THE IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This paper presents the impact of psychological factors on the evolution of linguistics in three distinct domains: sound, word, and syntactic change. Psychology is the scientific study of people's minds and behaviors, whereas linguistics is the scientific study of language and its structure. Since language is an essential component of human cognition and communication, there is a relationship between the two fields of study. The next query is: What is the connection between them? This study concludes that these language changes are significantly influenced by psychology. Additionally, it analyzes and explains the reasons that led to the arguments and provides a number of common examples to back them up.

Keywords: linguistics, psychology, linguistics change

Introduction

The study of the relationship between linguistics and psychology can be tracked back to 20th century when these two disciplines developed as scientific fields. However, at the beginning, linguists like Ferdinand de Saussure and Leonard Bloomfield focused primarily on the formal analysis of language structure. Then in the mid-20th century, psycholinguistics emerged later and understood how languages were processed and represented in mind. In the 1950s and 1960s, the relationship between the two majors became much solidified with the study of cognitive psychologists, such as Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner. Since then, linguistics and psychology have continued to grow stronger. Linguistics provides a framework for understanding the structure and properties of language, while psychology contributes insights into how language is processed, acquired, and used by individuals.

Linguistic change refers to the process of languages evolving and transforming over time. It is associated with the alternations of pronunciations, vocabulary, structure and usage of languages and have effects on phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and so on. It is a natural process occurs in all kinds of languages. Languages become meaningful because of the existence of human who create and use it. It is certain that people's mental factors influence the contents of languages.

Briefly, the influence of psychology on sound change is complex and multi-faceted and obviously, psychology is not the only factor that contributes to sound change [1]. It has many interactions with other elements, such as speech rates, articulatory constraints and language experience. However, this part will focus on the social psychology layer. Language serves as a tool for people to convey their mind and communicate with each other, and it is a social bond constructed by human interaction [2]. Therfore, people must be involved in this process, psychology plays an important role in driving language variation and change.

Social psychology factors such as identity, social status and linguistic prestige can influence how individuals perceive and adapt to new sounds or pronunciation patterns. This can lead to sound changes over a community and even spreading to a whole country.

Firstly, in terms of social identity, it includes age, gender, ethnicity, which focuses more on being a membership of specific social group [3]. According to social identity theory, proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979, suggests that individuals strive to maintain a positive social identity by identifying with certain social groups [4]. Social identity is tied closed with a sense of belonging which human need to feel connected, accepted, and valued within social groups or communities.

In this way, people may adopt certain speech pattern or accents to align themselves with a particular social group, gradually resulting in sound change.

Secondly, when it comes to social status, it relates more to the position or rank of individuals in social hierarchy based on wealth, education or occupation [5]. Then, individuals with higher social status may have more influence on language change. They are considered to access better education, social networks and increased exposure to standard languages and prestigious dialects. As a result, their speech patterns and pronunciations may be seen as more reliable and influential. What is more, the higher status person has, the more possibility to become well-known he or she has. When a famous person speaks on social media, like TV show or movies, his or her accent can be spread rapidly and thus has more possibility to be accepted and imitated. Meanwhile, those from lower status backgrounds may strive to upward mobility. They may conscious or unconsciously adopt the speech sounds that are perceived as appropriate in higher status, while avoid the sounds that are inappropriate or even deviant.

Thirdly, regarding the linguistic prestige, it usually means some linguistic features or varieties are seen as more valued or popular within a certain society or community [6]. It often involves associating higher status with certain ways of speaking and viewing them as more educated, formal, or socially desirable. Its affect can be similar to that of individual's social status, and it just like the social status of a sound.

Psychology plays an important role in the word change in linguistics, like social cultural and norm, pragmatic adaptation and cognitive efficiency [8]. Before analyzing the effect of psychology, it is better to introduce an English "bleaching" phenomenon of word semantic change: Bleaching refers to a process by which a word loses its part or all of its original meaning and gradually has another concept. The word "nice" is an example that has gone through significant semantic change over the centuries. The meaning of "nice" word has changed for a long period, and it occurred among English speaking community worldwide. Therefore, it is difficult to figure out the pinpoint time when it started to evolve and ended.

