

Significance and Application of Psycholinguistics on English Teaching

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Abstract: Psycholinguistics is a discipline of the combination of psychology and linguistic, which is to study how psychology can influence the teaching and learning of language acquisition, and how to learn and teach language more effectively and better by means of psychology elements. Through the study of psycholinguistics, we can know how people use language or what the mental process a person use in producing and understanding language, which can help us to conduct teaching in a scientific way. In this paper, significance and application of psycholinguistics is discussed in some aspects of English teaching, which are development of speech and production, language acquisition, text and discourse, and bilingualism.

Keywords: Psycholinguistics; English Teaching; Language

Introduction

Psycholinguistics is an interdisciplinary field that draws on psychology and related disciplines to study language processes. It is a scientific discipline whose goal is a coherent theory of the way in which language is produced and understood. There are three aspects in psycholinguistics. One is language production, which indicates how students can construct an utterance from idea to completed sentence. The second one is language acquisition which explains how human beings learn language, or the process students acquire language. The other one is language perception or comprehension, which shows how students can perceive and understand speech and written language. In short, psycholinguistics reveals how language is done, or what cognitive processes are in using language.

In the process, speech production is one of the three main aspects of psycholinguistics. It reveals how people construct an utterance from ideas to completed sentences, and how to think and express their thoughts through language from the perspective of psychology. Moreover, language acquisition is the other process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend language, and it is a very complex process and in psycholinguistics, there are more specific and concrete analysis and study on it. Besides, in speech and production of psycholinguistics, the effective and appropriate text and discourse can help to build a comprehensive and complete structure of language. For the last aspect, in bilingualism, the second language can be mastered by learning the language intentionally and consciously, whereas the first language and mother tongue is acquired naturally and unconsciously without a formal setting.

1. Significance and application

1.1 Development of speech and production

The development of speech is a very complicated process, which should follow the nature and law of physiological and psychological development. So through studying and analyzing how psychological factors influence the process of development of speech, how children develop their speech gradually with their growth of age, we can understand every stage at which the children are functioning and the activities we can do to stimulate and encourage the further development.

Besides, speech production is also a complex activity, which refers to how a person creates speech, sign language, or text, beginning with an initial idea or message and ending in the spoken, signed or written form. Psycholinguistics is concerned with the cognitive faculties and processes that are necessary in order for grammatical forms of language to be produced from a mental grammar and the lexicon in the process of speech production. In particular, the study of speech errors generated in the process of speech production is most widely focused in psycholinguistics. The study of error analysis are often used to provide evidence to support hypotheses about the nature of speech. As a result, speech errors are often used in the construction of models for language production. One of the most effective ways to explain the way

people represent meanings using rule-governed languages is by observing and analyzing instances of speech errors. They include speech dysfluencies like starts, repetition, reformulation and constant pauses in between words or sentences and slips of tongue, like blinding, substitutions, exchanges and various pronunciation errors. These speech errors yield significant implication on language production. That is the most important application of psycholinguistics in speech production and development^[1].

1.2 Language acquisition

Language acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend language. Language acquisition also looks at how people produce and use words and sentences to communicate. It is a very complex process and in psycholinguistics, there are more specific and concrete analysis and study on it. Besides, developmental psycholinguistics, as a branch of psycholinguistics, concerns itself with the child's ability to learn language and it examines phonological, semantic, syntactic acquisition and the process in every stage of language acquisition.

In the study of language acquisition, psycholinguistics studies some factors which influence the effect of language acquisition, such as intelligence, aptitude, learning style, personality, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, culture as well as status and age. Psycholinguistics specifically presents the theories behind language acquisition and how the mind aids in a person's ability to gain language. Nativism propounded by Noam Chomsky embodies the fact that children will never gain the resources needed for processing language just by the things they heard, but more by how the language acquisition device works. They do not just learn language randomly, but through a set of rules. They look for regular patterns in speech, and use these as rules to work out new utterances. This theory supported that all people are born with a universal grammar that gives them the ability to acquire language^[2].

