

Linguistics and Other Fields

Problems concerning the role of language in society:

- 1) The problems of communities which develop a standard language and the reactions of minority groups to this (as in Britain, India, or Wales).
- 2) The problems of people who have to be educated to linguistic level where they cope with the demands of a variety of social situations.
- 3) The problems of communication which exist between nations or groups using a different language, which affects their 'world view'.
- 4) The problems caused by linguistic change in response to social factors.
- 5) The problems caused or (solved) by bilingualism or multilingualism.
- 6) The problems caused by the need for individuals to interact with others in specific linguistic ways (language as an index of intimacy or distance, or solidarity of prestige or power, or pathology, and so on).

Chomsky's view of linguistics in his book 'Language and Mind':

That is the most important contribution linguistics can make is the study of the human mind; and that linguistics is accordingly has seen as a branch of cognitive psychology [=is the branch of psychology that focuses on the way people process information. It looks at how we process information we receive and how the treatment of this information leads to our responses. In other words, cognitive psychology

is interested in what is happening within our minds that links **stimulus** (input) and **response** (output)].

The strong mutual bonds of interest operating between **psychology** and **linguistics**:

- i) The extent to which language mediate or structures thinking.
- ii) The extent which talks about language 'simplicity' or 'complexity' can be given any meaningful psycholinguistic basis.
- iii) The extent to which language is influenced by and itself influences such things as memory, attention, recall, and constraints and perception.
- vi) The extent to which language has central role to play in the understanding of human development is broad illustrations of such bonds.

Acquisition of language in children:

In psycholinguistics, there are two kinds which have been taken into consideration, i.e., *descriptive* and *theoretical*.

a) The descriptive need is nothing was known about the actual factors of language acquisition in children, in particular about:

- (i) The order in which grammatical structures was acquired.
- (ii) Even elementary questions such as when and how children develop

their ability to ask question syntactically.

(iii) Or when they learn the inflectional systems of their language, went unanswered.

b) The theoretical questions have focused on the issue of how we can account for the phenomenon of language development in children at all. It is discussed in two ways:

(i) Normal children have mastered most of the structure of their language by the age of five.

(ii) The generative approach argued against the earlier behaviourist assumptions that it was possible to explain language development largely in terms of *imitation*(the important factor in the development of language, but it cannot be the major one, thus the basis of any theory of language acquisition) and *selective reinforcement*.

Hypothesis of the nature of language acquisition:

All normal children come to develop the abstract knowledge of the grammatical rules for themselves and the generative approach argues that such a process (abstract knowledge) is clear if it is postulated that certain features of this competence are present in the brains of children from the beginning. In other words, children's brains contain (innate) characteristics which 'pre-structure' them in the direction of language learning.

Objections against the innat hypothesis:

(i) On the ground that what is not so much deep structural information but rather learning principles of a more general kind.

(ii) Some people would like to see what would happen if the hypothesis were formulated in terms of other than those provided by Chomsky's later work.

Q:How to enable the innate features to develop into adult competence?

Children must be exposed to human language, i.e., they must be stimulated in order to respond.

Different kinds of English are used in different situations:

We do this to talk with: (i) equals, (ii) superiors or subordinates, (iii) on the job, (iv) when we are old or young, (v) upper class or lower class, (vi) male or female. (vii) when we are trying to persuade, and (viii) inform or bargain.