The notion of language change and its nature

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ABSTRACT

Any treatment of linguistics must address the question of language change. The way languages change offers insights into the nature of language itself. Language always changes and develops either internally or externally. Internal language change occurs as a result of the behaviour of speakers in their everyday lives to adjust to each other, and followed by a tendency to innovate in groups of people who are already familiar. Then followed by other changes in sequence, ultimately make a language different. It is grammar, phonology, phrase sequences, and sentence with gender function. The change will be followed by other changes. Language change may occur in any level of a language: in pronunciation, word forms, syntax, and word meanings.

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Til o'zgartirishi va uning tabiati tushunchasi

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

til o'zgarishi,
elektron aloqa,
leksik o'zgarish,
sinxron,
diaxron,
tarixiy tilshunoslik,
sotsiolingvistika,
evolyutsion tilshunoslik,
fonetik va fonologik
o'zgarishlar,
sintaksis,
bir tilda so'zlashuvchi
jamiyat.

Tilshunoslikda til o'zgarishi hodisasi asosiy ahamiyat kasb etadi. Tillarning o'zgarish usullari tilning tabiatiga oid tushunchalarni qamrab oladi. Til har doim ichki yoki tashqi ta'sirlar natijasida o'zgaradi va rivojlanadi. Tilning ichki o'zgaruvi bir-biriga shu tilda so'zlashuvchilarning bir-birini yaxshiroq tushunishi uchun ularning kundalik hayotidagi muloqoti natijasida sodir bo'ladi. Va shunga o'xshash boshqa o'zgarishlar natijasida til boshqacha tus oladi. Bunday o'zgarishlar grammatika, fonologiya, frazeologiya bo'limlarida yuz berishi mumkin. Bir o'zgarish ortidan boshqa o'zgarishlar kelib chiqadi. Til o'zgarishi tilning istalgan sathida yuz berishi mumkin: talaffuzda, so'z shakllarida, sintaksisda va leksikologiyada.

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Понятие об изменении языка и его природе

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

изменение языка,
электронная
коммуникация,
лексические изменения,
синхронно,
диахронически,
историческая
лингвистика,
социоллингвистика,
эволюционная
лингвистика,
фонетические и
фонологические
изменения,
синтаксис,
речевое сообщество.

Любая трактовка лингвистики должна касаться вопроса изменения языка. То, как меняются языки, позволяет понять природу самого языка. Язык всегда меняется и развивается либо внутренне, либо внешне. Внутренние языковые изменения происходят в результате поведения говорящих в их повседневной жизни, чтобы приспособиться друг к другу, и сопровождаются тенденцией к инновациям в группах людей, которые уже знакомы. Затем следуют другие изменения в последовательности, которые в конечном итоге делают язык другим. Это грамматика, фонология, последовательности фраз и предложения с гендерной функцией. За этим изменением последуют другие изменения. Языковые изменения могут происходить на любом уровне языка: в произношении, словоформах, синтаксисе и значениях слов.

The possible answers to why languages change tell us about the way language is used in society, about how it is acquired by individuals and may reveal to us information about its internal organization. (Raymond Hickey, *Language Change*, 2003). As all languages are systematic, the history of any language is the history of change in its systems. By change, we mean a permanent alteration thus slips of the tongue, ad hoc coinages that are not adopted by other users of the language, and “new” structures that result from one person’s getting his or her syntax tangled in an overly ambitious sentence are not regarded as change. Neither ephemeral slang which is widely used one year but that has been abandoned five years later can relate to the language change, it is indeed part of the history of the language but has no permanent effect. It is studied in several subfields of linguistics: historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, and evolutionary linguistics. Some scholars use the label corruption to suggest that language change constitutes degradation in the quality of a language, especially when the change originates from human error or is a prescriptively discouraged usage. Modern linguistics typically does not support this concept, since from a scientific point of view such innovations cannot be judged in terms of good or bad. (Kemenade, Ans van. ‘Parameters of morphosyntactic change’ 1997) John Lyons notes that “any standard of evaluation applied to language change must be based upon recognition of the various functions a language ‘is called upon’ to fulfill in the society which uses it”. (Bloch B., Trager G. *Outline of linguistic analysis*. Baltimore: Linguistic Society of America, 1942) The belief that a language ought to be fixed; made stable and forbidden to modify itself in any way was held by a host of scholars in the 17th and 18th centuries. They were more familiar with the dead languages, in which the vocabulary and usage was closed, than they were with the living languages, in which there is always incessant differentiation and unending extension. Truly, the development of a language was firstly grounded on the lexical changes, when the first linguists saw that the older the text is, the less its level of comprehension. Any new epoch was accompanied by the introduction of new words which denote new objects and phenomena. From the time of Saussure until the late 1960s, it was assumed by the great majority of linguists that the “omnipresence of ongoing change”

