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Language And Its Relation To Surrounding Reality

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Abstract

The present article proves that language is not a natural material, but the creation of a group, collectivity or people. This material, i.e. language, is not a given forever rather it is in a continuous change filled with loads that come from different territorial areas, from one social group to another, century by century. According to Max Muller, language, under the pressure of thought, becomes a true metamorphosis. Being intrigued by the amazing forces that people feel they are dependent on, they have started to reflect over these changes and therefore they constantly wonder what they consist of. They have made the effort to substitute the obscure feeling that they initially had into a more clear idea, a concept that was better defined. The idea and the concept are impossible to define without the word. Worf stated that "linguistics is essentially the quest for meaning." The content of the thought influences the process of thought and differing contexts produce differing species of process, so that generalization about process becomes impossible without context's being taken into account.

Keywords: Language, reality, thought, origins of language.

1. Introduction

The present article proves that language is not a natural material but it is the creation of a group, collectivity, and people. This material i.e. language was not given once and for all but it is in a continuous change being filled with load that differ from one region to another, from one social group to another, from one century to another. According to Max Müller, the language is the action upon human thinking that leads to a real metamorphosis (Müller, 1864, p. 20).

Being intrigued by the amazing forces the people depended on, it triggered the excitement to reflect on them, therefore questions started to arise wondering what this was based upon and they made the effort to substitute the obscure sensation that they had with a better, clear defined concept. And the idea and the concept are impossible without the word.

Language does not only represent the outside garment of the thought but it is its external armour too. It is not contained only to translate it for the outside world once it formed, but it creates the thought also. As Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny (2000) state: the thoughts differ not only by the "representative content", as the same content can be involved in a belief, desire, and each of them it's a feeling that controls the behaviour (Devitt & Sterelny, 2000. p. 139).

In spite of all these, the language has got its own specificity, laws that are not the same with the thinking laws. In our mind, we do not "utter" complete sentences and phrases, or, when we jump from one subject to another we are not interested in stating the subject, time of the action; this is done by our thought itself without being requested to establish grammatical accords… This is due to the thought pattern and the language cannot constrain the thought without slightly deforming it. As Durkheim mentions: such a deformation determined the singular character of religious representations (Durkheim, 1995, p. 78). Perhaps, this is the reason why the sacred names were not "translated" in signs in order to make them fixed or contained.

As C. Rădulescu-Motru (1996) observes, to think means to get an order in your ideas. By using the language, we individualise, classify, grade (by the usage of adjectives, epithets and comparisons). "For instance, to think the fire is like placing it into a certain category of things, so that you can state it is that and not something else. But, by far, to classify means to name as a general idea is not into existence and reality but by the words used to express it, the only word that offers it individuality." (Rădulescu-Motru, 1996, p. 14).

The language is the one that moulds the thought; by using words we make plans and accept or reject other people's ideas. Even more, the language helps us to select, to provide nuances.

Communication has an important, well-known and recognized role between people, groups, and cultures. All these would not have been capable to survive unless this consistent binding was present, i.e. communication, which ensures good relations for the horizontal line – between contemporaries – and on the vertical line – between generations (Anghel, 2012, p. 259).

2. Problem Statement

At the beginning of all things, it was the word. The word was used to create all things. Afterwards, languages emerged and alongside, people have changed as well. Therefore, cultures emerged. The present

paper focuses on how language impacted people, cultures, behaviours, patterns of thinking, and, basically, the entire humanity.

The paper also focuses on the constant correlation between language and people due to certain brain structures that influence the decision making from the beginning of humankind.

At the beginning of the last century, the linguists thought that people learn how to talk in the same way the animals were trained i.e. when the child used a word correctly or individually produces a full correct grammatical sentence he is rewarded. This image was removed in the 50s by the revolutionary ideas of Noam Chomsky (1955). He proved that the syntax structures are in subconscious linguistic patterns – the so-called deep structures – that are completely different form of the usual words that we use. Chomsky believes that there is no learning system of a language that is based on direct observation of the language and cannot explain these subconscious patterns (Augé, 1964, p 161).

Chomsky (1955) reached the idea that the deepest structures of the language are not innate but acquired. We are all born with the same basic grammar connected to our brain and we are programmed to "reap" the additional rules of the local language such as, for instance, the ducklings are pre-programmed to follow the first animal they see when they hatch.

