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The Main Role of Psycholinguistics in Language Learning

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Abstract. This article discusses main principles of psycholinguistics and the role of it in language learning. Psycholinguistics has provided numerous theories that explain how a person acquires a language, produces and perceives both spoken and written language. The theories have been used in the field of language teaching. Some experts use them as the basic theories in developing language teaching methods. It is known as psycholinguistics approach. Psycholinguistic approach views learning as a cognitive individual process happening within the individual and then moves to the social dimension.

Key words: psycholinguistics, ELT, method, perception, approach, language skills

Introduction. Psycholinguistics mainly helps teachers to consider the use of appropriate method to teach that four language skill. These methods apply psycholinguistic principles that how a person acquires his/her mother tongue or first language (First Language Acquisition), learns his/her second or third language (Second Language Learning), perceives a language (Language Perception), and produces language (Language Production). Language perception refers to listening and reading, while the language production refers to speaking and writing. Listening, reading, speaking and writing are called as the four of language skills. Specifically, psycholinguistics helps to understand the difficulties of these four skills both intrinsic difficulties and extrinsic difficulties. Psycholinguistics also helps to explain the errors students do in the language learning. Moreover psycholinguistics also defines some kinds of brain disorders that affect language learning performance such as agraphia and aphasia which must be treated properly.

Psycholinguistics is an integration of two disciplines; psychology and linguistics. Psychology is the study of mind and behavior; linguistics is the study of language. So, in general, psycholinguistics can be defined as the study of mind and language. It is concerned with the relationship between the human mind and the language as it examines the processes that occur in brain while producing and perceiving language.

Methods. Psycholinguistics covers three main points; language production, language perception and language acquisition. Language production refers to the processes involved in creating and expressing meaning through language. Language perception refers to processes involved in interpreting and understanding both written and spoken language. Language acquisition refers to



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processes of acquiring a native or a second language and improving language skills. Psycholinguistics has provided numerous theories that explain the three points above. The theories have been very useful in the field of language teaching. Some experts use them as the basic theories in developing language teaching methods. It is known as psycholinguistics approach. Psycholinguistic approach views that language and thought as related but completely independent phenomena. Learning is viewed as a cognitive individual process happening within the individual and then moves to the social dimension.

An approach in language teaching consists of theories of the nature of language and the theories of language learning. Language teaching methods are concretization of language teaching approaches. A method of language teaching can be well understood if its fundamental theories are clearly understood. Fundamental theories in developing language teaching methods are divided into two main theories; the theory of language and the theory of language learning. There are three fundamental theoretical views in developing the language teaching method: structural theory, functional theory, and interactional theory. Structural theory views language as a system of grammatical unit: phrases, clauses, sentences, affixes, and soon. Functional theory views language from its function as a mean of communication: informational, emotional, persuasive, and social. Interactional theory views language as a mean to realize interpersonal relationship and as a performance of social transaction between individual and society. Each view implicates differently in the development of language teaching method. Beside the theory of language, the developing of language teaching method is also based on the theory of language learning that related to two main questions; (1) what cognitive process that involved in language learning, and (2) what condition are needed to reach a high quality of language learning activity. Psycholinguistics has clearly answered these two questions. Therefore, psycholinguistics has been used widely as fundamental theory in developing language teaching method. Some methods which were developed based on psycholinguistic approach are described as following (Harras and Andika, 2009)

From many questions that psycholinguistics attempts to answer, it, addresses two questions (1) what knowledge of language is needed for us to use language? and (2) what cognitive processes are involved in the ordinary use of language?

Psycholinguistics has developed rapidly and expanded into several sub-disciplines as cited in Chaer (2015) below: Theoretical psycholinguistics. It focused on theories of language relating to human mental processes in language, such as phonetics, diction, syntax design, discourse, and intonation. Developmental psycholinguistics. It is related to language acquisition, both first language acquisition (L1) and second language acquisition (L2). It examines phonological, semantics and syntactic acquisition, process in stages, gradually, and integrated. Social psycholinguistics related to the social aspects of language, including social identity. Educational psycholinguistics discussed general aspects of formal education at school, including the role of language in teaching reading teaching proficiency, and improving language ability to express thoughts and feelings.

Neuro-psycholinguistics focused on the relationship between language, language production, and the human brain. Neurology experts have managed to analyze the biological structure of the brain



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and analyzed what happens with the input language and how language output programmed and set up in the brain.

Experimental psycholinguistics covered and experimented in all language productions and language activities, language behavior, and language outcome.

Applied psycholinguistics concerned with the application of the findings of six sub-disciplines of psycholinguistics explained before in certain areas that require it, including psychology, linguistics, language learning, neurology, psychiatry, communications, and literature. Psycholinguistic approach views language and thought as related but completely independent phenomena (Claros, 2009). In the psycholinguistic approach, the individual internal cognitive processes are activated so that activation allows the individual to access the comprehensible input needed to further advance in the acquisition of the L2 (Long, 1996 cited in Claros, 2009). Krashen (1985) argues that to understand and learn language, s/he must be exposed to the linguistic input that is a little beyond his/her current level of competence. Krashen explains his view in his famous $i+1$ concept which indicates that the input the learner receives must contain some slight amount of new information in addition to what s/he already knows. To Krashen, a comprehensible input is not just a necessary condition, but it is the sufficient condition.

In relation to language teaching, developmental psycholinguistics and applied psycholinguistics play significant roles in formulating effective ways of teaching. Psycholinguistics theory covered the language development of humans, in accordance with humans' physical and mental development. These theories are considered in designing language teaching programs and materials in order to be effective for the second language learners master the target language. Harras and Andika (2009) mention three kinds of language teaching methods which are developed according to psycholinguistics principles: natural method, total physical response method, and suggestopedia method.

Conclusion. Each meeting in this method is divided into three time allocations. The first is reviewing the previous topic through discussion, games, sketch, or role playing. If students do some mistakes, teacher corrects it carefully to keep a positive atmosphere. The second is distributing the dialogue traditionally. The third is relaxing students. This is divided into two: active activity and passive activity.

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