THE COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE AND THE EXTRA-LINGUISTIC FACTORS

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Abstract: The article focuses on the practical relationship between language facts and models and the corresponding extra linguistic factors revealed through comparison. The presentation of the historical landmarks of the comparative methodology aims its contextualized central positioning in terms of cross-discipline networking. The insights into the development stages of culture and civilization phenomena in terms of economic development through the comparative study of languages bring forward the epistemological vision on the coherence of integrated examination of the socially constructed aspects mirrored by linguistic production. The reference to iconicity of the linguistic sign reveals the economic contextualization of language maturation.

Keywords: language-culture relationship, comparative historical methods, extra-linguistic factors, meaning construction, language development

Comparative Research of Languages in terms of economic development

The distinction that Ferdinand de Saussure made in 1974 between language (la langue) and speech (la parole) highlighted language as a product of the abstract mental structure related to the cultural context, by associating linguistic sign arbitrarily to reality. We add the economic restriction to complete the cultural context that is able to contribute to the process of language maturation.

The structuralist perspective of Claude-Levi Strauss on reality analyzed in systemic terms, the existentialism of Sartre and phenomenological sociology of Schutz (1970) proved to be crucial for emphasizing comparative understanding based on meaning and action. The implications of such analytical positions is that meaning created through social action in terms of economic level is culturally constituted, as a result of human strategy to maximize profits

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(Elster, 1986) through the common sense typified stock of knowledge that made culture consistent with „socially structured meanings" (Geertz, 1973:12) and economic development.

Historical landmarks of comparative methodology

Along the ages, researchers have been interested in widening the insights into diverse social phenomena and discern the world through the comparative historical methods that proved their efficiency. Names of leading scientists of all times that can be included into the list of the contributors to the development of the comparative methods tradition were Adam Smith[1], Alexis de Tocqueville[2], Karl Marx, Max Weber[3], Barrington Moore[4], Charles Tilly[5] and Theda Skocpol[6].

The term naming the field of comparative study of languages was coined in the 19th century and derived from the Latin linguistica referring to materials or books dealing with language. The German Linguistik is first attested in 1808[7] and adopted by the French in 1812 and the English in 1827, with reference to the new approach to the traditional grammar. Up to 1830 the domain was featured by a mixture of (proto) typological study dealing with historical-comparative grammar, glottogenetic speculations and geographical classifications. (Swingers, 2011:806-821)

The fluctuation of the contents and practices of the domain which became an academic subject in the 19th century is mirrored by the English term comparative philology which survived and developed in the 20th and 21st century. It was Wilhelm von Humboldt, the universal spirit, the founder of the University in Berlin that established the comparative linguistic study as an academic curriculum subject which promoted the interest in languages

[1] Philosopher, Political Scientist, Journalist, Educator, Scholar, Economist (c. 1723–1790). The author of „The Wealth of nations"
[2] French sociologist and political theorist (1805-1859) He traveled to the United States in 1831 and returned with a wealth of broader observations that he codified in "Democracy in America" (1835), one of the most influential books of the 19th century.
[3] architect of modern social science along with Karl Marx and Emil Durkheim. His contributions gave critical impetus to the birth of new academic disciplines such as sociology and public administration as well as to the significant reorientation in law, economics, political science, and religious studies. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy) http://plato.stanford.edu/index.html
[4] American political sociologist. His heading work Social Origins of dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and peasant making the modern world (1966) is a comparative study of modern Britain, France, United States, China, Japan, Russia, Germany and india which focus on the socio-historical conditions of totalitarianism.
[5] (1929 – 2008) "the American founding father of 21st-century sociology"; he wrote on the relationship between politics and society.
[6] American influential sociologist advocating the historical institutional and comparative approach
[7] http://zs.thulb.uni-jena.de/receive/jportal_jpjournal_00000043?XSL.view.objectmetadata.SESSION=true

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as a culture-bound expression of the world vision. The interpretation of human language diversity and its study comparatively are crucial for human cognition diversity. Language reconstruction is, in fact culture reconstruction.

Language development and economic extra-linguistic factor

Since language is the functional instrument of communication and information, efficiency is the most powerful predictor when it comes to the modeling process of language evolution, decline, and shift. (Coulmas, 2005: 1667-1674). The present-day process of globalization guides the phenomena of language development and acquisition based on economic incentives which become apparent in historical comparative and applied linguistics. Economic language needs are now common reason for the preference of bilingual education, rather than for cultural edification. Language utility considerations are highly limited to developed languages and their association with economic well-being. In a nutshell, people are willing to learn languages other than their own as instruments for the fulfillment of their economic and social goals. (Laitin, 1992)

The comparative study of languages, based on the economic extra-linguistic factor will reveal linguistic capacity to express economic development that can be formulated exclusively by a mature language. The negative functional utility of a language and its failure to adapt communication and instructional information needs will result in a decline of the subject language. The study of languages based on economic variability will compare:

- size of the speech community
- income of speakers as compared to the majority speech community
- domains of use (home, work, public administration, school)
- level of technological development (writing, language standardization, electronic processing, access to information, information application opportunity, etc)

(adapted from Coulmas, 2005: 1667-1674)

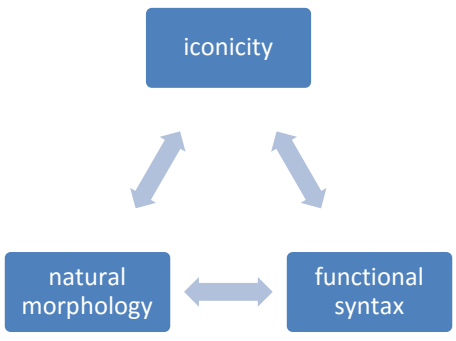
The historical comparative analysis of languages will include factors like the process of economic development based on science and technology research that had a major linguistic impact on the process of the language evolution making internal and external

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economy of language interact. The Zipf[8]'s Law demonstrated that instrumental nature of language makes it able to facilitate communication, store information and develop cognition according to its utility level. Our reference to the external economic motivation for the language relativization and non-arbitrariness highlights the relationship between word and meaning, as an adaptive reaction of the speakers.

