pei, 1966, p. 141)
> Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication (Wardhaugh, 1972, p. 3)
> [Language is] any means, vocal or other, of expressing or communicating feelings or thoughts… a system of conventionalized signs, especially words, or gestures having fixed meanings (Neilson, 1934, p. 1390).
> [Language is] a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings (Gove, 1961, p. 1270)

A consolidation of a number of possible definitions yields:

1. Language is systematic – possibly a generative system.
2. Language is a set of arbitrary symbols.
3. Those symbols are primarily vocal, but may be visual.
4. The symbols have conventionalized meanings to which they refer.
5. Language is used for communication.
6. Language operates in a speech community or culture.
7. Language is essentially human, although possibly not limited to humans.
8. Language is acquired by all people in much the same way – language and language learning both have universal characteristics.

These definitions do not mask the sophistication of the linguistic research underlying each concept:

1. Explicit and formal accounts of the system of language on several possible levels (phonological, syntactic, and semantic).
2. The symbolic nature of language; the relationship between language and reality; the philosophy of language; the history of language.
3. Phonetics & phonology; writing systems; kinesics, proxemics, etc
4. Semantics; language and cognition; psycholinguistics.
5. Communication systems; speaker-hearer interaction; sentence processing.
6. Dilectolody; sociolinguistics; language and culture; bilingualism and SLA
7. Human language and nonhuman communication; the physiology of language
8. Language universals; first language acquisition

Is there one definition for learning? NO

- American Heritage Dictionary (1989, p. 720): To gain knowledge, comprehension, or mastery through study)
- Kimble and Garmezy (1963, p. 133): Learning is relatively permanent change in a behavioral tendency and is the result of reinforced practice.

Is there one definition for teaching? NO

- American Heritage Dictionary (1989, p. 1246): to impart knowledge or skill to someone
- Brown (2000, p. 7): Showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instructions, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge, causing to know or understand

The domains of learning:

1. Learning is acquisition or "getting."
2. Learning is retention of information or skill.
3. Retention implies storage systems, memory, cognitive organization.
4. Learning involves active, conscious focus on acting upon events outside or inside the organism.
5. Learning is relatively permanent but subject to forgetting.
6. Learning involves some form of practice.
7. Learning is a change in behavior.

Schools of Thought in Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

- Structuralism/Behaviorism
- Rationalism & Cognitive Psychology
- Constructivism

Structuralism/Behaviorism

- Time Frame: Early 1900s &1940s & 1950s
- Also known as *structural* or *descriptive and empiricist* school of linguistics
- Advocates: Leonard Bloomfield, Edward Sapir, Charles Hockett, Charles Fries, and others

Characteristics:

- Behaviorists saw learning as behavior change through habit formation. Language is a subset of learned behaviors, so language learning was seen as being similar to any other kind of learning.
- Behaviorist or connectionist learning theories describe and explain behaviors using an SR-model.
- A connection is established between a stimulus (S) and the organism's response (R) to the stimulus.

Skinner (1957) experiment /Skinner's Box: (First Language Acquisition)

Skinner put rats in a cage with two levers in it. If the rat pressed the first lever, a morsel of food would drop into the cage. If the rat pressed the second lever, it would get itshpowder thrown over it. It turned out that rats are capable of learning: after a number of tries, they systematically pressed the first lever.

- Skinner defined the notion of *reinforcement*
  - *Positive reinforcement*: an increase in the probability of occurrence of a response to a stimulus as a result of the fact that this response, being correct, is rewarded
  - *Negative reinforcement*: a decrease in the probability of occurrence as a result of the fact that this response, being wrong, is punished

- In other words, humans are exposed to many things in their environment **So** the response they give to such stimuli will be reinforced if successful and will become a habit or if unsuccessful be abandoned. (habit-formation & "shaping behavior")
- First and second language acquisition (SLA) apply the basic principles: imitation, practice, reinforcement/feedback and habit formation following stimulus-response.
- By imitating & repeating the same structures, a person can learn a language.
- No allowance is made, in the explanation of human behaviors, for such non-observable human factors as plans, intentions, attitudes, etc.
- Concepts as consciousness and intuition were regarded as "mentalistic" or illegitimate domains of inquiry.

- The elimination of such concepts is considered a prerequisite for a scientific analysis of behavior.
- Only the "publicly observable responses" could be subject to investigation (things that can be objectively perceived, recorded, and measured).
- Everything adhered to scientific methods
- The unreliability of observation of states of consciousness, thinking, concept formation, or the acquisition of knowledge made such topics impossible to examine in a behavioristic framework.
- Language could be dismantled into small pieces or units and these units could be described scientifically, contrasted, and added up again to form the whole.
- Since the first language L1. acts as the base for the second language L2., the first language can "interfere" with L2 learning. Elements that are similar in L1 and L2 will be easy to learn; those that are different will be difficult to learn.
- They believed teachers needed to focus on the structures that they thought would be difficult for their students (different in the L1 and the L2).
- The best tool for any teacher would be to understand the differences between the two languages being taught.
- That is the reason researchers were interested to compare languages in order to pinpoint areas of difficulty (a term known as *Contrastive Analysis*)

Rationalism & Cognitive Psychology

- Time frame: 1960s &1970s
- Also known as *generative-transformational* school of linguistics
  Advocate: Noam Chomsky

Characteristics:

