立功 科技教育 升學證照 講義

辦學項目

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語言學概論 9

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Chapter 1 Language: a preview

When we study human language, we are approaching what some might call 'human essence,' the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man.

Noam Chomsky, *Language and mind*

(Language is a mirror of the mind)

We all become 'human' because we all know at least one language. Our neurophysiological control mechanisms permit us to be proficient at speaking and understanding what others say. But we do that without being able to explain the principles or rules of balance and support. Linguistic knowledge is unconscious and unique to man.

I. What Does Linguistic Language Consist of?

(a) **Phonetics**: The study of human speech sounds.

(1) The possible human sounds (inventory) in the language.

(2) The physical properties of sounds.

(3) How sounds are transferred and perceived?

(b) **Phonology**: The study of the patterning of speech sounds.

(1) The permissible combinations of phonetic inventory.

(2) Phonotactics: people know in their language which sounds may start a word, end a word, and follow each other.

(3) The rules and systems of combining sounds.

(c) **Morphology**: The study of word combinations.

(1) Knowledge of how to relate sound sequences and meanings with linguistic signs.

(2) Lexicons (words) in our mental dictionary, which includes information of spelling, the standard pronunciation and definitions to represent the word's meanings.

(3) Knowing the arbitrary relation of form and meaning. Even the mimetic (onomatopoeic) word, involuntary cries or fillers may vary from language to language.

(d) **Semantics**: The study of the linguistic meaning of words, phrases, and sentences.

(1) Knowledge of the meaning of words.

(2) Decomposition: It allows us to separate words into pieces of information. We can further analyze the semantic properties of the words

(e) **Syntax**: The study of how to put words into phrases and sentences that express our thoughts.

(1) The different ordering of words also contributes to the different meaning of sentences. (Structure determined)

(2) Grammaticality of sentences: speakers will distinguish the possible sentences from the non-sentences in their own native languages.

(3) Creativity aspect:

a. Being to produce new sentences never spoken before and to understand sentences never heard before.

b. Not stimulated response.

c. Being able to form indefinitely long sentences; this is a universal property of human language.

(4) To study the parameters and syntactic principles of syntax.

II. Linguistic Competence vs. Performance

There are great differences between what we know, which is our linguistic competence, and how we use this knowledge in our actual speech production and comprehension, which is our linguistic performance.

IIV. Grammars:

(a) **Descriptive Grammar**:

a. Mental grammar is the grammar stored in the brain of the speakers. Linguists describe the grammar of the language that exists in the minds of its speakers. Excluding the idiosyncratic usages, only shared knowledge is described. Descriptive grammar is a model of mental grammar. It doesn't tell people how to speak but describe human's basic linguistic knowledge.

b. Attitude: Grammaticality vs. ungrammaticality
Sentences conforming to the rules of both grammars, mental and descriptive grammars are said to be grammatical. Sentences deviating in some way from these rules are said to be ungrammatical.

c. Objective: No language or variety of language is superior to any other in a linguistic sense. Every grammar is equally complex and logical and capable of producing an infinite set

of sentences to express any thought.

d. Language is vigorous and dynamic and constantly changing.

(b) **Prescriptive Grammar**: A set of rules established by grammarians, which has been set up to be followed. Those grammarians (purists) attempted to establish rules for socially or stylistically correct use of languages, telling that one should talk in the way conforming to the standard dialect. It was influenced by Latin grammar. And new middle class tends to subjectively consider language change or mix as corruption.

(c) **Teaching Grammar**: The grammar used to learn another language or dialect, stating explicitly the rules of the language, and list of the word and their pronunciations. It is assumed that the students, who study Teaching Grammar already know one language (their native languages). Teaching Grammar is an aid in learning a new language or dialect.

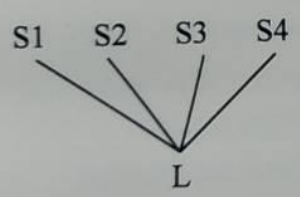
IV. The Origin of Language

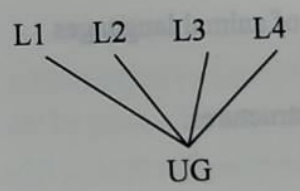
(A) God's gift to mankind.

(B) Human invention or the cries of Nature: **onomatopoeic** (The sounds of the words supposed imitate the sounds of nature.)

V. Language Universal

It is a ***mechanism*** that is unique to man, or the ***laws*** that pertain to all languages.





(S: speaker. L: language)

Evidence1: Translation

Evidence2: Language Acquisition

Evidence for language universals:

Sign languages:

1. Deaf children of deaf parents who are exposed to sign language learn sign language in stages parallel to language acquisition by hearing children oral languages.

2. A kind of human language that do not utilize sounds to express meanings; instead, they are visual-gestural systems that use hand and body gestures as the forms used to present words.