which is observable in all real-life linguistic data must be ignored in synchronic description (apart from the possibility of allowing “free variation”; This picture has now substantially changed, as a result of numerous careful studies of linguistic variation, most of which have been directly or indirectly inspired by the work of William Labov. (Bailey, Charles-James N. Variation and linguistic theory. 1976) For Saussure, language is a social institution that has its own internal arrangement. He frequently compares the latter to a game of chess: in language, one moves from one synchronic state to the next, as one moves only one piece at a time on the chessboard. But, just as one move can change the whole game, and sometimes the chess player may not even foresee all its effects, one change in language may have a repercussion throughout the whole system. However, “each move is absolutely distinct from the preceding and the subsequent equilibrium”, whichever way a state in the game has been reached is irrelevant, and someone looking at the chessboard at that very moment can assess the situation without having to know what happened just seconds before. He constantly points out that any individual creation in language is doomed unless it is taken over by the speech community, at which time the individual loses all control over it. Thus, “a language never exists apart from the social fact”, (Saussure, de Ferdinand. Course in General Linguistics, 1996) and while society insures its continuity, language is, like all social institutions, subject to change in time. Saussure states explicitly that “each change is launched by a certain number of individuals before it is accepted for general use”, (Saussure. De Ferdinand. Course in General Linguistics, 1996) but not all innovations receive this recognition. As long as they remain individual, the linguist may safely ignore them, since they only actually enter his field of investigation after adoption by the whole community.

In the 21st century, electronic and wireless communication has changed the way we sometimes represent words in writing. For example, in SMS language (text messaging), the sentence “I have a question for you” is “?4u”. Some scholars use the label corruption to suggest that language change constitutes degradation in the quality of a language, especially when the change originates from human error or is a prescriptively discouraged usage. Modern linguistics typically does not support this concept, since from a scientific point of view such innovations cannot be judged in terms of good or bad. John Lyons notes that “any standard of evaluation applied to language-change must be based upon recognition of the various functions a language ‘is called upon’ to fulfill in the society which uses it”. In 1785, a few years after the first volume of Edward Gibbon’s ‘The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire’ had been published, the poet and philosopher James Beattie declared: “Our language (I mean the English) is degenerating very fast”. The desire to stop language change and looking to the past to find models of unchanging language, has led to the notion of correct and incorrect language. Correct usage is that which is supposedly immutable – cast in iron with explicit rules, and which is somewhat old-fashioned. Incorrect usage, by contrast, is fluid, decadent, without any rules and socially undesirable. For an objective examination of language change such views are spurious. They have more to do with people who use language and our attitudes towards them than with language itself which is of course neutral. One can get use to an item of change, no matter how unpleasant one may regard it initially. In general, one can say that the first time one hears something, it is strange, the second time a little unusual, the third time it is perfectly normal.

