



Emergentism and General System Theory as a holistic approach to language (acquisition) –on the example of prosody

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Since language is yet another manifestation of human activity it should be treated and analysed as any other activity such as walking or eating. A holistic approach requires viewing language as a system and analyzing it as other systems in science. The call for perceiving all sciences holistically has been issued already in 1968 by Bertalanffy in General System Theory which, although not dwelling particularly on linguistics, can be applied to language as well. Emergentism as a philosophical trend was introduced by John Stuart Mill in 1843 with its basic tenet that the whole is more than the sum of its parts and has had little linguistic application as yet. However, emergentism seems especially valid for the creation of a new language system, i.e. language acquisition. A holistic approach to language (acquisition) is based on the fact that language is a hierarchic system. This is particularly visible when it comes to prosody as suprasegmental features operate on many levels that interact and create more complex levels. The presentation will include a description of how prosodic units emerge in the process of second language acquisition on the example of Polish learners of Spanish.

References:

Mill, John Stuart. 1843. *A system of Logic*. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer.
von Bertalanffy, Ludvig. 1968. *General System theory: Foundations, Development, Applications*. New York: George Braziller.