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AN INTRODUCTION TO  
**LINGUISTICS**

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## PREFACE

The book entitled *An Introduction to Linguistics* is intended for providing materials to our students attending the subject of Introduction to Linguistics. Up to the present time, the subject has been lectured by using the handouts as a result of our compilation of some references on language and linguistics. This book is written based on the handouts that have been used since the writers handled the subject.

The materials discussed in this book cover *What is a Language, Characteristics of Language, What is Linguistics, Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Transformational Grammar, Semantics, Sociolinguistics, and Psycholinguistics*. In *What is a language*, the writers elaborate on the definition and concept of Human Language and Animal Language. In *Characteristics of the human language*, they explain some concepts on “A language is systematic, A language is arbitrary, A language is social, A language is spoken, A language is used for communication, and A language is complete for its speakers.”

In *Linguistics and Language Teaching*, they present the definition of linguistics and its branches of linguistics, and linguistics in language teaching.

In *Phonetics*, they present the concept of phonetics and organs of speech are used for producing speech sounds, both vowels, and consonants, and will be explained how to differentiate voiced from voiceless sounds. While in classification of consonants, the kinds of consonants based on (a) Manner of Articulation, namely: Plosives/Stops, Fricatives, Affricates, Nasals, Lateral/Liquids, and Semi-vowels/Glides, and (b) Place of Articulation, namely: Bilabial, Labiodental, Interdental, Alveolar, Palatal, Velar, dan Glottal sounds will be explained in detail so that the students understand the mechanism of producing the consonants. In the classification of vowels, the kinds of vowels: (a) Front, Central, Back Vowels, (b) Open, Half-open, Close, Half-close vowels, and (c) Rounded and Unrounded Vowels and (d) Tenses and Lax Vowels will be elaborated.

In *Phonology*, the definition of phonology and the difference between phonetics and phonology will be presented. Also, in this chapter, phonemes, phones, and allophones will be discussed; these sub-topics include the ways to identify phonemes and phones, and also allophonic variation. The minimal pairs and minimal sets are also presented. The other sub-topic contains a brief description of Phonological Rules and its types such as Aspiration, Vowel Lengthening, Vowel Nasalization, Flapping, dan Nasal Deletion. The description is meant to help students to classify sounds in the processes of aspiration, vowel lengthening, vowel nasalization, flapping, and nasal deletion.

In *Morphology*, the definition of morphology, differences between phonemes and morphemes, differences between morphemes dan allomorph, and types of morphemes: Free morphemes and Bound morphemes are presented. This chapter also discusses the Word-formation process to show the students the process of word-formations (inflection and derivation).

In *Syntax*, the definition of syntax, content words and functional words, syntactical construction, and its types and sub-types, syntactic devices, and syntactical analysis are presented and elaborated. In *Transformational-Generative Grammar*, the definition of TG Grammar and its principles, and types of transformation are discussed briefly.

In Semantics, the definition of semantics and its aspects are discussed. While in Pragmatics, the definition of pragmatics and the difference between pragmatics and semantics are elaborated. While in Sociolinguistics, the definition of sociolinguistics, Language in socio-cultural aspects, Language variation, Language use, etc. are explained. And, in Psycholinguistics, the definition of psycholinguistics, the relation of linguistics and psychological aspects, language acquisition and language learning, mastery of two or more languages are presented.



## Chapter XIII

# PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

Fatchul Mu'in

Psycholinguistics' is a combination of psychology and linguistics. Both are the branches of sciences. Psychology is defined as the systematic study of human experience and behavior or as the science that studies the behavior of men and other animals Knight and Hilgert in Abu Ahmadi, 1992). There are several branches of psychology, among others, social psychology, the psychology of communication, developmental psychology, educational psychology, and psychology of language. The last branch of psychology is often called as psycholinguistics.

### What is psycholinguistics?

- a. Psycholinguistics is a field of study that combines psychology and linguistics. It covers language development. (Lim Kiat Boey).
- b. psycholinguistics is the study of human language -language comprehension, language production, and language acquisition (E.M. Hatch)
- c. Another term is the psychology of language.

