**Lesson 21**

Bilingualism (or more generally: Multilingualism) is the phenomenon of speaking and understanding two or more languages. The term can refer to individuals (individual bilingualism) as well as to an entire society (social bilingualism). The meaning and definition of bilingualism varies tremendously from situation to situation.

* When children acquire two languages at the same time, their bilingualism is referred to as simultaneous bilingualism.
* Sequential bilingualism occurs when an individual (child or adult) acquires a second language after already acquiring a native language.
* Most commonly, children learn two languages simultaneously when they are born into a community that is bilingual.
* Another situation that leads to simultaneous bilingualism is when a child’s family speaks two languages in the home.
* Sequential bilingualism also occurs in a variety of different circumstances.

Thus, it is a fluctuating system in children and adults whereby use of and proficiency in two languages may change depending on the opportunities to use the languages and exposure to other users of the languages. It is a dynamic and fluid process across a number of domains, including experience, tasks, topics, and time.