

Clinical Linguistics

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Editorial

Clinical linguistics is the application of linguistic concepts, theories, and methods to the study of language disorders. These disorders may result from impairment or breakdown in, one or more of the subsequent language components: prosody, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse.

This branch of linguistics is inextricably linked to speech-language pathology (also known as speech and language therapy in the United Kingdom), the clinical discipline responsible for the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of clients with a variety of communication disorders (and not just language disorders). However, clinical linguistics is nonetheless a definite linguistic discipline that's not in any way subsumed by speech-language pathology.

Clinical phonetics

Phonetics may be a branch of linguistics that studies the sounds of human speech. Clinical phonetics involve applications of phonetics to describe speech differences and disorders, including information about speech sounds and the perceptual skills used in clinical settings.

Clinical morphology

Morphology is the study of words, how they are formed, and their relationship to other words in the same language. It analyses the structure of words and part of words, such as stems, root words, prefixes, and suffixes.

Clinical discourse

In corpus linguistics, discourse refers to the study of language expressed in corpora (samples) of "real world" text, the codified language of a field of enquiry, or a press release that determines the connections among language and structure and agency.

Applications

Linguistic concepts and theories are applied to assess, diagnose and administer language disorders. These theories and ideas commonly involve psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. Clinical linguists adopt the understanding of language and the linguistic disciplines, as mentioned above, to explain language disorders and find approaches to treat them.

Areas of linguistics

- Conversation analysis.
- Forensic phonetics and linguistics.
- Historical and anthropological linguistics.
- Phonetics and phonology.
- Sociolinguistics.
- Syntax and semantics

Clinical linguists adopt the understanding of language and therefore the linguistic disciplines, as mentioned above, to elucidate language disorders and find approaches to treat them. Crystal pointed out that applications of linguistics to clinical ends are highly relational. The most important for linguist is language proficiency and a baccalaureate. Linguists are experts in linguistics or the study of language who can analyze a language in various aspects. We can summarize much of the preceding discussion by saying that the chief aim of clinical linguistics is to supply the clinician with increasing levels of insight and confidence in arriving at linguistic decisions. Basic insights are in fact not difficult to realize as has been repeatedly shown since the 1960s through the analysis of short audio samples of clinical interactions. The other levels of linguistic description are far less represented – grammar has some 20 items, prosody (including the rhythm problems found in stuttering) and pragmatics / discourse have some 15 each – but even these are well covered, by comparison with semantics.

The Future of Clinical linguistics

The past works of linguists like Crystal were applicable to a good range of communication disorders at every linguistic level. However, with the influx of latest insights from disciplines like genetics, neuroscience and neurobiology (among others), it's not sufficient to only specialise in the linguistic characteristics of a particular speech impairment.

In today's context, one among the challenges in clinical linguistics includes identifying methods to bridge the knowledge of various fields to create a more holistic understanding. The translation of general research that has been done into effective tools for clinical practice is another aspect that needs future work.

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