Applied Linguistics
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Lecture 2
Language

Today, we are going to be talking about language. You see, in the domain of applied linguistic, or for that matter in the entire discipline of linguistics, the primary object of investigation is spoken language. Spoken language is also known as natural language, and then whatever we do with language and whatever domains language is involved in, becomes the domain of investigation for the discipline of linguistic.

We are talking about applied linguistics and in this field; we are going to be looking at applications of the findings of studies in linguistics. In various subdomains of linguistics, there have been several interesting and theoretically motivated findings about language that are relevant in solving several issues and this is what is the domain of applied linguistic.

So we are trying to set a stage where we can talk about language, since language is the primary stuff that we will be talking about. And in this course, language is something which is going to be the object of enquiry in a in a slight a different way, so it is imperative for us to talk about language and get introduced to the idea of language and how language is being approached to study and therefore, it is relevant that we look at language.

So let us start looking at language in some sense and we will try to make sense of language. Little later, I will also explain it to you that how the discussion of language is further relevant in terms of understanding what is coming up in this course. So we have been looking at some of the key ideas, key concerns in the domain of the study of language.

Some Concepts

- Language
- Linguistics
- Language and Dialect
- Language Learning / Acquisition
- Behaviorism / Innateness Hypothesis
- Generative Mechanism
- Language computation

So the 1st one is language, then we have looked at in some sense what linguistics is all about, we will be talking about language in dialects, we will also talk about language learning and then in in that section, we will discuss the similarities and differences between learning and acquisition. Then it is interesting to understand what psychologists have contributed in understanding of our process of language learning.

Therefore, we will look and behaviorism and its hypothesis and then we deal with the process of language learning through generating mechanism therefore, we will get to understand little bit of generative computation as well. And finally, we will be looking at in several modules from now about language competition. So again, what I am going to be generally talking about is prelude to next 8 to 10 modules in this course, which is going to introduce to the broader idea of language. Once we have gone through that, we will get through applications as well.

But please keep in mind, the introduction about language that I am going to be discussing with you is on the basis of how and what kind of discussion on language is relevant for understanding issues in applied linguistics therefore, these details. So we will we will start with generative foundation of language acquisition however, we are going to be looking at the process of language acquisition separately little later.

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Generative Foundation of Language Acquisition

- Language Acquisition Device (LAD)
- Universal Grammar
- Principles
- Parameters
- Knowledge of Language (KoL)
- Generative Capacity

Therefore, I would not go into too many details of this part, but I will explain this to you. Let me let me go back, by now I am sure based on our discussion of several minutes including in the 1st module you understand what language is about. There are 2 key points for us to remember about language, language is a unique and fascinating human capacity. Humans are associated with language in fact, language defines humans.

It is language that distinguishes us from many other species; such as the significance of language in our lives. Therefore, language happens to be one of them was fundamental existences aspect of our existence, one. The 2nd part is that we need to know and understand and where we are going to be focusing upon is, it is a rule governed system.

An underlying language is a system, so whenever we talk about language, we are talking about system and this is where the linguistic comes in to play its role. The in-depth study in the different subdomains of linguistic helps us understand the underlying structure of language. Therefore, in short we can say, language is a systematic phenomena and it is a rule governed system.

We will be looking at some of them or rather several of them in order for us to understand, what is it that we mean when we say language is a rule governed system. What kinds of rules are we talking about? So these are the 2 things that we must keep in mind before we discuss language. In general, when we talk to people, language is so common to us that either we do not pay much attention to it or we do not or we think it is it is normal.

It is true that language is normal to humans. So, when you begin a discussion about language, in most cases the primary response from your audience will be language is a medium of communication. That is a very small part of language; it is true that one of the mediums of communication is language, in fact a very powerful medium for communication. However, it is just one part of it.

Therefore, what we are going to be looking at from this perspective of communication is it intersects with other people, so when we are looking at language as a rule governed system, then we are talking about language within us. When we are talking about language as communication, then we are talking about how we interact with others. And here others refer to help us create the notion of society.

