

April 24, 2013

Day 31: Acquisition

- I. Linguistics knowledge
  - a. What does a child have to acquire in order to become a native speaker of a language?
- II. Language Acquisition
  - a. Central Questions for Linguistics:
    - i. What do you know when you know a language?
    - ii. How is that knowledge acquired?
    - iii. How is that knowledge put to use?
- III. Task: on the basis of some body of data, the child has to recreate the system that generated that data
  - a. Combine sounds/morphemes to make words
  - b. Learn to produce speech sounds (control airflow, timing of vocal cords, articulators)
  - c. Combine words to make phrases and sentences
  - d. Identify phonemes of target language
  - e. Transformations (what transformations are and are not possible)
  - f. Decode continuous speech signal into discrete words
  - g. Linguistics Input → Initial State → Grammar
- IV. Children learn language of their environment
  - a. Baby + Data from English = Mental Grammar of English
  - b. Baby + Data from Spanish = Mental Grammar of Spanish
  - c. Baby+ Data from Japanese = Mental Grammar of Japanese
  - d. Acquiring syntax
    - i. The input is...a bunch of sounds in sequence. How is the underlying structure discovered?
    - ii. Children to support the representations they ultimately come to have?
    - iii. If not, where do those representations come from?
- V. Theories of Language Acquisition
  - a. Imitation/correction: based on input
  - b. Grammar construction: based on innate predispositions
- VI. Pre-linguistics stages
  - a. Birth-12 weeks: crying, reflexive vocalizations
  - b. 4-5 months: can distinguish own language
  - c. 6-8 months: babbling, notices distinct phonemes from other languages
  - d. 10-18 months: one word stage, 50% describe objects, 50% request for action, modifiers, or routines
    - i. Phonology: can no longer distinguish sounds that are allophones in their native language
    - ii. Syntax: know word order (English SVO)