Based on the definitions of psycholinguistics above, our discussion will be focused on language acquisition, language development, language comprehension, and production

### Language Acquisition

Relationship between psychology and linguistics can be seen from behaviorist psychology in which a language activity is considered as a part of human behavior; and from cognitive psychology in which acquiring/learning and using a language are discussed as cognitive processes.

All scientific studies must be based on philosophical reasoning. Let us try to trace back rational reasoning of psycholinguistics. For a new-child a language (first language) is acquired; after acquiring his mother tongue or first language, he may learn a second language. Some experts differ in language acquisition and language learning.

In this relation, let us try to discuss two branches of philosophy: nativism (Schopenhauer) or rationalism (Descartes) and empiricism (John Locke). Nativist/rationalist uses the former and empiricists use the latter. The nativist claims that individual development is much influenced or determined by hereditary factors; the rationalist claims that all knowledge derives from the human mind; he believes that the brain is the only source of knowledge. Thus, the ability to speak a language is genetically transmitted. For rationalists, Descartes, for instance, the mind is more active in gaining knowledge; human's perception of the external world rests upon some ideas. These ideas are *innate* and not

derived from experience and are sometimes said to be inherent in the human mind. In the human mind, there is 'a little black box,' which is then called 'Language Acquisition Device' (LAD). LAD refers to inborn or innate ability. Noam Chomsky is one of the supporters of rationalism in studying a language, in which he develops what is TG Grammar, among other things, he differs *competence and performance (langue and parole in Ferdinand de Saussure's term)*. Also, he differs from two kinds of language structures: *deep and surface structures*.

Whereas, the empiricist believes that all knowledge derives from experiences or socio-cultural environment. John Locke believes that a newborn child is like *tabula rasa*; it is something like a piece of white paper on which we can make a drawing or picture or something in a written form. He learns everything from his environment. He discovers a particular language from his parents, family, and environment. This philosophical thought influences much on behaviorists' thought. The empiricist admits the existence of LAD in a human's mind, but it is then considered as 'a potential seed' which has to be developed and nurtured in an appropriate place: a social community. A child can acquire language he has an adequate physical and cognitive endowment and because he grows up in a speech community. A child from birth is well equipped to perceive human speech but takes several years to learn to produce the speech sounds of his language correctly. As has been stated above, a newborn child is equipped with a language acquisition device, and it is supported by physical apparatus (called speech organs), enabling him to produce speech sounds (e.g., phones).

So, the ability to speak a language in human beings is not genetically transmitted, but it is culturally acquired and or learned from their elders or social environment. This means that a child will not automatically speak a language just because he is a human being, but because he has to acquire or learn it from his parents or people around him, though the process is not always consciously carried out. This also explains why there is no universal language spoken by all human beings in the world since the language spoken by man is culturally determined. This is to say that it depends on the community in which the child is grown up.

In the process of acquiring a language, children (1) do not learn a language by storing all the words and all the sentences in the mental dictionary. The list of words is finite, but no dictionary can hold all the sentences, which are infinite in number, (2) learn to construct sentences, most of which they have never produced before, (3) learn to understand sentences they have never heard before. They cannot do so by matching the "heard utterance" with some stored sentence, (4) must, therefore, construct the "rules" that permit them to use language creatively, and (5) are never taught these rules. Their parents are no more aware of the phonological, syntactic, and semantic rules that are the children.

### *Stages in Language Acquisition*

As has been stated above, a newborn child cannot automatically speak a language. Linguistic knowledge develops through stages.

#### **1. First sounds**

At the time an infant is born, he can only produce sound through crying. When he is hungry or thirsty, he cries. When he is sick, he cries. When he wants her to accompany him, he cries. After several weeks (8 weeks), beside crying, he can coo; he can produce squealing-gurgling sounds. The kind of sound is vowel-like in character and pitch-modulated. The vowel-like cooing sounds begin to be interspersed with more consonantal sounds. In this stage, cooing changes into babbling.