3. Research Questions

The paper is trying to prove how language impacts everyday choices. It also highlights that language is only specific to humans, and we researched on what linguists proved to be so.

Another question that emerged in our research was based on why languages change.

Chomsky (1955) found no proof of any animal to possess an innate mechanism of syntax. If learning a language would only mean an adequate training, then we should be able to train guinea pigs to speak or at least monkeys. But apes are physically incapable to speak. Though, they can be taught to use sing language to indicate words or symbols on a chart. Therefore, starting in the 60s, several experimental studies were conducted to train chimpanzees or other big apes to use several signs in order to ask for things and answer the questions in order to get a reward (Augé, 1994, p. 29). Though, linguists were not impressed. They stated that the signs for the apes only had a purely instrumental meaning: the animals only made tricks to be rewarded and there was no trace of syntax whatsoever in the mixture of the signs the apes were doing. An ape that showed "Please give me a cake", in a minute after it mixed the words in "cake me please give".

As language is not a natural material but the creation of a group, of a people, during the last century the philosophy of language has become the central area of philosophy, especially in English tradition (Devitt & Sterelny, 2000, p. 25). As language transforms itself constantly, Eminescu, after reading a Latin verse stated "It's not the same if two people say the same thing". C. Rădulescu-Motru (1996) considers that usually, the societies evolve by constantly developing the origin community conscience in the language community conscience (Rădulescu-Motru, 1996, p. 14).

Some linguists, particularly scholars in the former Soviet Union, study language from an anthropological or cultural perspective. These scholars are attempting to trace the origins of all the world's languages back to a mother tongue or even back to humans' first language.

4.   Purpose of the Study

Our purpose to identify the specificity of language over time and its importance on humans as a whole, led us to understand how languages evolved and try to find an answer why. Subsequently, we provided examples based on scholars' attempt to trace the origins of world's languages.

Their study on the origin of languages is based on two assumptions: that languages are dynamic and ever changing and that the relationship between the sound of a word and its meaning is arbitrary.

The first assumption, that languages are dynamic and ever changing, can easily be seen from these examples of English:

- 8th century Old English: "Hwaet! We Gar-Dena, in Geardagum" (Beowulf)
- 14th century Middle English: "Whan that Aprille with his shoursesote." (Chaucer)
- 16th century English: "Shall I compare thee to a summer day?" (Shakespeare)
- 29th century English: "Don't have a cow, man!" (Bart Simpson)

The second assumption, that the relationship between the sound of a word – the symbol – and its meaning is arbitrary, deals with what words mean. Words represent symbols that a language community uses to refer to other things. In this sense the words are not the thing they refer to, and the use of every word symbol is arbitrary. For example, English uses the cord *cat* to refer to a furry domesticated carnivorous mammal having four legs and a tail and noted for its skill at catching mice and rats. Tomorrow, the English speakers could as easily agree to use the word *yahtzee* instead of *cat* (Jandt, 2004, p. 147).

5.   Research Methods

We understand by methodology the means to develop the methods of researching social life. The research method used was based on a theoretical one where we chose scientists marked already by their research that focused on language. We used the document analysis with regards to the data we selected in the relevant writings. The theoretical construction is provided by the theories elaborated to reflect and/ or develop those reflections. To theorize means to make order, to systematize the primary results of the theme. Therefore, in our paper we highlighted some of the most important theories that reflect on language. The language is used to offer an aesthetic value to art, communication, philosophy, and literature, basically all humanities and not only. Language is an activity of the spirit that addresses the consciousness, the civic sense, the contemporary and the future. It proves history, of what was seen, heard, known and discovered. Language is the purpose of the subjective reality.

Linguists study the words in languages and then look for similar sounding words with similar meanings in different languages. So as to be able to read Hindu legal texts, Sir William Jones, a judge in Calcuta at the end of the 18th century, began to study Sanskrit, the ancient language of northern India. He found similarities between Sanskrit and ancient Greek and Latin words and argued that the languages were derived from a common mother tongue. Scholars in the 19th century were inspired by this suggestion and began studying languages for their common ancestors (Jandt, 2004, p. 149).

