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THE ROLE OF SCHOLARS WHO STUDIED SPEECH PROCESSES IN WORLD LINGUISTICS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Abstract: The twentieth century witnessed remarkable developments in linguistic science, particularly in the study of speech processes. Linguists, psychologists, philosophers, and cognitive scientists significantly contributed to understanding how speech is produced, perceived, acquired, and processed by human beings. The study of speech evolved from structural descriptions of language to interdisciplinary investigations involving psychology, neurology, sociology, and communication studies. This article examines the contributions of major scholars who investigated speech processes during the twentieth century and analyzes their influence on the development of modern linguistics.

Keywords: speech processes, psycholinguistics, linguistics, speech production, speech perception, language acquisition, cognitive linguistics.

Speech is one of the most fundamental aspects of human communication and social interaction. Through speech, individuals express thoughts, emotions, intentions, and knowledge. Throughout the twentieth century, scholars from various disciplines sought to understand the mechanisms underlying speech production and comprehension. As a result, speech became a central topic in linguistics, psychology, neurology, anthropology, and communication studies.

The twentieth century marked a turning point in linguistic science. Earlier linguistic traditions primarily focused on historical and comparative analyses of language. However, modern scholars shifted their attention toward language as a living system and speech as a dynamic process. This shift led to the emergence of structural linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and neurolinguistics.

This article explores the contributions of major twentieth-century scholars who investigated speech processes and examines their role in shaping modern linguistic thought. Modern linguistic approaches to speech processes began with the theoretical contributions of Ferdinand de Saussure. Although Saussure did not directly investigate speech production from a psychological perspective, his distinction between *langue* (language system) and *parole* (individual speech) became fundamental for subsequent research.

According to Saussure, language is a social system shared by members of a speech community, whereas speech represents the individual realization of that system. This distinction enabled linguists to analyze speech as a separate object of scientific investigation. Saussure's ideas encouraged researchers to examine how abstract linguistic structures are transformed into actual speech behavior. His theoretical framework laid the foundation for structural linguistics and inspired generations of scholars to explore speech phenomena systematically.

One of the most influential American linguists of the twentieth century, Leonard Bloomfield, approached speech from a behaviorist perspective. Influenced by behavioral psychology, Bloomfield regarded speech as observable verbal behavior that could be studied scientifically.

In his landmark work *Language* (1933), Bloomfield emphasized the importance of objective methods in linguistic research. He argued that speech consists of stimulus-response patterns and should be analyzed through observable data rather than mentalistic explanations. Although later criticized for neglecting cognitive processes, Bloomfield's methodology contributed significantly to the empirical study of speech. His work established rigorous standards for linguistic analysis and encouraged systematic investigation of spoken language.

Vygotsky argued that speech is not merely a communication tool but also a mechanism for organizing mental activity. According to his theory, children initially use speech for social interaction and gradually internalize it as inner speech.

The concept of inner speech became highly influential in psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology. Vygotsky's research demonstrated that speech processes are closely connected to intellectual development, problem-solving, and self-regulation.

His theories continue to influence modern studies of language acquisition, educational psychology, and cognitive linguistics.

Roman Jakobson played a pivotal role in advancing the scientific study of speech communication. He developed a comprehensive model of communication that identified six fundamental functions of language:

1. Referential function
2. Emotive function
3. Conative function
4. Phatic function
5. Metalingual function
6. Poetic function

Jakobson emphasized that speech serves multiple communicative purposes beyond the mere transmission of information. His functional approach demonstrated how speakers adapt their speech according to communicative contexts. Jakobson also conducted pioneering research on aphasia and speech disorders. His studies connected linguistic theory with neurological evidence and contributed to the development of neurolinguistics.

Furthermore, his analysis of phonological systems provided valuable insights into speech perception and speech production mechanisms. The emergence of psycholinguistics in the mid-twentieth century significantly transformed the study of speech processes. Among the leading figures in this field was Charles Osgood. Osgood viewed speech as a complex process involving encoding and decoding mechanisms. His communication model explained how speakers transform thoughts into linguistic symbols and how listeners interpret these symbols.

The psycholinguistic framework developed by Osgood encouraged researchers to investigate speech processing experimentally. His work integrated linguistics and psychology, creating a scientific basis for studying speech comprehension, memory, and semantic processing. Psycholinguistics subsequently became one of the most important disciplines for understanding speech behavior. One of the most influential scholars in twentieth-century linguistics, Noam Chomsky revolutionized the study of language and speech through his theory of generative grammar. Chomsky criticized behaviorist

explanations of speech and argued that human beings possess an innate linguistic capacity. According to his theory, speech production is governed by internal cognitive structures rather than simple stimulus-response mechanisms.

The twentieth century was a transformative period in the scientific study of speech processes. Scholars from diverse disciplines developed theories that profoundly influenced linguistic science and expanded understanding of human communication.

Ferdinand de Saussure established the theoretical distinction between language and speech; Leonard Bloomfield introduced empirical methods; Lev Vygotsky explored the relationship between speech and thought; Roman Jakobson analyzed communicative functions; Charles Osgood developed psycholinguistic models; Noam Chomsky initiated the cognitive revolution; and William Labov revealed the social dimensions of speech. Together, these scholars laid the foundations for modern psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and neurolinguistics. Their contributions continue to guide contemporary research and remain essential for understanding how human beings produce, perceive, and use speech in everyday life.

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