Principles of Labov (1975)

Principles for determining when informal elicitation is not enough.

➞ **Consensus Principle**: If there is no reason to think otherwise, assume that the judgments of any native speaker are characteristic of all speakers.

➞ **Experimenter Principle**: If there is any disagreement on introspective judgments, the judgments of those who are familiar with the theoretical issues may not be counted as evidence.

➞ **Clear Case Principle:** Disputed judgments should be shown to include at least one consistent pattern in the speech community or be abandoned. If differing judgments are said to represent different dialects, enough investigation of each dialect should be carried out to show that each judgment is a clear case in that dialect.

Corpus data

- to identify and organize a representative sample of a written and/or spoken variety from which characteristics of the entire variety or genre can be induced.

- **concordances of word usage:** a state in which things agree and do not conflict with each other

- primary method of data collection before other methods

➞ *Are corpora too limited? How representative can a corpus ever be?*

- **Corpus cleaning:** automatic or manual removal of numerical tables, typographical slips, spelling mistakes, etc.

- **Corpus annotation:** permit certain kinds of analysis and grammar testing ➞

- **part-of-speech tagging**

• *The_ARTICLE boy_NOUN went_VERB home_ADVERB.*

- **lemmatization**

• *going_GO, went_GO, goes_GO, gone_GO*

- **parsing:** encoding trees representing underlying structure

- **semantic/pragmatic annotations**

Whorfianism

According to Whorf, the grammar of a language (rather than the lexicon) cuts up and organizes nature for its speakers.

Strong Sapir–Whorf hypothesis: language **determines** thought and that linguistic categories limit and determine cognitive categories

Weak Sapir–Whorf hypothesis: linguistic categories and usage **influence** thought and certain kinds of non-linguistic behaviour.

Phenotypes: overt grammatical categories typically indicated by morphemic markers

Cryptotypes: covert grammatical categories, marked only implicitly by distributional patterns in a language that are not immediately apparent.

➞ language must be used in order to think

➞ the only structure and logic that thought has is grammatical structure

➞ linguistic structure is comprised, in part, of distributional patterns in language use that are not explicitly marked

Weak vs. Strong Whorfianism

➞ **Medium-strength version:** language could affect certain aspects of our cognitive functioning without making certain thoughts unthinkable for us

Weak versions are viewed as trivial:

• generally accepted as true

• cannot be adequately formulated to develop testable hypotheses

Strong versions are viewed as implausible:

• It would mean that there are thoughts that a person couldn't think because of the language(s) they speak

• It would mean mean that the content of any claim based on this would not be able to be expressed in any language it is true of

Testing Whorfianism

Problems with Whorfian studies:

• most have not adequately utilized both the relevant linguistic and psychological research;

Testing Whorfianism (cont)

• most have focused on optional rather than obligatory linguistic features;

• most have not stated hypotheses in a clear, testable way, and

• most have not ruled out relevant competing Slobin-like hypotheses

Dan Slobin (1996): when speakers are using their cognitive abilities in the service of a linguistic ability (speaking, writing, translating, etc.), the language they are planning to use to express their thought will have a temporary online effect on how they express their thought. As long as language users are thinking in order to frame their speech or writing or translation in some language, the mandatory features of that language will influence the way they think.

Language Acquisition

Child language acquisition came to prominence because of Essentialist work in the 1970s and 1980s. All three approaches agree that some unlearned capacities are necessary to learn language.

➞ **General nativism:**

• inductive reasoning ("bottom-up" logic): coming to a conclusion based on your experience, observations, and knowledge up to that point.

• defeasible: modifying a conclusion when/if presented with conflicting data

➞ **Linguistic nativism:**

• language cannot be acquired through induction; structural properties must be largely unlearned

• the acquisition of languages makes use of unlearned capacities that are non-language specific.

➞ non-linguistic dispositions and mechanisms

➞ general cognitive and perceptual capacities

➞ language draws on an unlearned system of Universal Grammar

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General Nativism

- Languages are acquired mainly through the exercise of defeasible inductive methods, based on experience of linguistic communication
- The unlearned capacities that underpin language acquisition constitute a uniquely human complex of non-linguistic dispositions and mechanisms that also subserve other cognitive functions
- Various non-human animal species may well have most or all of the capacities that humans use for language acquisition—-though no non-human species seems to have the whole package, so interspecies differences are a matter of degree

Linguistic Nativism

- Language cannot be acquired by defeasible inductive methods; its structural principles must to a very large degree be unlearned
- In addition to various broadly language-relevant cognitive and perceptual capacities, language acquisition draws on an unlearned system of ‘universal grammar’ that constrains language form
- There is a special component of the human mind which has the development of language as its key function, and no non-human species has anything of the sort, so there is a difference in kind between the abilities of humans and other animals