6. Findings

Based on our research we understood that this topic is far to ever finish in being debated. Linguists understood the multifaceted directions that the study of language can take. One thing is for sure, though, language is one of the most important human activities and around it all human actions make sense. Below, we offer some of the theories that stood out to answer our research questions based on why languages change and we tried to highlight its importance on everyday human activities.

Many academic disciplines refer to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis when accounting for the differences in languages across cultures (Carroll, 1956, p. 30) Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941), a succesful fire prevention engineer at the Hartford Fire Insurance Company, came into contact with the noted linguist anthropologist Edward Sapir (1884-1939) through a course that Sapir (1921) was teaching at Yale. Largely self taught, Whorf had studied ancient Hebraic, Aztec, and Mayan cultures and in the 1930s went to the U.S. Southwest to study the Hopi;s Uto-Aztecan language. Among Whorf's observations were the Hopi:

- do not pluralize nouns referring to time, such as days and years. Instead, time is viewed as a duration.
- do not use words denoting phases of a cycle, such as summer as a phase of a year, as nouns. Whorf suggested that the Hopi view of time is the perpetual "getting later" of it.
- do not see time as linear in that there are no tenses in the language. Whorf observed that the Hopi have no words, no grammatical forms, constructions, or expressions that refer to time (Jandt, 2004, p. 150).

The proof of the connection between language and society can also be found in the Romanian culture. Romanian language was throughout history strongly connected with the establishing of state institutions. As Nicolae Iorga stated, "It is too much believed that a language is developed only by the means of writing; it is developed by its constant usage, and as much a certain class uses it, the literary language is used. I wouldn't say that the nowadays Romanian language was formed in the Gatherings of the Organic Rules or the first Romanian parliaments, but it cannot be said how much the literary language we write and use nowadays has been used then, starting from the court debates, to all the circumstances the Romanian language could not have been used anyhow, but a certain decency was added to it" (Iorga, 1977, p. 35).

The language is the instrument that makes the communication possible to members of society, therefore the possibility of culture is provided by accumulating social experiences form one generation to another. Besides having this role, the language has a creation role as well. It incites the human being to innovations: "The more a people find more humans with highly exceptional developed language skills, the more the new language horizons open to the society" (Rădulescu-Motru, 1996, p. 15). The individual has to adjust "on the way" to the big changes, which leads to a process of continuous and more difficult adjustment, because the human doesn't know his limits anymore, by not finding himself before in the same situations (Nistor, 2014).

The Romanian nation was defined alongside with the Romanian's widespread consciousness of statements as: *Our language is a treasure, our language is saint* (Mateevici), or *I hereby leave as inheritance to you the growth of the Romanian language to make it proud* (Văcărescu). "Based on

language community, and not that of origin, the consciousness of the European people arose towards their own national sovereignty. Because, based on cultivating the language, a people start to know itself on grounds of what it can know and do. The folk creations are as a mirror where he can see and admire himself. The nationalism of European people in the last century is the ideological product of the hard-working manner on how people harvested their language" (in Rădulescu-Motru, 1996, p. 14).

7. Conclusion

We understood that languages stand at the core of humanity, development, and science. In the same way, due to development, people felt the need to improve the language used in order to express themselves better. Language changes the patterns of thinking, develop new lens through which reality is perceived. Further on, we offer some of the most concluding findings on the matter.

According to Durkheim, following Max Müller's ideas, the language of a people influence the pattern in which the new things are classified in spirit and, therefore, in thinking. Consequently, when an elaborate representation of the universe is formed, the language has an inerasable trace over the pattern of the ideas system (Durkheim, 1995, p. 80). Ferdinand de Saussure unequivocally stated that the language has an individual side and a social side, which cannot be perceived independently. Even more, in every moment, the language is an "actual institution and a product of the past" (Saussure, 1998, p. 35).

This is a proof that our civilisation was grounded on the *word*, in accordance between things and words and the harmonious comprising of the human experience in the language sphere that it accumulates for itself and future generations. Language is considered to be sufficiently generously complete for the real world in order to create a comfortable space of truth without making us feel restrained or limited. The only mystique experience is refused to this restraining, but it is situated somewhere up high and just a few enjoy living it.

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