

Mustansiriyah University

College of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature

3rd Year Linguistics

Textbook: Linguistics (Aichison, 2010)

Lecture Title: Speech Production and Comprehension

- The aim of this lecture is to explore speech comprehension, speech production and language disorders.
- When children first learn a word they tend to overgeneralize the meaning of that the words by using it to refer to several concepts associated with it. Undergeneralization is not uncommon, however, as some children may use a word only in particular context.
- Overgeneralizations in children language acquisition can be attributed to the fact that children's minds work with prototypes that are different from that of the adults.
- Children's understanding and acquisition of their first language is an active process, because children draw conclusions on the basis of partial information.
- Word recognition involves parallel, rather than serial, processing where all the possibilities related to missing information can be considered subconsciously at the same time.
- To understand grammatical structures, hearers utilize **perceptual strategies**. These strategies enable them to jump to conclusions on the basis of outline clues by imposing what they expect to hear onto the stream of sounds.
- Speech production involves two processes: words selection and words assemblage. Slips of the tongue provide insights into these processes. Slips of the tongue can be of two kinds; selection errors and assemblage errors.
- Slips of the tongue are not haphazard; they in fact show certain regularities. Selection errors can tell us which words are closely associated and stored in the mind.
- Assemblage errors indicate how whole sequences are organized ready for production. Mistakes nearly always take place within a single 'tone group' - a short stretch of speech spoken with a single intonation contour. This suggests that the tone group is the unit of planning.
- Slips of the tongue are part of normal speech. Yet, they overlap with the stranger and more extreme errors found in people suffering from speech disorders.
- **Aphasia** a general term used to refer to serious speech disorders; it literally means 'without speech'. Almost all aphasic persons have difficulty in finding words, a problem known as **anomia**, literally 'without naming ability'.

- Aphasia can be broadly classified into two types: agrammatism and fluent aphasia. The latter is more common than the former.
- **Agrammatism** is a technical term used to refer to an aphasic condition in which the patients find difficulty in stringing words together into sentences. They speak effortfully, typically in three or four word bursts, using nouns above all. Additionally, there are hardly any endings on words or functional words and prepositions. Therefore this type of aphasia is production-related speech disorder.
- **Fluent aphasia** refers to a speech disorder where patients speak fluently but in a nonsensical manner. They sometimes produce strange made-up words, and often have severe problems comprehending what is said to them. This type of aphasia is comprehension-related speech disorder.
- Through studying aphasia, linguists try to understand how human can store and organize linguistic information in their minds.
- **Aphasiology** links the study of language with that of the mind and the brain, as it straddles the borderline between psycholinguistics, which deals with the relationship between language and mind, and **neurolinguistics**, which deals with the relationship between brain and language.
- One of the main questions that have been discussed in neurolinguistics whether particular types of language disorder can be correlated with damage to particular areas within the brain.
- It was found that those who have problems with speech production, such as agrammatic aphasics, mostly have injuries towards the front of the brain, while those who have problems with comprehension, such as fluent aphasics, have injuries towards the back.