

Contemporary Linguistic Analysis

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Content Introduction	From its inception, the basic goal of <i>Contemporary Linguistic Analysis</i> has been to provide an up-to-date introduction to the discipline of linguistics while at the same time providing coverage of phenomena that are of special interest and relevance to the linguistic situation in Canada.

Abstract

This book attempts to emphasize the extent of this knowledge as well as to introduce the scientific methodology used in linguistic analysis.

Contemporary Linguistic Analysis

What is language

The possession of language, perhaps more than any other attribute, distinguishes humans from other animals. To understand our humanity, one must understand the nature of language that makes us human.. According to the philosophy expressed in the myths and religions of many people, language is the source of human life and power.

Linguistic knowledge

1. Knowledge of the sound system

Part of knowing a language means knowing what sounds are in that language and what sounds are not. This unconscious knowledge is revealed by the way speakers of one language pronounce words from another language.

2. Knowledge of words

Knowing the sounds and sound patterns in our language constitutes only one part of our linguistic knowledge. Knowing a language is also to know that certain sound sequences signify certain concepts or meanings.

3. The creativity of linguistic knowledge

Knowing of a language enables you to combine words to form phrases, and phrases to form sentences. Knowing a language means being able to produce new sentences never spoken before and to understand sentences never heard before.

Morphology

Morphology has focused on the structure and formation of words in human language. Many words consist of smaller formative elements, called morphemes. These elements can be classified in a variety of ways and can be combined and modified under various conditions to build words.

The two basic types of word formation in English are derivation and compounding. Other important morphological phenomena include cliticization, conversion, clipping, blends, and backformation.

Inflection, a change in the form of a word to convey grammatical information such as plurality or tense, can be expressed via affixation, internal change, reduplication, and tone placement.

Phonology

To discover the phonemes of language, linguistics can use a methodology such as looking for minimal pairs of words, or for sounds that are in complementary distribution. This feature matrix of allophone of a phoneme that results in the simplest statement of the phonological rules is selected as the underlying phoneme from which all the phonetic allophones are derived.

Semantic

The study of semantics is concerned with a broad range of phenomena, including the nature of meaning, the role of syntactic structure in the interpretation of sentences, and the effect of pragmatics on the understanding of utterances. Although much remains to be done in each of these areas, work in recent years has at least begun to identify the type of relations, mechanisms, and principles involved in the understanding of language. These include the notions of extension and intension in the case of word meaning, thematic roles in the case of NPs, and c-command in the case of pronouns.

Syntax

Universal grammar provides all languages with the same general type of syntactic mechanisms. This includes a merge operation that combines words in accordance with their syntactic category and their subcategorization properties, creating a representation called deep structure. Deep structure must comply with the X schema, which stipulates the place of heads, specifiers, and complements in phrase structure. Move operations can modify deep structure by moving words and phrases in particular ways to produce a surface structure.

First language acquisition

Although we commonly refer to the emergence of language in children as language acquisition, the end result of this process is actually a *grammar*- the mental system that allows people to speak and understand a language. There are at least two reasons for believing that the development of linguistic skills must involve the acquisition of a grammar.

First, mature language users are able to produce and understand an unlimited number of novel sentences. A second indication that children acquire grammatical rules comes from their speech errors, which often provide valuable clues about how the acquisition process works. Even run-of-the-mill errors such as *doed*, *runned*, and *goed* can be informative. Since we know that children don't hear adults produce words like these, such errors tell us that they have formulated a general rule that forms the past

tense by adding –ed to the verb stem.

Second language acquisition

One of the most easily recognizable traits of a second language learner's speech is that it bears a certain resemblance to the first language. Proficiency in a second language requires both knowledge and ability, something captured in a model of communicative competence. Someone must acquire knowledge in all linguistic domains as well as the ability to use that knowledge in a variety of social contexts. What is easy or difficult to acquire in a second language is investigated from a variety of perspectives. We focus on universal grammar and typological universals. However, it is not just universals that influence second language learning; the specific characteristics of an individual can also affect the process. Affective factors and cognitive factors both influence second language learning. So too do factors such as modified input, modified interaction, focus on form and bilingual education.

Conclusion

Students in Taiwan face many struggles when learning English. They are forced to memory vocabularies and idioms as possible as they can. They show nervousness and worries when encountering examination except reading. That is because examinations dominate any English teaching affairs in Taiwan. Students can not enjoy English class in that they learn languages merely due to the entrance examination. They can't find the interest of learning English, not to mention to appreciate the beauty of languages. To solve the problem, teachers in Taiwan must encourage students to speak English loudly and to create more interesting activities which appeals more students to involve in the English class. Besides, to establish English learning atmosphere is also crucial. The environment makes students know the importance of English ability. If students set up their goals, they will learn English actively, instead of being forced by their parents or teachers. Teaching English is really a tough work in Taiwan. I hope every English teacher can enjoy the job, the most important of all, students in Taiwan can love to learn English.