Therefore, the use of language in communicating with others is another part. So we are we are basically talking about 2 parts; one is the internal part and other is the external part. Internal part is known as 'I' language and external part is known 'E' language. In other words, rather several terms have been used for understanding this aspect, but it is pretty simple.

Language, when we are talking about its rules, its underlying structure as long as we are talking about these 2, it is internal to us, it is part of us and then we are talking about 'I' language. The moment we talk about things related to its use and it involves other people, we're talking about 'E' language. So therefore the 2 other terms to explain the same phenomena that have been used in this context are "form" and "function".

So, when we are talking about formal properties of language that is underlying rules, then the formal properties of language is related to "I" language and when we are talking about communication, we are talking about actually the function of language, these are some of the generic things that we need to know about. Now let us understand little bit more and then we we turn to some other relevant things that we need to understand in order for us to understand introduction about language.

So we come back to language acquisition device universal grammar and then knowledge of language and generative capacity in some time. So, what we are going to be looking at, what we want to 1st look at is another question about language that often comes in.

When we say, when did language, when did humans, human language begin. And same question is asked in several ways, people will ask you, "When humans did began to speak?" That is history of human evolution; these questions are also related to history of human evolution. So we need to deal with this question in order for us to understand introduction to language.

One of the fascinating answers to this question comes from Ray Jackendoff. In a very introductory article, Ray Jackendoff answers this question in plain simple words. And his answer is "we do not know". And apparently, that happens to be one of the most convincing answers to this. It is imagining capacity, not doubt. It must not have developed overnight, it must not have been planned and to understand these things.

Now we have substantial evidence that we can talk about and we come to believe such things, but to understand when exactly humans began speaking, we do not know. So there are fascinating things to know about language and we will be talking about some of them as well in our modules little later, when we start discussing structure of language for us to understand the underlying structure, we will get to see things like, how human language has vocabulary of thousands of words, which comes out of just a few dozen of sounds.

This must not have been a planned phenomenon. Just now, we discuss that language must not have been a planned phenomena. So the output of thousands of words in any language with the help of a few 2 to 3 for maximum for dozens of sounds including vowels and consonants both, will give so many words, must not have been a planned phenomena. We do not have sufficient evidence of any sort of evolution, to be really precise without going into the details.

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- FOXP$_2$ "Language Gene"
- Achieved present shape around 100000 to 200000 years ago.
- Rational
  - A mutation in this gene leads to language deficit and problems in the control of face and mouth.
- Critique
  - Does this really lead to language impairment of only creates speaking difficulties.

NPTEL

There have been efforts in this field and in some context, people have talked about something called language gene and this has been referred to as FOXP2. According to the discussion, humans achieved current shape around 100 to 200 thousand years ago. And the rational mind,

this is that maturation in this gene leads to language deficit and problems in the control of face and mouth.

So, any kind of mutation that is done or that happens to this language gene does something to our language capacity. Therefore, this has been named as language gene. About 1000 years ago, we do not do much again. However, a critic to this approach comes right away, we are talking about a particular gene that is in humans and we would want to conveniently name it language gene.

And our rational is some sort of mutation to this gene leads to some issues with language, to put it in simple terms. The question here is, "does this really leads to language impairment or only creates speaking difficulties?" This is an important thing to understand. Speaking difficulty could be mechanical difficulty, language impairment would, if there is evidence to language impairment, that would lead to some kind of convincing argument on the basis of language genes namely FOXP2.

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Language in Mind

1. Children understand much more than they can imitate showing that they have constructed grammar.
2. Children come up with novel patterns implying that they have mental grammar.
3. Patterns come from the menu of Universal Grammar.

The point is we; there have been attempts to understand this and brilliant attempts I must add. However, we do not know much and it is an important aspect for us to consider that we do not know much evolution of human language in humans. To understand language, one aspect was it always called tool of the medication.

And for long, people believed that humans namely human children that is in very early stage, learn language by imitating others, by practicing what they here, by copying the language that they here around themselves. All of that could partially be true however, they never look

sufficient to begin with. However, for a long time people did not pay much of attention to this.