Besides, it is not limited to a particular place or resign. However, its original connotation can be traced back to Middle English, where its origins in the Latin term "nescius," means "ignorant" or "foolish." Over time, its concept evolved to include "careful," "precise" and "delicate." By the 18th century, "nice" started to acquire positive meaning and was connected with being an agreeable and pleasant. This semantic shift likely occurred gradually under the influence of several psychological factors.

The way that human memory words provide a possibility for a same-sound word to evolve from one meaning to another meaning [9]. According to the knowledge of human mental grammar, the mental lexicon stores all of the words known to individuals. However, it is significant that the information for phonological form and semantic content are stored respectively by people, which means it is possible for a word or phrase to have multiple distinct meanings or semantic contents. In such cases, the phonological form remains the same, but the semantic interpretation changes based on context or usage. Therefore, a same-sound word can gradually include more than one kind of meaning, like "nice" may have the meaning "ignorant," as well as the meaning "careful" in a period. Totally, this can be a premise of word semantic change.

The words are used by human, so the habit and preference of a group of people may be essential for the meaning shift of words [10]. Hence, the social culture and norm may serve as a catalyst for the appearance of the positive meaning for "nice" word. In many cultures, politeness and positive social interactions are highly valued and then become a recognized manners or norms among the whole society. Then, the "foolish" meaning of "nice" was used less and less for avoiding being offend or rude, whereas the relative pleasant concepts became more and more prevalent. In this way, "Nice" was often used as a socially acceptable and non-committal way to express approval without delving into specific details or providing deeper insights. Ultimately, because of its frequent

and widespread use in everyday language, the positive meaning of "nice" became an independent element in people's mental grammar.

Cognitive efficiency refers to the ease and efficiency with which human's cognitive processes operate [11]. People's brains are wired to maximize efficiency and minimize cognitive load. In terms of language, individuals naturally prioritize information that is more essential for communication. When a word or morpheme is used repeatedly in a specific context, human's brains tend to generalize its meaning or function to save cognitive resources. This is associated with how a new meaning of a word is stored in brain.

However, when a word meaning becomes less necessary or is used less and less frequently, it may gradually fade from collective memory. In the case of "nice," its original meaning of "foolish" or "precise" may have become less relevant among the society over centuries. And naturally they were abandoned by our cognitive efficiency strategy. After generation and generation, these concepts lost by people withdraw from the stage of history. As a result, the "nice" is basically solely means agreeable or pleasant nowadays.

Overall, there lies significant influence of psychological factors in the meaning change of "nice" word. Additionally, beside "nice", there are numerous words have experienced some degrees of bleaching throughout history, such as "cool," "awesome," and "silly". That proofs this phenomenon is universal and hence the effect of psychology on word change is widespread as well.

This part will introduce the influence of psychological factors on syntactic change. Syntactic change refers to the evolution of structure of a language's syntax over time. Also, it is closely intertwined with psychological aspects of human and human society. In terms of human, people create language to communicate with each other efficiently to survive better. Consequently, the structure and organization of language, including syntax, must be reasonable for our cognitive style. As for human society, the group consciousness will play a vital role to affect or even decide and then change the use of language.

Conclusion

In conclusion, psychological factors have profound impacts on the change of phonology, semantics, and syntax in linguistics. When people analyze the change in linguistics, it is unavoidable to consider the influence of psychological factors due to the nature of languages. Psychology helps linguists understand why the transformation of languages is not completely decided by the natural process but impeded by the unpredictable psychological factors.

Also, for psychological factors, it is radical to know that human use languages to communicate and cooperate more efficiently to survive. Just picture the process how human create languages: in ancient time when a group of hunters were catching their preys, they found it was faster to communicate with partners by sounds which do not need body postures. In this way, they had not to move their sighting away from the animals, so they had more possibility to capture the food successfully and support their tribes to continue to reproduce. In such kind of general process, languages are created. Nowadays, although languages have had its relatively basic and complete form, the general process do not stop. People are still in the general process of using and creating languages, and it still influences and changes the elements of languages. Totally, the research and understanding of psychology support the study of linguistic change.

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