Language change may occur in any level of a language: in pronunciation, word forms, syntax, and word meanings (semantic change). The extent to which speakers are aware of it depends on the level. (Campbell L. *The History of Linguistics*, 2002) As might be expected, change which involves a closed class of segments is not as conscious for speakers as change which takes place within an open class. The prime example for the latter type of change is lexical change. Vocabulary items and phrases introduced in literature enter the spoken language. The written tradition tends to give rise to concepts of correctness and to act as a conservative influence on the spoken language. It is important to note that change is not a goal of speakers of a language. Rather it is what is called an ‘epiphenomenon’. By this is meant that re-arrangement in language occurs for internal or external reasons – or a combination of both, which is discussed in the next chapter of our work. Language changes across space and across social groups, and it also varies across time. Generation by generation, pronunciations evolve, new words are borrowed or invented, the meaning of old words drifts, and morphology develops or decays. The rate of change varies, but whether the changes are faster or slower, they build up until the “mother tongue” becomes arbitrarily distant and different. After a thousand years, the original and new languages will not be mutually intelligible. In the modern world, language change is often socially problematic. Long before divergent dialects lose mutual intelligibility completely, they begin to show difficulties and inefficiencies in communication, especially under noisy or stressful conditions. (Mc Mahon A. *Understanding language change*, 1994) Although it is claimed that the processes and the causes of linguistic change can never be understood by looking at old documents or by reconstructing proto-languages, but only by observing ongoing change, linguists working within this framework are developing descriptive models which can be applied both synchronically and diachronically – thus breaking another Saussurean taboo. (Aitchison, Jean. *Language change: Progress or decay?* 3rd edition 2001) Bailey, for example, claiming that “the function of time in defining synchronic language patterns cannot be ignored in valid descriptions of language proposes the development of “dynamic or time-based models” which will be “suitable for either historical or descriptive analysis” (Bailey, Charles-James N. *Variation and linguistic theory*. Washington D.C. Center for Applied Linguistics) The explanation uncontroversial among evolutionists is as follows: in languages there is an amount of variation, and variants are selected in speakers’ usage. A particular variant may be selected increasingly often such that other competing variants possibly die out. Change therefore is an unintended by-product of many individual choices among available variants and speakers don’t select variants in order to change their languages, but because they want to communicate successfully. The empirical consequences of the evolutionary scenario can be summarized as follows: The locus of change is language use rather than (incomplete) language acquisition (Millward M.A, *Biography of the English Language* 3rd Edition, 2012)

All languages change continuously, and do so in many and varied ways. Marcel Cohen details various types of language change under the overall headings of the external evolution and internal evolution of languages. The ongoing influx of new words into the English language helps make it a rich field for investigation into language change, despite the difficulty of defining precisely and accurately the vocabulary available to speakers of English. Throughout its history English has not only borrowed words from other languages but has re-combined and recycled them to create new meanings, whilst losing some old words. (Milroy J. *Linguistic variation and change*, 1992) Lexicographers try to keep track

of the changes in languages by recording and dating the appearance in a language of new words, or of new usages for existing words. By the same token, they may tag some words eventually as “archaic” or “obsolete”. For example, in the English language, there occurred a shift from common words (e.g. house) towards the use of rarer words (e.g. building), but on a marginal level. Within over 300 years, the relative frequency of words in samples of English and American newspapers decreased only about three units within a possible theoretical range of 208 units that is 1-2%. (Millward M.A Biography of the English Language 3rd Edition 2012, Wadsworth, Cengage learning. 1996)

Standardization of spelling originated centuries ago. Differences in spelling often catch the eye of a reader of a text from a previous century. The pre-print era had fewer literate people: languages lacked fixed systems of orthography, and the handwritten manuscripts that survive often show words spelled according to regional pronunciation and to personal preference. As a rule, if there are extensive ongoing changes in one subsystem of a language, other subsystems tend to remain fairly stable. For example, over the centuries, an uncurbed change would lead to a total breakdown in communication. Changes in the graphic system of a language come much more slowly than changes in other systems. English has not adopted a totally new grapheme (though a few have been lost and the distribution of others has been modified) since it began to be written in the Latin alphabet. Despite vast changes in pronunciation, English spelling has not been revised in any fundamental way for the past five hundred years, until the electronic age. However, electronic media, such as email, blogging, computer games, and cell phones, have caused drastic changes in spellings. Abbreviations and accepted misspellings abound. And now we use emoticons for whole sentences. The emoticon ☺ means “I am happy”. This can also be done with a computer keyboard. The symbol “;)” means “I am smiling and winking at you”. (Lamy, Hampel Online Communication, 2007) There are multiple reasons for this relative conservatism of writing systems, most of them external to language itself. First, although speech is ephemeral, writing provides a permanent reference; we can go back to check what was written. Digital texts survive even longer than printed ones. We can save computer files and emails forever. In some ways, though, writing has also become less permanent. Digital files can be “eaten” by an untrustworthy computer.

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