#### **2. Babbling**

At the age of six months, children in all cultures begin to babble. Babbling refers to the child's effort to produce sounds by using his speech organs. According to Fromkin and Rodman (248), the sounds produced in this period seem to include the sounds of human languages. Most linguists believe that in this babbling period, infants provide a large variety of sounds, many of which do not occur in the language of the household. Deaf children also babble, and it is reported that their babbling up to the age of around six months seems very similar to that of normal children. Nondeaf children born of deaf parents who do not also speak babble. Thus, babbling does not depend on the presence of acoustic, auditory input. Hearing children born of non-speaking parents even babble. There are, however, at least two different schools of thought concerning babbling. One group believes that babbling is a necessary prerequisite for normal language acquisition. Others consider babbling about being less crucial.

When the minimum vocabulary is acquired, children have difficulties in pronouncing all the words; they represent words in terms of *phonemes*. The child's ability to generate patterns and construct rules is also shown in phonological development. In the first language, children may not distinguish between voiced and voiceless consonants, for example. When they first begin to construct one set -that is, when they learn that /p/ and /b/ are distinct phonemes- they also begin to distinguish between /t/ and /d/, /s/ and /z/, etc.

It is far from being called as a real language. In some crucial respects, it resembles the adult language. The sounds he produces are in long sequences of vowels and consonants such [pa pa pa], [ma ma ma], or [wa wa wa]. For one thing, babbled sequences are not linked to immediate biological needs like food or physical comfort; and those are frequently uttered in isolation for pleasure.

Babbling has at least two functions. Firstly, it serves primarily as practice for later speech. In this relation, a newborn child has been equipped with a language acquisition

device and speech organs. These enable him to speak a language that is, of course, preceded by producing speech sounds. The sounds created in this period seem to include a large variety of sounds, many of which do not occur in the language of the household.

### 3. Holophrastic Stage

In this stage of language acquisition, a child begins to understand a word as a link between sound and meaning. The words they acquire are the words that are most common in his everyday environment. The words show tremendous variability in pronunciation. Some may be perfect adult productions; others may be so distorted that they only to the child's closest companions. Still, others vary in their pronunciation from one occasion to the next. Because of his instability, psychologists have come to believe that children do not show an understanding of phonemes in their first words. Let us consider the one-year-old child who pronounces *bottle* as [ba] and *daddy* as [da].

A child begins to use the same string of sounds repeatedly to "mean" the same thing. At this point, he has learned that sounds are related to meanings and he is producing his first words. Most children seem to go through the "one = one sentence" stage. These one-word sentences are called **holophrastic sentences**.

### 4. Two-Word Stage

In this stage, around the time of a child's second birthday, he begins to produce two-word utterances. At first, these appear to be strings of two of the child's earlier holophrastic utterances (one-word sentences). At 18 months or so, many children start to produce two- and three-word utterances. These kinds of utterances are used for some purposes, such as requesting, warning, answering to question, informing refusing, etc. For instance, an utterance 'want cookie' (= I want a cookie) is meant to request; and 'red car' is intended to inform that the car is red (Steinberg, 1997: 7-8)

### 5. Telegraph Speech

The utterances of children longer than two words have unique characteristics. The small function words such as to, the, a, can, is, etc. are missing; only the words that carry the main message, namely: the content words are used. The utterances like 'cat stand up the table,' 'what that?', and 'no sit here,' etc. are lack of the function words. These are why they are called **telegraphic speeches**.

The telegraphic speech includes only morphemes and words that carry valuable semantic content. Gradually a child will begin to include function morphemes (bound morphemes) in his or her utterances. Children acquire them in a logical order. The present progressive verbal suffix-ing (*walking*) appears in children's speech before the third person present marker -s (as in *she walks*), and this marker -s is acquired well before the past tense marker -ed (as in *walked*). Around the time -ing appears. The suffix -s referring to the plurality (as in *shoes*), the possession (as in *John's*), and the present tense with the third person subject (as in *he walks*) are required, respectively.

