University of Biskra | **Course:** Linguistics

Section of English | **Level:** 3rd Year

Lecturer: Dr. Ahmed C. Hoadjli | **Groups:** All

THEME EIGHT: Language Production

Description and Rationale

This theme covers basic assumptions related to language production. Its aim is to elucidate the cognitive mechanisms by which the process of language production occurs. Simply put, it explores how the stages involved in language production from the initial mental aspect to the spoken or written linguistic forms take place. In brief, it attempts to explain the process of communicating through language.

Learning Objectives

After completing this theme, students should be able to:

- Understand the cognitive mechanisms involved in language production.
- Figure out the main functions of memory.
- Identify the four stages involved in language production.
- Discuss the factors that can affect language production.
- Find out the connection between language comprehension and language production.

Guiding Questions

1. What is meant by language production?
2. What are the stages involved in language production?
3. What are the specific characteristics of each stage?
4. Explain the mechanisms of the components of language production (i.e., speech production, and written production).

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1. Language Production: A Brief Introduction

Now that we have arrived at the third component in language processing, language production, it is important to raise the attention that this third component is considered the most important since it concerns the production of language. In the literature, psycholinguists agree on saying that language production is a highly complex motor behaviour. It requires the translation of conceptual information into intricate sequences of motor commands to allow many production forms, such as speaking, writing and even signing (McDonald, 2013).

Additionally, it has been argued that language production is concerned with the stage of speech from the initial stage that is mental to the linguistic tangible manifestations. This is to say that language production is frequently seen as the process of communicating through language (Psychology Wikia & Alley Dog).

In order to understand the importance and complexity of language production better, let us review some of the available definitions:

- Language production involves the retrieval of information from memory, the planning of an articulatory programme, and executive control and self-monitoring. These processes can be related to the domains of long-term memory, motor control, and executive control. Here, we argue that studying neuronal oscillations provides an important opportunity to understand how general neuronal computational principles support language production (Piai & Zheng, 2019).
- Language production is, in one sense, difficult. The speaker has to decide on something worth saying, choose words (out of a vocabulary of 40,000), appropriate syntax, morphology, and prosody, and ultimately has to articulate at the rate of two to three words per second. In another sense, production is easy. We think it takes little effort. Particularly when we are talking about familiar topics, we can at the same time walk, drive, or even play the piano (Dell & Jacobs, 2016).

- Language production begins around the age of 12 months; however, language understanding is earlier and develops faster. Grammar begins developing around 2–3 years. At around 5 to 6 years, the child is expected to have a basic language with the following capabilities: to produce all the phonemes and phoneme combinations existing in his/her language, to have a basic vocabulary including approximately 2000–3000 words, to use the basic grammar, and to adapt the language to the current context. (Ardila & Rosseli, 2020).
- Language production begins with the formulation of a message and includes steps of discourse planning, lexical selection, and syntactic encoding. Language comprehension involves the analysis of discourse, syntactic, and lexical representations. Because of the many levels of analysis and the necessity of integrating information from all levels, both aspects of language use are compromised to some extent in all types of dementia beyond the small but significant effects of normal aging. (Kemper & Altmann, 2009).

2. Stages of Language Production

Language production occurs through different stages. In the literature, it is claimed that the stages of production include four processes. On this point, and as an example, Josias (2019) refers to Sovel to elucidate these four processes or let us say stages. These are presented in what is coming:

- **Stage one (Conceptualisation):** It is the initial stage in language production. At this first stage, there are two concurrent modes of thought that ought to be (1) syntactic thinking, and (2) imaginistic thinking. Josias adds that in regards to this stage, the speaker often decides what to communicate. What is worth mentioning at this stage is the fact that it is the most abstract of language production. That is why it is called the message stage. Additionally, this message stage is also considered different from the other stages simply because it is within this stage, the speaker determines what to say,

the ideas to convey, selection of the relevant utterances, and the finalisation of the pre-verbal product of the message.

- **Stage two (Formulation):** It is the second stage in the language production process. In this stage, it is generally time to frame the message into words, phrases, and clauses. More precisely, it is the stage wherein the speaker translates the conceptual representation into a linguistic form. According to Josias (2019), in this stage, the process of lexicalisation occurs. This means that this speaker has to choose the words to utter. Moreover, at the level of this stage, other processes can take place and occur. This mainly concerns the processes of syntax planning, where words are combined to make a sentence, the process of phonetic planning, where phonological encoding happens, and the processes of morphological and grammatical encoding, where sentences are encoded.
- **Stage three (Articulation):** It is the third and the most important stage. It is often known as the physical stage. This is because, in this stage, the words are translated into actual speech. According to Josias (2019), in this stage, thoughts and linguistic plans are sent from the brain to the speech system in order to produce the appropriate sounds. At this level, speech comprehension starts.
- **Stage four (Self-monitoring):** It is the fourth and final stage. In this stage, the speaker ensures that the produced language is accurate and meaningful. This means that the speaker usually checks syntax, lexes, phonology, and appropriateness in terms of register, loudness, and precision.

