Language acquisition is the process by which humans perceive language. It is the development of language in children. Language researchers defined language acquisition into two categories: native language acquisition and second language learning.

Native language acquisition refers to the first language acquisition, which investigates infants’ acquisition of their mother-tongue. According to Hoff and Bridges (2009), the term “first language acquisition” refers to children’s natural acquisition of the language or languages they hear from birth. It is distinguished from second language acquisition, which begins later, and from foreign language learning, which typically involves formal instruction.

All humans (without exceptional physical and mental disabilities) have an innate capability to acquire language. Acquisition occurs passively and unconsciously through implicit learning. In other words, children do not need explicit instruction to learn their first languages but rather seem to just “pick up” language in the same way they learn to roll over, crawl and walk (Kosur, 2012).

Second language learning, on the other hand, is the process by which people learn a second language. Robertson and Ford (2016) stated that second language acquisition assumes knowledge in a first language and encompasses the process an individual goes through as he or she learns the elements of a new language, such as vocabulary, phonological components, grammatical structures, and writing systems.

According to Kosur (2012), second language learning, in contrast to language acquisition, is the process whereby humans past the critical period learn second languages. All humans have the ability to learn additional languages although, just as with other areas of study like math or
science, some people are better at learning second languages than others. Older children and adults may learn one or more second languages. For example, a woman who acquired French as a child and learned English as an adult would have one first language (French) and one second language (English). Similarly, a man who acquired Japanese as a child and learned English and Spanish as an adult would also have one first language (Japanese) but two second languages (English and Spanish).

In recent years, researchers about the interference of first language to the acquisition of second language have been focused on the role of the mother tongue. Based on the interviews and observations conducted by the researcher, as well as the responses of the respondents in the questionnaire floated by the researcher, it was found out that first language greatly influences the acquisition of second language across all arts of language learning, from vocabulary to pronunciation to grammar. Linguistic similarities of the first language to the second language can help the language learning positively. On the other hand, the differences of the two languages can hinder the acquisition of the second language.

According to Nation (2003), in classrooms where the learners all share the same first language or national language, there is a tendency for tasks which should be done in the second language such as conversation activities, discussion of intensive reading and preparation for writing to be done in the first language.
References:

Hoff, Erika and Bridges Kelly. (2009). *First (Primary) Language Acquisition*. Education.com

