# Definition of Basic Terms

**Discussion: Didactics is the art and science of teaching.**

**- Linguistics:** the study of language as a system of human communication. Linguistics includes many different approaches to the study of language and many different areas of investigation (structure and function, history, development, etc.).

Several specialized branches of linguistics have also developed in combination with other disciplines, e.g. APPLIED LINGUISTICS,  SOCIOLINGUISTICS, PSYCHOLINGUISTICS, Computational linguistics, etc.

**- Applied linguistics** is an interdisciplinary field of linguistics that identifies, investigates, and offers solutions to language-related real-life problems. Applied linguistics uses information from sociology, psychology, education, communication research, as well as from linguistics in order to develop its own theoretical models of language and language use, and then uses this information and theory in practical areas (language pedagogy, translation, speech pathology, etc.).

- Applied linguistics refers to the practical applications of linguistics and language theory.

- The field of **language learning and teaching** (**language didactics**) is a branch of applied linguistics. It is concerned with the development of language programmes and courses, teaching methodology, materials development, second language acquisition theory, testing, teacher training and related areas. In other words, students studying English didactics are supposed to acquire the theoretical and practical skills necessary for English language instruction.

**SLA Theories**

Second language acquisition, or second language learning, is the process of learning a language in addition to the first language (L1). The additional language is called a second language (L2), regardless of whether it is the second, third, or any subsequent language to be acquired.

As a field of research, Second Language Acquisition, often abbreviated to SLA, is the study of how a second language is learned. Its main focus is on learners and learning rather than teachers and teaching. In other words, the main concern of SLA research is the study of the underlying processes involved in learning another language; that is, how learners come to internalize a new language system.

Gass and Selinker (2008, p. 1) define SLA as "the study of the acquisition of a non-primary language; that is, the acquisition of a language beyond the native language". They add that SLA is "the study of how learners create a new language system".

Some second language researchers make the distinction between foreign language learning and second language acquisition. The former is used to refer to language learning in the context where the language is not spoken outside the classroom. Second language acquisition, on the other hand, is used to refer to the learning of a

language in the environment in which that language is spoken. But it is common to put all contexts of learning under the cover term 'second language acquisition'.

SLA theories attempt to provide a theoretical explanation to how second languages are learned. They include "an understanding, in general, of what language is, what learning is, and for classroom contexts, what teaching is".

Long, in 1993, showed that there were between 40 to 60 SLA theories. Nevertheless, "we are far from a complete theory of SLA" (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 1).

## Approach, method and technique

Edward Anthony (1963) was the first to introduce the three-tier system: approach, method, and technique. Based upon Anthony's framework, Brown (2001, p. 16) gave the following definitions which reflect current usage of the terms:

**Approach**: Theoretically well-informed positions and beliefs about the nature of language, the nature of language learning, and the applicability of both to pedagogical settings.

(an approach can be said to define the assumptions and beliefs about the nature of language, and the nature of language learning and teaching.)

**Method:** A generalized set of classroom specifications for accomplishing linguistic objectives. Methods tend to be concerned primarily with teacher and student roles and behaviours and secondarily with such features as linguistic and subject matter objectives, sequencing, and materials. They are almost always thought of as being broadly applicable to a variety of audiences in a variety of contexts.

(A method, then, can be said to refer to a systematic way of teaching and learning a language based upon a selected approach.)

**Technique:** Any of a wide variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used in the language classroom for realizing lesson objectives.

(techniques are specific classroom activities consistent with a specific method.)