

THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

Week 2

Psycholinguistics

What is Psycholinguistics?

- Psycholinguistics
 - ➔ Psychology + Linguistics (Taylor, 1990)
 - ➔ The psychology of language (speaking & listening (means of communication) and their acquisition) (Clark & Clark, 1977)
- **CALD (3rd.Ed.)**
- ➔ **psychology**

‘the scientific study of the way the human mind works and how it influences behaviour, or the influence of a particular person's character on their behaviour’
- ➔ **linguistics**

‘the systematic study of the structure and development of language in general or of particular languages ‘

Further defined

- General Linguistics is 'concerned with human language as a universal and recognizable part of human behaviour and of the human faculties, perhaps one of the most essential to human life as we know it, and one of the most far-reaching of human capabilities in relation to the whole span of mankind's achievements' (Robins, 1980)

Linguistics as a science

- ‘deals with a specific body of material, namely spoken and written language, and that it proceeds by operations that can be publicly communicated and described, and justified by reference to storable principles and to a theory capable of formulation’
 - a. as an empirical science → observable with the senses, speech as heard, the movements of the vocal organs as seen directly or with the aid of instruments, ‘speaking’ as perceived by speakers and ‘writing’ as seen and read.
 - b. As a social science → part of the behaviour of men and women in society, in interaction with their fellows.
- ‘Linguistic theory is led by an inner necessity to recognize not merely the linguistic system, [] but also man and human society behind language, and all man’s sphere of knowledge through language’ (p.7).

Psycholinguistics

- Taylor (1990): ‘ the study of language behaviour: how real (rather than ideal) people learn and use language to communicate ideas’.
- Deals with ‘how language is produced, perceived, comprehended, and remembered? How is it used for communicative purposes? How is it acquired? How does it go wrong? How is it represented in the mind?’.

- Clark & Clark (1977) 'is concerned with..
 - a. By what mental processes do people listen to, comprehend, and remember what they hear? (**comprehension**)
 - b. By what mental processes do people come to say what they say? (**production**)
 - c. What course do children follow in learning to comprehend and produce their first language, and why? (**acquisition**)

➔ You see how the definitions proposed by Taylor and the Clark's intersect?

Language

- ‘a system of signs (e.g. Speech sounds, hand gestures, letters) used to communicate messages’
 - ‘a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates’
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- Taylor ‘human language is an oral-auditory communication system’.
- Clark & Clark ‘communication with language is carried out through two basic human activities: speaking (*production*) and listening (*comprehension*)’, and ‘if we are to understand speaking and listening, we must understand the relation between language structure and the processes of speaking and listening’.

Language structure

→ Grammar : a system that relates sounds to meaning, which produces 'grammatical rules' that deal with the phonology, syntax and semantic aspects of a language.

→ Chomsky's

Competence : 'the idealized knowledge a speaker or a hearer has of a particular language system' or 'one's capacity to use a language'

Performance : 'the actual use to which a speaker-hearer puts his competence' or 'the actual application of this competence in speaking or listening'

→ Structure : how speakers turn ideas into words and how listeners turn words into ideas? This implies that sentences can be divided into parts that reveal the elementary ideas being expressed and their conceptual relations to each other. Structure is 'the order and arrangement of words within the sentence'.