- Human language cannot be scrutinized simply in terms of observable stimuli and responses or the volumes of raw data gathered by field linguists.
- They not only described languages, but they also wanted to arrive at an explanatory level of adequacy in the study of language.
- In simple words, they are not only interested in:
  - What happened? (describing)
  but also in:
  - Why did it happen? (explaining)
- The rationalist linguist has a formalist view of language: the child is preprogrammed for acquiring language (Language Acquisition Device = LAD) because universal grammar is innate.
- They believed that the SLA process can be understood better by first understanding how the human brain processes and learns new information
- They were interested in both *performance* & *competence* (Chomsky) or what is also known as *Parole* & *Langue* (Ferdinand de Saussure).
- **Performance:** the actual use and realization of language
  Parole: the appliance of language, the actual process of speaking.
- **Competence:** a speaker's knowledge of his language that enables him to understand an infinite number of sentences often never heard or produced before./a person's underlying and unobservable language ability.
  Langue: the general system of language

In general, we can say:

➢ **Performance/Parole=** Using a language.
➢ **Competence/Langue=** The linguistic system underlying second language grammars and its constructions.

* Linguist Noam Chomsky made the argument that the human brain contains a limited set of rules for organizing language. In turn, there is an assumption that all languages have a common structural basis. This set of rules is known as *universal grammar (UG)*. UG is a theory of linguistics postulating principles of grammar shared by all languages, thought to be innate to humans (linguistic nativism)

Constructivism

- Time frame: 1980s,1990s & early 2000
- Advocates: Jean Piaget & Lev Vygotsky

Characteristics:

- All human beings construct their own version of reality, and therefore multiple contrasting ways of knowing and describing are equally legitimate.
- This school focuses on "individuals engaged in social practices, ... on collaborate group., [or] on global community" (Spivey, 1997, p. 24)
- Concentrated on topics such as: conversational discourse, sociocultural factors in learning, cooperative group learning, interlanguage variables, and interactionist theories

This view/theory is *sometimes* called the *creative construction hypothesis*
- Learners are thought to 'construct' internal representations as 'mental pictures' of the target language (TL). These internal representations are thought to develop, in predictable stages, in the direction of the full second language system.
- Most of the evidence for this theory has come from the analysis of:
  - learners' errors at various points in their SLA
  - the order or sequence in which certain structures are acquired
- It proposes that internal processing strategies operate on language input without any direct dependence on the learner actually producing the language, i.e. the learner needs not to actually speak or write in order to acquire the language. Acquisition takes place internally as learners read and hear samples of the language that they understand.
- The speech and writing which learner eventually produced is seen as an outcome of the learning process rather than as the cause of learning or even as a necessary step in learning.
- Learners' oral or writing production is useful only in so far as it allows the learner to participate in communicative situations.

Constructivists differ in their emphasis of social context (some stressed the importance of individual cognitive development through stages while others claimed that social interaction was foundational in cognitive development and rejected the notion of predetermined stages).

- All three positions are important in creating balanced descriptions of human linguistic behavior
- These shifts lead to the emergence of new paradigms of teaching methodology (with each new one breaking from the old but at the same time taking with it some of the positive aspects of the previous paradigms)

Language Teaching Methodology

- Since the 1970s the relationship of theoretical disciplines to teaching methodology has been especially evident.
- *The field of psychology*: growing interest in interpersonal relationships, the value of group work, the use of self-help strategies for attaining desired goals.
- *The field of linguistics*: searching for answers to the nature of communication and communicative competence and for explanations for the interactive process of language
- The language teaching profession responded to these theoretical trends with approaches and techniques that stressed the importance of self-esteem, of students cooperatively learning together, of developing individual strategies of success and focusing on the communicative aspect of language learning

Different Types of Teaching Approaches:

- Grammar-Translation Method
- Direct Method
- Audiolingual Method (ALM)
- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)/ Communicative Approach

The Grammar-Translation Method

History:

- In the western world foreign language teaching was synonymous with learning Latin (which was thought to promote intellectuality through "mental gymnastics") or Greek which was until recently held to be indispensable to an adequate higher education.
- Latin was taught by means of this Classical Method:
    - Focus on grammatical rules
    - Memorization of vocabulary and of various declensions and conjugations
    - Translation of texts
    - Doing written exercises
- As other languages began to be taught in the 18th & 19th centuries, the same method was adopted as the main method of teaching foreign languages.
- At that time, little thought was given to teaching oral use of languages; languages were not being taught primarily to learn oral communication, but to learn for the sake of being "scholarly" or for gaining a reading proficiency in a foreign language.

- Since there was little if any theoretical research on SLA in general, or on the acquisition of reading proficiency, foreign languages were taught as any other skill was taught.
- Late in the 19th century, the Classical Method came to be known as the Grammar Translation Method.

Characteristics:

According to Celce-Murcia (as cited in Brown, 2000, p. 15) the major characteristics of the Grammar Translation Method are:

1. Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
2. Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
3. Long elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
4. Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.
5. Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.
6. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
7. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
8. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

Criticism:

- It does virtually nothing to enhance a student's communicative ability in the language.
- According to Richard & Rodgers (1986) (as cited in Brown, 2000, p.16):
  - It is "remembered with distaste by thousands of school learners, for memorizing endless lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary and attempting to produce perfect translation of stilted or literary prose."
  - It has no advocates.
  - It is a method of which there is no theory.
  - There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempt to relate it to issues in linguistic, psychology, or educational theory.