3. Models of Language Production

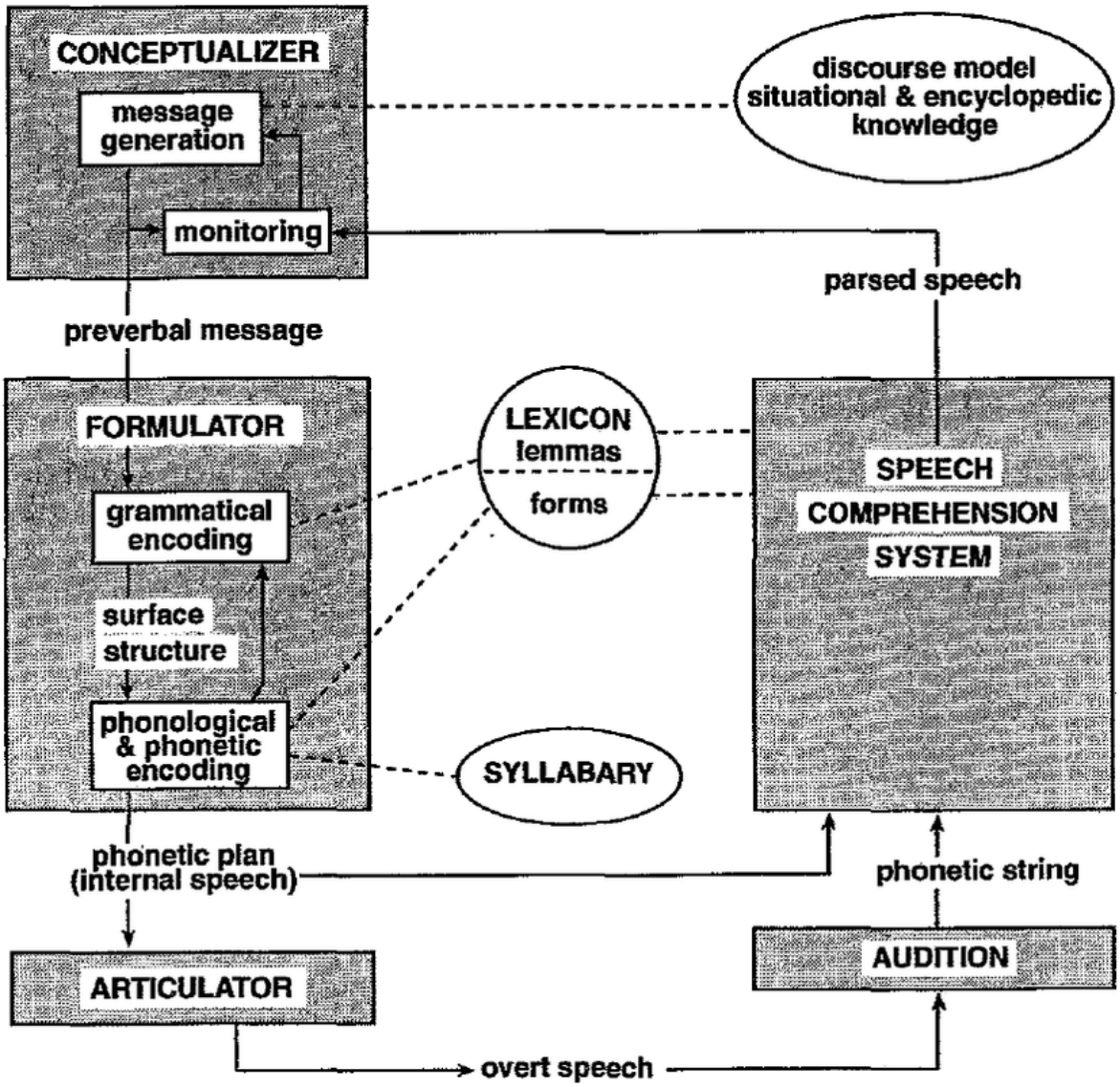
In the literature, there exist a number of language production models. These models have attempted to make the process of language production understood and more comprehensive. In more explicit terms, they have sought to discover how an average language user can produce language at a short rate of word-per-second, and the way language is produced in relation to the very low rate of errors.

