

PRODUCTION AND PERCEPTION OF SPEECH - AN INDIAN ANALYSIS

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This paper attempts to throw light on the Indian way of analyzing speech production and speech perception. According to Indians these two aspects of speech cannot be separated because without the one the other does not exist. The Indians had no access to phonetic instruments and they analyzed on the basis of their own observations which have been noted to be so accurate as to defy many instrumental results.

Subject

Human speech has two well-marked divisions: (1) Production and (2) Perception. According to Indian grammarians and phoneticians communication has a four-fold basis, 'ādhāracatuṣṭaya' - consisting of prayoktā, s'rotā, pratipādyā, and s'abdajñāna - namely the speaker, the listener, the spoken matter, and the knowledge of the spoken matter. According to the Vākyapadīya, the mechanism of speech has to pass through four stages each way to become effective. The process of production begins with 'icchā' or desire to communicate, the next one is the word concept or 's'abdabhāvanā', the third one being effort or 'prayatna', and the final one audible speech or 'uccarāna'. In the case of perception, it begins with the audible sound called 'nāda', which gives birth to 'sphoṭa',¹ and then the words are conceived by 'dhvani' with the result that meaning through 'svarūpa' or form is grasped by the listener.

Conclusion

The Indian analysis has a metaphysical background for they believed in the theory of 'vāka' or speech which is nothing but the manifestation of 'brahma'. The speaker, the listener, the words and the meaning are all emanations from the ultimate word-principle, 's'abdatattva'.

References

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(1) Sphoṭa has been translated in several ways - breaking forth, splitting open, bursting, disclosure, etc. It is the impression produced on the mind and the form that is created before us.