

# PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS PSYCHOLINGUISTICS?

- *"Psycholinguistics is the study of the cognitive process that supports the acquisition and use of language"* Schmitt, N.
- *"Psycholinguistics is the study of how the mind equips human beings to handle language"* Simpson, J

# INTRODUCTION

## HISTORY

Over the centuries...

Language discussions of language acquisition and of the origins of language.

Nineteenth century...

Parallel interest in the psychology of adult language development

# INTRODUCTION

Twentieth century...

First half: Behaviorism

Second half: Miller and Chomsky

# INTRODUCTION

- Second century....
  - First half: Behaviourism.
  - Second half: Miller and Chomsky.
- Today...
  - Psycholinguistics is a multidisciplinary field, drawing upon cognitive psychology, theoretical linguistics.....
  -

# LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

- DEFINITION
- THEORIES

# NATIVIST THEORY

- CHOMSKY'S ASSERTIONS: language is an innately acquired faculty
- Arguments:
  - The sort period of time while a child achieves grammatical competence.
  - The lack of correction or explicit teaching by adults.



# NATIVIST THEORY

The poverty of the stimuli available to the child.

All normally developing children acquire full competence

# NATIVIST THEORY

- UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR (UG)
- Components:
  - Principles: they enable the infant to recognise features that are common to most or all of the world's languages.
  - Parameters: they can be set to accord with the language to which the child is exposed

# NATIVIST THEORY

- CRITICAL PERIOD; THEORY :
- The two emispheres might be "plastic" at birth
- The left hemisphere gradually becoming the dominant one for language during the five first years of life
- It was not corroborated by recent studies and commentators extended the cut-off point to adolescence

# ALTERNATIVE THEORIES

- Many alternatives to the nativist view emphasize the role of the LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT to which the child is exposed
- Jean Piaget (Piatelli-Palmerini 1980)
  - Language acquisition is driven by COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT as the child succeeds in making sense of the world around it.

# ALTERNATIVE THEORIES

- Other cognitive accounts – Human mind structure permits to trace patterns in real-world phenomena, including speech, without special language-related device.
- Deacon (1997) – It is possible that language took advantage of cognitive operations that served other purposes and that the brain then gradually evolved to accommodate it.

# ALTERNATIVE THEORIES

- Simulations of language acquisition based on computer modeling – A so-called return to empiricism (even behaviorism) – A connectionist computer program capable of ‘acquiring’ accurate past tense links. Even though:
  - No abstract rule
  - Based upon generalization across examples and exceptions.
- However, whether this kind of program achieves its goal or not is open to challenge.

# PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- CHILD LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
- SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION  
AND BILINGUALISM

# Child language development

Is language innate?

- Many studies have investigated syntax, morphology lexis and phonology.
- syntax: verbs used and its valencies.
- Morphology: whether inflections are acquired by a child in a fixed order.
- lexis: the way in which infants succeed in associating meanings with words.



# Child language development

- Phonology: child face important challenges of establishing articulatory setting and of co-ordinating the movement of the articulators from one to another.

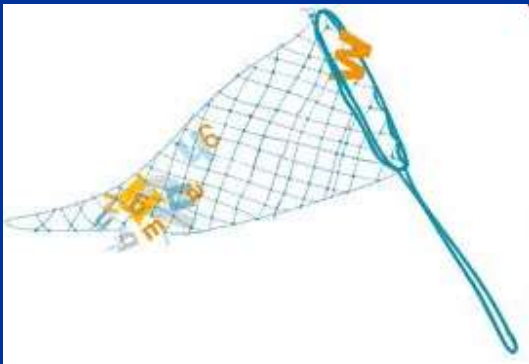
# L2 AND BILINGUALISM

Example:

English-spanish bilinguals judge wheter letter strings are real words in their L2. These words are false friend.

Spainsh: the word *red* means “net”

English: the word *red* refers to a color.



# CONCLUSION

# REFERENCES

- SIMPSON, J. (ed). 2011. *The Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. Routledge.
- SCHMITT, N. (ed). 2010. *An introduction to applied linguistics*. Hodder Education.