Relativity and the non-arbitrariness of linguistic meaning and form

The developments on the relationship between word and its meaning give new interpretations on relativity and give rise to new refined models of language form and function in terms of morphological structure, syntactic and discourse nature, with reference to the non-arbitrariness of linguistic meaning and form. Cognitive sciences have enabled the change of the paradigm of arbitrariness by investigations of the mechanisms that make meaning correlate to certain linguistic forms. We focus on iconicity[9] as a prominent form of non-arbitrariness which emerges from the use of iconic linguistic signs conditioned by a wide bio-cultural and economic context of human cognitive process. Icons are culture and therefore, language specific. The anthropological view on language analysis highlights understanding on iconicity as the expression of specific language creativity in interpretation of reality giving rise to a natural specific morphology and a functional syntax.



Our perspective takes into consideration the basic principles of iconicity as they are revealed by Elzbieta Tabakowska (2009:375-388)

- the principle of sequentiality
- the principle of proximity
- the principle of quality

[8] analysis of language carried out by the linguist George Kingsly Zipf who theorized that in a given a large body of language the frequency of each word is close to inversely proportional to its frequency rank. (1947) Wentian Li established in his paper Random Texts Exhibit Zipf's-Law-Like Word Frequency Distribution, published in IEEE Transactions on Information Theory, that words generated by randomly combining letters fit Zipf pattern.
[9] Similarity or analogy relationship between the form of a sign and its meaning as opposed to arbitrariness

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The first refers to the cultural ordo naturalis, that is the linearity that the language can provide in accordance to the world described, making possible a certain word order in the sentence (Enkvist 1990: 172) in three basic types of texts:

- action oriented (You are prohibited to perform this operation.)
- location oriented (The back entrance is locked now due to security reasons.)
- time oriented (Archeological evidence confirm that yeast was used in Egypt as early as 4000 B.C.)

The examples provided follow the pattern displayed by Enkvist in his Discourse comprehension; text strategy and style (ibidem) with reference to the English language and English language culture.

The prototypical questions to request information performed in accordance with social action or speech act (e.g. What time is it? or Is Anne home yet?) drawn from Marked Initial Pitch in Questions Signals Marked Communicative Function provide the cultural-embedded correspondence between the varieties of social actions and the culturally patterned questions. Anthropological linguistic research provides evidences on the identification of the members of a community with their social actions. Prosody proves to be functional both in creating the form of a question and the recognition of social action through potentially disambiguating between indirect and direct speech acts.

The examination of a cross-cultural corpus of questions and responses shows that a question pitch can be a cue for social action that a culturally-embedded question implements. (Sicoli, Stivers, Levinson: 2014)

Our approach on linguistic iconicity reveals the correspondence between structural language patterns and their meanings, i.e. the merger of structural and semantic/metaphorical diagrammatic iconicity.

The transformation of icons into symbols[10] is postulated as a fundamental mechanism of language change and evolution by Haiman (1985) who perceives the principles of iconicity as a dynamic force in the evolution of communication and culture with reference to the relationship between linguistic or textual forms and the development of cultural conventions. Our perspective on language iconicity makes Haiman's principles of conflicting motivations work for the social and cultural compromise on language use to ensure optimal

[10] an object or a concept that represents, stands for or suggests another idea, visual image, belief, action or material entity. The word derives from the Greek symbolon (σύμβολον) meaning token or watchword and comes from "throwing things together" to determine if something is genuine." Hence, "outward sign" of something

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communicative effects. It is the overriding strategies of communication that re-organize cognition as a cultural survival strategy carried out through imitation to achieve mutually cultural understanding.

The linguistic invisible hand and culture relativization

The growing interest in the human and the economic factor brings together theoretical linguistics on language functions and neighboring fields which disclose the "role played by perceptual conventions and cultural codes in processing the iconic signification". (Muller&Fisher 2003:8) The anthropological approach on historical comparison of languages meets the need to understand the development of linguistic expression in terms of cultural and economic context.

The systematic investigation of languages is also concerned with the survival value of language as products of collective contribution that makes social communities and their cultural identity survive. The culture relativization is the result of the language adaptability to particular conditions and functional requirements. A linguistic invisible hand will act as an adaptive force upon its speakers to balance and optimize the social relationship of the community. The process of language maturity will be strongly influenced by the extralinguistic factor of economic development in terms of word-meaning relationship, morphological and syntactic structure and discourse that acknowledge the paradigm of language non-arbitrariness.

The use of iconic linguistic signs is, therefore, conditioned by the bio-cultural context of human cognitive process which is forged by the level of economic development.

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