Namely, how does it happen that given so little of input in a couple of years of time, children jump to a level of vocabulary of more than 10,000 in a period between 24 to 30 months of children's development. The exponential growth in vocabulary among children is an example that it must not be only on the basis of what we hear and what we produce. What we hear definitely has a role, what we produce definitely has a role or that is an outcome, but there is something missing in between.

And little later, linguists psychologist, people from several other disciplines agreed and were convinced that there is a role of human mind in language because between the production, between hearing of language from society that is input and production that is output, there lies something else and that is human mind. So all of this capacity develops in human mind, where we get the capacity of 10,000 words within no time.

Here are 10,000 is not mathematical number, I must add this on my own understanding of this point, it simply means a lot. This a lot does not happen only on the basis of few, so what happens on the basis of few is, in this process human mind figures out the underlying pattern of word formation. And then on the basis of that underlying pattern and the generative capacity it develops a computation that is responsible for producing unlimited number of words and sentences.

And not only that, children also simultaneously or little later along the same time learn how to use language. This is an important point for us to underline. Not only children develop generative capacity around this time, but they also develop how to use that. And generativists have not found this convenient for reasons that I am not aware of to talk about in the generative framework.

However, for the purpose of this discussion and because I want to lead this discussion to applied linguistics and understanding concepts in applied linguistics, I would like you to understand this thing very carefully that language is generative capacity of human mind, so not only this generative capacity of human mind helps us develop computation and through which we generate or we derive underlying rules of language.

But also the same capacity helps us figure out the rules, underlying rules language used. Then it makes sense to say that children understand much more than they can imitate, showing that

they have constructed grammar. So we have just developed, just discuss that it is not possible to teach a child about everything that he knows. Children come up with novel patterns implying that they have mental grammar.

And patterns come from the many of universal grammar which we discuss little later. So, here we have discussed the role of human mind in language. Rather, I have tried to underline 2 specific points that is the missing link of human mind in understanding of language learning one. And two that that missing link of human mind and generative capacity language computation also encodes rules of language used.

Secondly, just take an example for this purpose and then we start looking at language learning in little bit more details. What actually happens is the process of language learning is also called learning by learning. So to see the patterns underlying learning, we take some examples from English past tense, so most of the verbs take "e d" suffixed at the end of it.

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However, there are so many irregular verbs like "put" and "fit" and "read" these verbs do not change they do not take "e d" suffixed, they do not change, they remain unchanged. There are several verbs in English, which change vowels and occupy past tense. Then there are some totally regular verbs like "caught" and "bought" which occupy which take a different shape altogether.

In no time, children 1st learn the rule of "e d" suffixed as an unmarked pattern of past tense formation in English. Pretty soon, when they start applying this rule to all the verbs like "go" and "put" and "fit" as well, they pretty well realize that this is not working. This process of

realization of not working is called unlearning and then right after they take them as acceptance and learn them separately and start using the desired pattern.

So this helps us understand that learning of language, the entire process of language learning has huge role of human mind in it. We will add couple of more points here to go for further discussions from here. To conclude this part, we have looked at the definition of language; we have looked at what language is, what it does, and what is the role of human mind in it.

We have also looked at, how the 2 aspects that we have discussed in the beginning that is "I" language and "E" language, that is "form" and "function" of language, both are not really separate entities. Generative apparatus is capable of dealing with both simultaneously. That is to say, in the process of development of forms, human mind also figures out rules of language used in the real world.

Therefore, the unknowing rules of "I" language embed is included with the underlying rules of language used. These are the 2 aspects that are crucial for understanding language in totality. And also in understanding how language is not sufficiently only the tool of communication.

Of course, it is a tool of, it is helpful in communications, but it is much more than that in the sense that it is intrinsic to human, it is natural to human and human beings are programmed to learn language. We are going to, in the next session, we are going to be looking at some of the aspects of language and its social implications that is, the society around the language. Little later, we come back to understanding of language learning in little bit more details.

So, 1st we will discuss about language and society and its interaction with society and how language looks in society, then we will come back to the process of language learning and then we go further in taking a detailed look at, what is it that we learn when we learn language. And little later, we will go further with the aspect that I have promised you in this course. Thank you.