At first, children's speech does not show plurality. This is to say that no plural marker is used at all. Nouns only appear in their singular forms. Next, irregular plural forms may appear for a while; a child may say instead of *man*. Then he discovers the morpheme *-s* and applies it to make plurality.

In some cases, overgeneralization occurs when he says *mans*. Then, he is able to produce plural forms correctly, except for irregular ones. Plurality is learned gradually.

## Language and the Brain

In relation to human ability for language it is necessary to know something about the way the brain controls language. The following discussion shows some of the aspects of the way our brains store and use language.

### 1. Physical Features of the Brain

There are four major parts of the brain. They are –from the top of the spine upwards– medulla oblongata, the pons Varolii, the cerebellum and the cerebral cortex (cerebrum). These parts of the brain form an integrated whole by means of connected tissue in that order. The first three are concerned with essentially physical functions, including breathing, heartbeat, transmission, and coordination of movement, involuntary reflexes, digestion, emotional arousal, etc. The cerebral cortex is a layer of grooved, wrinkled and winding tissue.

The cerebral cortex is characterized by a division into halves, called hemispheres, which are connected by tissue called the corpus callosum. The corpus callosum is a connector for the hemispheres, and at the same time, the principal integrator of the mental processes carried out in the two hemispheres (the right and the left hemispheres).

The connections between the brain and the body are contralateral. This is to say that the left hemisphere controls the right side of the body, while the left side of the body is controlled by the right hemisphere. The contralateral connection also means that sensory information from the right side of the body is received by the left hemisphere, while the right hemisphere receives sensory information from the left side of the body.

### 2. Lateralization

The lateralization of language is related to the areas of the brain which are involved in the use of language. Language centers predominate in the left hemisphere in right-handed people and sometimes in the right hemisphere for left-handed people. The main language centers in the left hemisphere are Broca's areas (in the front part of the brain), Wernicke's area (towards the back), and the angular gyrus (which is even further back). (Seinberg, 1997: 180).

Each side of hemispheres of the brain performs different cognitive functions. Damage to the left side of the brain resulted in impaired language ability while damage to the right side of the brain did not influence language ability. People with damage to the left hemisphere experience aphasia, an inability to perceive, process or produce language because of physical damage of the brain (Language Files, p. 228).

Language is lateralized; that the left hemisphere is the location of abilities that are used in producing language while the right hemisphere is essentially devoid of such

cognitive abilities. The split-brain persons, for instance, still could use speech and write in the disconnected left hemisphere but their right hemisphere had little such capacity (Seinberg, 1997: 181).

### 3. The Critical Period

By a critical period or age is meant here an age beyond which language learning will be difficult or even impossible (Seinberg, 1997: 184). It is also referred to as 'the period of time from birth to puberty.' A child must learn a language during this period to gain normal, native competence in the language. In this period, the children's left hemisphere is open to language learning. As the child's brain matures and the patterns of neural activity become set, the readiness for language learning which was once present becomes less and less available. This will result that it becomes much more difficult to learn a second language after the critical period than it was as a child; that children who learn two or more languages during the critical period usually can speak the languages without an accent; and that if a child is not exposed to language during childhood he/she may become impossible to learn language (Language Files, 229).

### Bilingualism

Some experts have different views on bilingualism. Let us look at William F. Mackey's review on the term bilingualism, as follows: The concept of bilingualism has become broader and broader since the beginning of the century. It was long regarded as an equal mastery of two languages. Bloomfield considered bilingualism as "the native-like control of two languages." Haugen broadened this to the ability to produce "complete meaningful utterances in the other language."

