**Subject**: Linguistics

**Level**: Second year

**Lesson Seven :**

**An Introduction to Psycholinguistics**

The word 'psycholinguistics' was implemented during the 1950s through an important Seminar on Psycholinguistics in 1953 , but the earliest use of the term ‘Psycholinguistics’ was in J.R Kantor ‘Objective Psychology of Grammar’ (1936), in which Kantor as a behaviorist attended to refuse the idea that language reflected any form of intended cognition or mind. Jodai (2011)

The field of psycholinguistics has been developed and redefined by reaction to Chomsky. Chomsky’s view about creating syntactic sentences was that language exists because human beings possess an innate ability and was highly critical of skinner’s book in 1959. That review (as we mentioned in the previous lesson) started what has been termed the cognitive revolution in psychology. The review of Chomsky still holds that the human ability to use syntax is qualitatively different from any sort of animal communication.

1. **Definitions of Psycholinguistics**

There are many definitions of Psycholinguistics :

1. Psycholinguistics is the study of the mental processes and skills underlying the production and comprehension of language, and of the acquisition of these skills.
2. Psycholinguistics is interdisciplinary and is studied in different fields such as psychology, cognitive science and linguistics.
3. Psycholinguistics means psychology of language is the study of the psychological and neurological factors that enable humans to acquire, use, comprehend and produce language (“Altman”, 2001, p.1).
4. Psycholinguistics is the branch of cognitive psychology that studies the psychological basis of linguistic competence and performance. Psycholinguistics studies the psychological and neurological factors that enable human to acquire, use and understand language. Psycholinguistics mainly concern with the use of psychological / scientific / experimental methods to study language acquisition, production and processing. Jodai (2011)
5. Psycholinguistics is a scientific study of mental processes and elements employed in language
6. How the human mind constructs a thought and applies it into language is called psycholinguistics.
7. **Who is a Psycholinguist ?**

From the above definitions, we can consider that the main interest of a psycholinguist is language development; language use and language break down .perception, attention, motor planning and memory, more specifically, a psycholinguist studies language, speech production and comprehension, using behavioral and neurological methods which traditionally are developed in the field of psychology though other methods such as corpus analysis are also widely used.

1. **Objectives of Studying psycholinguistics**

In psycholinguistics researchers try to develop models to describe and preferably predict specific linguistic behavior. The significance is that it captures all aspects of language use. Ultimately psycholinguistics tries to have a model that describes how language is processed in our brain. The other significance of studying of psycholinguistics is that it uncovers universal processes that governs the development, use , and breakdowns of language (Bates et.al ,1995 , p.96 )

1. **The Main Questions that Psycholinguistics Treats about Bilingualism:**

Frequent questions with respect to bilinguals are :

* Is L2 acquisition different from L1 acquisition?
* To what extent does the L1 play a role in using the L2?
* Are there rules governing code-switching (the use of More than one language in an utterance?
* How do speakers of more than one language keep the two languages apart? \*
* How are languages acquired at some point in time Lost or maintained over time? (Schmitt, 2002, p.133-149)

1. **Linguistics related areas :**

Phonetics and phonology are concerned with the study of speech sounds within psycholinguistics, research focus is on how the brain process and understand that sounds.

Morphology is the study of word structure especially the relationship between related words (such as dog and dogs) and the formation of words based on rules (such as plural formation).

Syntax is the study of the patterns which dictate how words are combined to form sentences.

Semantics deal with the meaning of words and sentences where syntax is concerned with the formal structure of sentences.

1. **Psychology related areas :** The study of word recognition and reading examines the processes involved in the extraction of orthographic, morphological, phonological and semantic information from patterns in printed texts
2. **Production and comprehension**

Psycholinguists consider the skilled human language user as a complex information-processing system. Their aim is to account for the user's acquisition, production and comprehension of language in terms of the various components of this system and their interactions.

1. **Language Production**

The production of languageis commonly viewed as involving the following main component processes.

(a) Conceptualizing: a conscious planning activity in which a communicative intention guides the construction of one or more Messages (conceptual structures that can be formulated in the target language).

(b) Formulating : generating natural language representations for messages. This involves two processes.

**First**, Grammatical Encoding maps the message onto some grammatical form; this involves retrieving items from the mental lexicon and arranging them in a syntactic frame.

**Second**, Phonological Encoding transforms this syntactic structure into a phonetic or articulatory plan.

(c) Articulating: executing the articulatory plan as a sequence of Articulatory gestures The primary execution modes are the **Oral** for spoken languages, and the **Manual** for sign languages. The main secondary mode is **Writing**

**2-Language Comprehension :**

The cpmprehension of language comprises at least the following component processes.

(a) Perceptual (auditory or visual) Decoding: mapping linguistic input (connected speech, **a** stream of manual signs, or a string of printed words) onto some code that can be linguistically Parsed .

The nature of these codes in the different linguistic modalities is controversial. Parsing involves segmenting and recognizing words (phonological and morphological decoding, and accessing the mental lexicon), as well as assigning syntactic and semantic structure.

(b) Interpreting: inferring the intended meaning by identigying referents and computing a conceptual representation of the uttereance on the basis of the result of parsing along with prosody and contextual information.

**References :**

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* Bates, E. , Dale , P.S, & Thai , D (1995) . Individual differences and their implications for theories of language development. In Fletcher & B. Mac Whinney, Handbook of child language (p.96-115) Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
* Schmitt Norbert, 2002: An Introduction To Applied Linguistics, Great Britain, Oxford University press Pp;133-150
* <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521774.pdf>