Language acquisition includes first language acquisition and second language acquisition. In the perspective of psycholinguistics, the individual internal cognitive processes are activated so that activation allows the individual to access the comprehensible input needed to further advance in the second language acquisition. What is vital for psycholinguistics theorists is that the exposure to comprehensible input and negative feedback leads to language learning. In a word, the psycholinguistics in second language acquisition focuses upon what humans know when they talk and how they acquire that knowledge and how that knowledge is put to use.

1.3 Text and discourse

Psycholinguistics focuses on language as an instrument for organizing, processing, and conveying information. On the other hand, language users communicate through discourse or text rather than through isolated sentences. In speech and production, the effective and appropriate text and discourse can help to build a comprehensive and complete structure of language. Text is the main body of a book or other piece of writing, as distinct from other material such as notes, appendices, and illustrations. Discourse is the multi-sentence language used in conversations, dialogues and narratives, which is the highest level of language analysis^[3]. Discourse is often considered a crucial notion for understanding human communication. The usage of discourse differs between various disciplines and approaches. For instance, in semantics and discourse analysis, it is a conceptual generalization of conversation within each modality and context of communication. Moreover, in regard to semantics, discourse is understood as the totality of codified language used in a given field of intellectual enquiry and of social practice,

In the process of speech production, we should make clear the distinction of text and discourse. Text is made up of a series of sentences including the property of grammatical cohesion, while discourse is the use of these sentences and comprised of utterances having the property of coherence. So in psycholinguistics, we usually analyze text in terms of cohesion, whereas analyze discourse in terms of coherence. To study text, you study the written words that communicate some information: structure, theme, meaning, rhetorical devices, etc. To study discourse, you study who is communicating with whom through what medium and for what social purpose. Training students' ability of producing discourse becomes main teaching aim and content in intermediate and advanced English teaching. Teachers should intend to help students adjust learning motivation and state, re-positioning the role themselves and re-evaluating the function of textbook. The practice of discourse production should focus on cohesion of phrase and discourse to fit native expression habits. Therefore, it needs the integration of verified

practice methods,different courses and different practice channels.

1.4 Bilingualism

Bilingualism is the ability of an individual or the members of a community to use two languages effectively. It may be acquired early by children in regions where most adults speak two languages. Children may also become bilingual by learning languages in two different social settings. Besides, bilingualism can also refer to the use of two languages in teaching, especially to foster learning in students trying to learn a new language.

Form the perspective of psycholinguistics, bilingualism refers to mastering or achieving the acquisition of two different languages including first or native language and second language. It is commonly believed that the second language can be mastered by learning the language intentionally and consciously, whereas the first language and mother tongue is acquired naturally and unconsciously without a formal setting. In the process of bilingual acquisition, the two languages may benefit from each other or hinder each other. Some of the common aspects in one language can help the acquisition of the other language. For example, pinyin in Chinese can help a lot in learning phonetic symbols in English. While the grammar or sentence structure may be the interference in learning English, due to the different rules of language. An ideal coordinated bilingual would have two completely separate linguistic systems and there would never be a mix of languages at any level. It should also be noted that the organization of the linguistic system and thus the state of bilingualism of a person can change depending on his or her experiences during life.

A specific bilingual person is not necessarily completely coordinated, compound or subordinate. Indeed, a bilingual can be coordinated for certain parts of the linguistic system, at the level of syntax and semantics, for example, but subordinate to the phonological level. It has a strong accent in its second language, while having impeccable syntax and a rich lexicon. So psycholinguistics can help us to clear more about the process of acquisition of bilingual languages, we can use these two languages more effectively and properly.

2. Conclusion

Psycholinguistics plays a very significant role in any aspect of language and speech, which is concerned with how language is acquired, comprehended and produced. This means that the field of psycholinguistics studies the cognitive processes that makes it possible to create a meaningful sentence with vocabulary and grammatical structures. Furthermore, it explores the processes that makes it possible to understand utterances, words, text, etc. So with the help of psycholinguistics, teachers can achieve a more precise and comprehensive understanding and application in language study and acquisition, and it can guide teachers to implement English teaching in a more scientific and effective way.

References

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