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PSYCHOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF CHILDREN'S SPEECH

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Abstract: This article analyzes the psycholinguistic aspects of children's speech. It explores the stages of speech development, the interplay of speech with psychological processes, research methods, and techniques for identifying speech disorders. Furthermore, the application of the psycholinguistic approach in pedagogy, speech therapy, and family education is discussed. The outcomes of the article serve as both a theoretical and practical foundation for the detailed study and development of children's speech.

Keywords: psycholinguistics, child speech, speech development, psychological processes, speech therapy.

Psycholinguistics is a field that studies language and speech activity in close connection with cognitive processes. Of particular importance is the formation and development of children's speech, which represents one of the vital research areas of psycholinguistics. Although language is a social phenomenon, the process of acquiring it is closely related to each child's individual psychological development. Speech plays a crucial role in a child's socialization, thinking, and personality formation. For this reason, the psycholinguistic study of children's speech is highly significant from both scientific and practical perspectives.

There are several important tasks in studying children's speech. The main objectives include identifying the stages of speech development, analyzing interactions with psychological processes, explaining the innate mechanisms of language ability, and the early diagnosis of speech disorders. Children's speech passes through various stages. In the prelinguistic phase (0–1 years), the child is sensitive to sounds, distinguishes the mother's voice, and produces cooing and natural sounds. The subsequent one-word speech stage involves using simple words such as “mama”, “dada” and “give”, where a single word may carry the meaning of an entire sentence. For example, “water” might mean “I want water”. Between ages two and three, the child's vocabulary quickly expands, forming simple sentences of two or three words. From ages three to six, the grammatical structure of speech develops; children construct more complex sentences, use verb tenses and possessive suffixes, and their speech activities increasingly integrate with cognitive processes.

Various methods are used in psycholinguistic research. The observation method records children's speech in natural settings, like family conversations or preschool activities. Experimental methods assess children's speaking and comprehension abilities through special tasks. Testing measures vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, memory, and repetition skills. The interview method, based on the child's interests, evaluates speech skills through question-and-answer sessions. These methods uncover not only general patterns of development but also individual differences.

Speech development is closely interconnected with other mental processes. Memory is key to remembering and reproducing words, while attention helps choose the right expressions in communication. Perception enables children to name objects, and thinking forms the basis for grammatically correct sentences. Therefore, studying a child's speech development is a vital source for understanding psychological growth.

Importantly, psycholinguistic research enables the early identification of speech disorders in children. For instance, dyslalia involves incorrect pronunciation of sounds, alalia refers to slow speech development or its absence, and stuttering is a disruption of speech rhythm and tempo. Timely detection of such issues is crucial in speech therapy practice. The psycholinguistic approach helps reveal their causes and develop effective remedial strategies.

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The practical significance of the psycholinguistic approach to fostering children's speech is considerable. In education, teachers take into account the stages of speech development when working with children. In speech therapy, this approach produces effective results in identifying and correcting speech defects. In family upbringing, parents can expand children's vocabulary and strengthen grammatical skills through reading stories, singing songs, and interactive games. In conclusion, the psycholinguistic study of children's speech deepens our understanding of the interconnectedness of language and cognition. Consistently exploring speech development offers valuable insights into a child's thinking, memory, attention, and personality formation. The psycholinguistic approach is not only useful for scientific analysis but also has important applications in education, the family environment, and speech therapy. Therefore, investigating children's speech from a psycholinguistic perspective holds both theoretical and practical significance for nurturing an accomplished future generation.

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