Among the available language production models, the Levelt Model is thought to be the most comprehensive and thorough since it synthesises and provides a psycholinguistic rationale for language production through different well-elicited components. These components include elements, such as the conceptualiser, the articulator, and the speech comprehension system. In what is coming, an attempt to elucidate and describe what these components imply is going to be presented.

- **The conceptualiser:** This component is concerned with the production of messages.
- **The formulator:** This component shapes messages by giving them grammatical and phonological stances.
- **The articulator:** It is about the execution of the message. It transforms these messages into phonetic representations.
- **The speech comprehension:** It allows the parsing or processing of both self-regulated, as well as other generated messages.

Figure 4.

Levelt's Modern of Language Production



4. Language Production and Errors

To produce language, a language user is not usually perfect. S/he may commit errors. In regards to such errors, in the literature, a number of scholars have attempted to investigate and study errors in language production. These scholars have all the time tried to identify and define errors, display the reasons and factors that often lead to commit these errors; and more importantly, they have sought to look for strategies that should be followed to avoid making these errors.

Correspondingly, Inda (2017) provided a thorough and comprehensive description of these errors by which he answered many of the raised questions above. A summary of his answers is going to be presented in what is coming:

- **Definition of errors:** Inda refers mainly to speech errors. He defines them as unintentional deviations from the target form one intends to produce. He cited Kin (2017) to give another definition of speech errors. For the latter, a speech error is an unintentional linguistic innovation.

  Moreover, he adds that an error is an involuntary deviation in performance from the speakers' current phonological, grammatical, or lexical intention. It is the product of both local opportunity from the particular circumstances and of a struggle between two mental forces: some underlying a need or wish and the other is the desire to keep it hidden. In a few words, an error is a deviation (conscious or unconscious) from the apparently intended form of an utterance.

- **Causes of errors:** Once again, Inda (2017) summarises the causes of errors in the following:
  - **Interference 1:** The interference from intended elements of the utterance (Plan internal errors).
  - **Interference 2:** The interference from an alternative formulation of the intended thought (Alternative plan errors).
  - **Interference 3:** the interference from an unintended thought (Competing plan errors).

- **Factors influencing errors:** For Inda (2017), the factors that influence speech errors could be listed in the following:
  - **Language transfer:** It concerns transferring linguistic elements from a native language to a second language.

- **Language transfer learning:** This transfer is explained by the fact that there is an error because of poor learning.
- **Communication strategy:** In this case, the communication strategy can also lead to committing errors. It is noticeable when a language user hesitates before communicating.

5. Let us Practice!

5.1 Questions

Answer these questions.

- Why is comprehension slower than language production?
- What are the stages involved in language production?
- How do language users self-monitor their speech?
- What are the main sources of speech errors?
- What causes speech errors?
- In what way do speech errors committed by children differ from those of adults?

5.2 Activity

"Although researchers have described how comprehension and production may interact in particular tasks, the two areas of research have not always been closely connected" -**Explain**

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In-Take Home Test (8)

PART ONE: Just Remember it!

Activity 1: Choose the best answer

1. Language production begins around the age of _____ months.

a. 12 **b.** 18 **c.** 24

2. At around _____ years old, the child is expected to have a basic language.

a. 3-4 **b.** 4-5 **c.** 5-6

3. Language production occurs through _____ stages.

a. two **b.** three **c.** four

4. Verbal language production is always viewed as the process of communicating through _____.

a. language **b.** signs **c.** gestures

Activity 2: Decide whether these statements are **True** or **False**

a. Language production is an easy process. It takes little effort.

b. Language production involves only the analysis of discourse.

c. For a child, grammar begins developing around 2-3 years old.

d. Conceptualisation is the last stage in language production process.

a	b	c	d

Activity 3: Match the concepts with their respective definitions

1. The conceptualiser	**a.** It allows the parsing or processing of both-self regulated and generated messages.
2. The formulator	**b.** It transforms messages into phonetic representations.
3. The articulator	**c.** It shapes messages.
4. The speech comprehension system	**d.** It is concerned with the production of messages.

PART TWO: In-Between

Activity 1: Fill in the gaps

To produce language, a ——**1**—— user is not always perfect. He may commit ——**2**——. Depending on the types of these ——**3**——, the ——**4**—— user may intentionally or unintentionally commit these errors.

1	2	3	4

Activity 1: Briefly, answer the following questions

1. What are the sources and causes of speech errors?

2. What factors could influence the occurrence of speech errors?

PART THREE: In-Depth

Activity: Read and discuss the following statement

- "To produce language, a speaker is not usually perfect. He may commit errors."