

Theory of mentalization and interaction analysis

Integrating language and psychology

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Mentalization refers to the ability to hold mind in mind – it refers to the process by which individuals interpret actions of themselves and others as meaningful on the basis of mental states such as feelings, needs and reasons. Peter Fonagy and his colleagues have developed a theory of mentalization that explains the development of mentalizing abilities and their consequences for interpersonal relationships.

This paper suggests an integration of the theory of mentalization with interaction analysis. It is argued that by framing an analysis of interaction within a theory of mentalization the researcher is able to explore and bring into the analysis interactants' psychological inner states such as feelings and unconscious patterns of actions. Introducing extracts from a General Practitioner's consultation with a depressed patient, it is shown how actions such as preemptive completion and self repair performed by the GP can be interpreted as performances that unconsciously deal with the patients' feelings and needs. It is also suggested that the integration of the two paradigms of language and psychology respectively, brings more light to the ways in which mentalization is enacted in conversations; and that the findings in conversation analysis regarding the order of interactions can inform how mentalization is interactionally achieved.

Rare and odd compounds

On the spelling of compounds in modern Danish

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This paper is concerned with the spelling of compound words in Danish. According to Danish grammar, a compound word should be written as one word, unlike in English, for example, where compound words can be written as two or more words. But many Danes incorrectly spell Danish compounds as two words. The purpose of the article is to explore the factors associated with incorrect two-word compounds. The most important result of our research is that the frequency of the compound is associated with compound errors: The lower the frequency of the compound, the higher the error rate. Other factors associated with compound errors are the source of the compound word data (with the lowest occurrence in newspaper articles and the highest occurrence in school papers from a technical college), the occurrence of proper names, abbreviations or numbers as compound parts (each of these being associated with increased error rate), the part of speech of the compound (with most compound errors occurring in nouns and adjectives), and the number of constituents of the compound (the error rate increasing with the number of constituents).

Getting a bad start

A study of children's language attitudes using multiple linear regression

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In this paper I present the method and some of the results from my study of the language attitudes among children in grade 0, 2, 4, and 6, in order to present the model for multiple linear regression as a tool for statistical analysis. I have carried out a verbal guise study at three different elementary schools in Denmark and studied the respondents' covert attitudes to the late modern urban youth style (also known as multiethnolect) and to young standard Copenhagen. In this article I focus on the effect of the variables concerning gender and grade in order to emphasize the advantage of multiple linear regression as a statistical method.

The model for multiple linear regression makes it possible for me to separate the effects of the different variables such as the speaker's gender, the respondent's gender, the grade etc. Thereby I can identify some relationships between gender and grade, and show that in general the respondents prefer their own gender, i.e. they rate speakers of their own gender more favourably, but in some cases both genders become increasingly more negative toward the male speakers.