

PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

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Topics of Discussion

- Introduction
- Psycholinguistics
- Linguistics Competence & Performance
- Language Acquisition
- Theories
- Stages of Language Acquisition
- Bilingualism
- Sign Language

What is Psycholinguistics?

- Psycholinguistics is a branch of study which combines the disciplines of psychology and linguistics.
- It is concerned with the relationship linguistics competence and linguistics performance.
- How we use our linguistic competence in speech production and comprehension.

Three primary processes investigated **in psycholinguistics**

- Language Comprehension
- Language Production
- Language Acquisition

Linguistic Competence and Performance

Linguistic competence is different from linguistic performance.

What we know, which is our linguistic competence .

- Knowledge of the Sound System
- Knowledge of Words
- The Creativity of Linguistic Knowledge
- Knowledge of Sentences.

How we use this knowledge in actual speech production and comprehension, which is our linguistic performance .

Language Acquisition

- The acquisition of language is doubtless the greatest intellectual feat any one of us is ever required to perform. (LEONARD BLOOMFIELD, Language, 1933).
- Language acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend language, as well as to produce and use words and sentences to communicate
- Language acquisition is a creative process.

Theories of Language Acquisition

1. Behaviourism

2. Innateness

3. Cognition

4. Input

Behaviorism

- Theories of language acquisition were heavily influenced by behaviorism, a school of psychology prevalent in the 1950s.
- B. F. Skinner, one of the founders of behaviorist psychology.
- As the name implies, behaviorism focused on people's behaviors, which are directly observable, rather than on the mental systems underlying these behaviors.
- Language was viewed as a kind of verbal behavior, and it was proposed that children learn language through imitation, reinforcement, and similar processes.

Innateness

- Two years later, Noam Chomsky showed that language is a complex cognitive system that could not be acquired by behaviorist principles.
- Language is an innate capacity. A child's brain contains special language learning mechanism at the birth.
- This suggests that children are born with a genetically endowed faculty to learn and use human language, which is part of the Universal Grammar.

What is Grammar?

Grammar is the knowledge speakers have about the units and rules of their language—

- rules for combining sounds into words (called phonology)
- rules of word formation (called morphology),
- rules for combining words into phrases and phrases into sentences (called syntax),
- the rules for assigning meaning (called semantics)
- The grammar, together with a mental dictionary (called a lexicon) that lists the words of the language, represents our linguistic competence.
- To understand the nature of language we must understand the nature of grammar.

Kinds of Grammar

- Descriptive Grammar

Descriptive grammar of a language represents the unconscious linguistic knowledge or capacity of its speakers. Such a grammar is a model of the mental grammar every speaker of the language knows. It does not teach the rules of the language; it describes the rules that are already known.

- Perspective Grammar

It is different from the descriptive grammars . Its goal is not to describe the rules people know, but to tell them what rules they should follow. It prescribes.

- Teaching Grammar

Teaching grammars are written to help people learn a foreign language or a dialect of their own language. Teaching grammars can be helpful to people who do not speak the standard or prestige dialect, but find it would be advantageous socially and economically to do so. They are used in schools in foreign language classes.

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- Universal Grammar

There are linguistic universals that pertain to each of the parts of grammars, the ways in which these parts are related, and the forms of rules.

These principles compose Universal Grammar, which provides a blueprint for the grammars of all possible human languages.

Universal Grammar constitutes the innate component of the human language faculty that makes normal language development possible.

Strong evidence for Universal Grammar is found in the way children acquire language.

Children learn language by exposure. Chomsky's view that there is a Universal Grammar (UG) that is part of the biologically endowed human language .

Cognitive

- Jean Piaget (1980)
- Language acquisition is driven by Cognitive Development as the child succeeds in making sense of the world around it.

Input theory

- Another theory of C. A. Ferguson (1977) is that children are able to learn language because adults speak to them in a special “simplified”.
- Language sometimes called motherese, or child-directed speech or more informally, baby talk.
- This theory places a lot of emphasis on the role of the environment in facilitating language acquisition.

Stages of Acquisition

1. The Babbling Stage – around 6 months
2. The One-Word stage – around 1 year
3. The Two-Words stage – around 2 years
4. The Telegraphic Speech stage
 - The age connected with each stage can be slightly different for different children.
 - Surprisingly, no connection with the child's IQ.

The Babbling Stage

- Children begin to babble regardless of what linguistic environment they are growing up in.
- Easy to produce sounds ([b], [p], [m], [a]) are most common.
- But they produce many different sounds, and many of them are not found in the environment around them.
- There is no link between sound and meaning.
- There is no biological need for babbling.
- Children babble for social reasons. They learn to interact with others by the responses their babbling receives.
- Children who are neglected and receive no encouragement from parents stop babbling.

The One-Word stage

- The same sequence of sounds (“words”) begins to mean the same thing.
- Children can understand multi-word utterances, but they utter only single words.
- They use words like cookie, drink, bad, no, but never functional words like in, the, and

The Two-Word stage

- First, just putting two words next to another (each has it's own intonation)
- Later, the two words form a simple sentence.
- word-order expresses semantic roles.
- Virtually no syntactic markers, i.e. no inflection for number, tense, etc.
- Pronouns are rare.
- Examples: hi Mommy, baby sleep, bye bye

The Telegraphic Speech stage

- There is no specific three-word stage.
- Usually function words are missing
- Almost always the correct SVO word-order (in English)
- Function words and morphemes come in gradually.
- There tends to be a specific order in which function morphemes are acquired.
- Children seem to constantly change/add rules.

Knowing More Than One Language

- People can acquire a second language under many different circumstances.
- They have learned a second language when they began middle school, or high school, or college.
- Moving to a new country often means acquiring a new language. Other people live in communities or homes in which more than one language is spoken and may acquire two (or more) languages simultaneously.
- Children may acquire more than one language at a time. . This is true for children acquiring two spoken languages as well as for children acquiring a spoken language and a sign language.
- Whether the child will be equally proficient in the two languages depends on the input he or she receives and the social conditions under which the languages are acquired.

Second language acquisition

- Second language acquisition, or L2 acquisition, generally refers to the acquisition of a second language by someone who has already acquired a first language.
- It requires conscious attention.
- It would be an over simplification to think that L2 acquisition involves only the transfer of L1 properties to the L2 interlanguage. There is a strong creative component to L2 acquisition.

Sign Language

- Deaf children acquire sign language much in the way that hearing children acquire a spoken language
- Sign languages do not use sounds to express meanings. Instead, they are visual gestural systems that use hand, body, and facial gestures as the forms used to represent words and grammatical rules.
- Sign languages are fully developed languages, and signers create and comprehend unlimited numbers of new sentences, just as speakers of spoken languages do.

Thank

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