Moreover, it has been now been suggested that the concept be further extended to include simply "passive-knowledge" of the written language or any "contact with possible models in a second language and the ability to use these in the environment of the native language. This broadening of the concept of bilingualism is due to the realization that the point at which a speaker of a second language becomes bilingual is either arbitrary or impossible to determine. It seems obvious, therefore, that if we are to study the phenomenon of bilingualism, we are forced to consider it as something relative. We must moreover include the use not only of two languages but also of any number of languages. We shall, therefore, consider bilingualism as the alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual (Mackey, in Fishman, ed., 1972: 555).

In the previous chapter, bilingualism and its aspects have been discussed. The discussion on bilingualism is related to the socio-cultural aspects. Now, we discuss it with the psychological aspects.

From the viewpoints of psycholinguistics, the first and foremost question in relation to bilingualism is how two or more languages are acquired or learned. Children acquire two or more languages when they are exposed to these languages early in life. Typically, they are exposed to one language at home and another outside the home. Under such conditions, they eventually become more proficient in the language spoken outside than inside the home (Taylor, 329-330).

Based on the concepts of bilingualism above, we can see that there is a distinction between one given by Bloomfield and the other ones given by another expert. Bloomfield's definition of bilingualism as "*the native-like control of two languages*" implies the same fluency and accuracy as those of language used by each of its native speakers. Furthermore, Bloomfield states: "In the extreme case of foreign-language learning the speaker becomes so proficient as to be indistinguishable from the native speaker around him. This happens occasionally in adult shifts of language and frequently in the childhood shift ..... In these cases where this perfect foreign-language learning is not accompanied by loss of the native language, it results in bilingualism, native-like control of two languages" (Bloomfield, 1935:56)

### **1. Advantage of Bilingualism**

To be a bilingual speaker may be a necessity for a human being. A language is used by its speakers for the sake of communication and interaction. Initially, a newborn child tries to master one language used in his immediate social environments such as family (father and mother) and surrounding people. In the age of pre-elementary school, he may have a mastery of one language; or, he may have a mastery of his mother tongue or native language. At the age level, he can be said as being a monolingual speaker. For him, to be able to use one language is sufficient. In the next development, when he wants to go to elementary school, the new social environment 'forces' him to learn another language until he has a mastery of the language (Indonesian language, for example). When he can be stated as having a mastery of the Indonesian language, he is called a bilingual speaker. To be a bilingual speaker for a young child is beneficial. This is because the brain functions of a young child are more plastic than those of older people. Young children, especially in the first six years or so, maybe considered as in the critical period for language acquisition, especially for phonology and basic syntax (Taylor, 332). Most people consider bilingualism as something functional. For one thing, knowledge of another language enables them to communicate with members of other cultures. This provides a means for cooperation and understanding among nations and people (Steinberg, 1997: 246).

### **2. Disadvantage of Bilingualism**

Some children have an opportunity to acquire a second language at school. The schoolchildren acquire a second language by being taught in a program, that is, by learning most of all school subjected in a second language; the native language may or may not be taught as a school subject. They acquire a second language mainly by exposure (Taylor, 1997: 338). Does learning a second language at an early age, while the child is still in the process of acquiring the native or first language, have a negative effect on a child's intelligence, thinking ability, creativity or cognitive areas. Research tended to find a negative impact (Steinberg, 247). In this relation, Taylor argues that bilinguals are slower than monolinguals, even when they are strongly dominant in one language, and trilinguals are still slower than bilinguals. The reasons can be : (1) a bilingual uses each language less frequently than a monolingual uses one language, (2) the two languages interfere with each other, (3) a bilingual has the extra cognitive tasks of determining which of two alternative linguistic systems he needs to use and of choosing one of the two, and (4) a bilingual's

vocabulary is enormous, as it includes words from two languages. By knowing and using two languages, bilingual faces a peculiar linguistic, cognitive problem. This problem may be in the form of language switching or interference.

### **Conclusion**

Psycholinguistics, among other things, studies how a language is acquired or learned, and then used. In this case, it covers the topics of language acquisition and language learning, language and brain, and bilingualism (as a result of learning two or more languages).



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