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Language and Cognition:
Some Philosophical and Linguistic Considerations
Concerning Language Change and Language Development

Abstract

The paper provides a brief overview of different approaches to language or languages in the history of linguistic thought. It briefly outlines the varying relationships between grammar or linguistics and other disciplines, especially philosophy and philology. Thereafter, the question of the relationship between language and cognition is considered from a viewpoint that does not provide an abstract and generalized answer, but rather offers insight into the processes that either reduce the cognitive potential of a language or enable a language to enhance its cognitive potential.

*Thus, the paper deals with two opposite processes that occur in the history of every language. One is language change, and the other is language development. These two concepts must be strictly differentiated, although they are often confused. Every language changes with time, and this change is usually "deterioration", or – as the Indian grammarians called changes in the Indian languages – "ruin" (*apabhraṃśa*). In the strictly linguistic sense, it could be termed the "loss of distinctions". This phenomenon reduces the cognitive potential of a particular language: communication becomes more limited or more difficult, and intellectual and cultural contents are impoverished and deteriorated.*

Language development is the opposite process, whereby a language gradually recovers from such a state of impoverishment thanks to the social, cultural, and intellectual needs of another epoch. Unlike language change, language development enhances the cognitive potential of language. The first process is spontaneous, while the second implies a conscious, systematic effort by the linguistic community. This development is realised through different strategies in languages of different structures, depending largely on the prior history of the respective language. Both processes are illustrated through select examples from European and Indian languages.

Keywords

language, cognition, language change, language development, cognitive potential of a language

Without language we would not be able to communicate our more elaborate thoughts or knowledge. Would we be able to think without language? J. G. Herder believed that man is unthinkable without language and that the language is as ancient as mankind (Herder 1772). Today, scientists usually estimate that the human species is considerably older than the language as we know it.

Hominidae may have appeared some 6 million years ago, Homo habilis more than 2 million years ago, Homo erectus more than 1,5 million years ago, Homo sapiens neanderthalensis approximately two hundred thousand years ago, and Homo sapiens sapiens some 100.000 years ago. Most anthropolo-

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gists and linguists today do not think that our language can be older than some 50.000 years, but also possibly not younger than some 30.000 years when a kind of revolution in art and crafts took place with Cro-Magnon. This estimation is based on indirect inferences from skeletal remains about the development of the neocortex as the seat of the linguistic potential on the one hand, and of the descent of the larynx as the necessary precondition for the articulation of various distinctive linguistic sounds on the other. This estimation takes into account the tools produced by different races of man and their variability. It also takes into account other signs of creativity, especially the emergence of art, such as painting or sculpture, as well as traces of possible forms of communication, beliefs or rites. There are hypotheses that connect the emergence of language with the general development of human faculties, social behaviour and intellectual faculties, while others tend to isolate the linguistic faculties from the rest. Some hypotheses view the emergence of language in the context of the continuous process of human development, while others stress the completely innovative character of language. At any rate, the question of the origin of language, which was banned from science by the International Linguistic Society of Paris as unanswerable in 1866, has once again in our times entered the agenda of sciences such as biology, psychology, neurology, anthropology and, of course, linguistics in the framework of the theory of evolution.[1]

In spite of the difficulties in identifying the human species by linguistic faculty, as it seems more probable that human species developed language over time, two other statements of Herder's have been confirmed: first, that humans are creatures that live in herds and therefore need language to communicate; and, second, that, just as it was impossible that humanity remained in one herd, so was it impossible to preserve one common language, and thus different national languages necessarily arose.[2]

These two statements may suggest that we could, if we are endowed with intellect, think without language to some extent, but that we would then be unable to communicate our thoughts, feelings, wishes, commands, knowledge, or lack of knowledge, expressed as questions to others in our society. Taking into account the competitive nature of human societies, this could imply that communication with others by means of language might strongly stimulate our thinking. This is well known in philosophy and in the sciences which greatly owe their development to dialogue and the exchange of ideas, scientific treatises and their criticism.

Herder's two statements cited above also imply that all modern humans share linguistic ability as a universal characteristic, but that different nations or communities speak different languages and linguistic idioms with different characteristics. The statement that the mankind was unable to remain one herd or one community, and that therefore different national languages arose, introduces not only the concept of the synchronous variety of languages, but also that of their diachronic differentiation, i. e. of language change. In the epoch following Herder, that of Friedrich Schlegel and Wilhelm von Humboldt, as well as of Franz Bopp and Rasmus Rask, grammar, the science of language, itself changed from the descriptive synchronous grammar of languages to language typology and to the historical and comparative grammar of languages or language families. In the times of the birth of historical and comparative grammar and of language typology, grammar emancipated itself from philology, began being understood as a science comparable to the natural sciences, especially evolutionary biology, and took on the new name *Sprachwissenschaft*, or linguistics.

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Historical linguistics and typology bring us from the problematic field of philosophical or scientific research into the undocumented origin of language to the field of well-grounded research into the documented history of languages and their varieties. This turning point came after many periods of speculation and research into language. First, language study was born from Greek philosophy of archaic and classical epochs. Thereafter it associated with the study of literary texts in the Hellenistic period, which gave rise to the first Western grammar in our sense, that was, however, originally a part of the grammatical art corresponding to our concept of philology. The Greek grammatical model was applied to Latin in due time. In late Antiquity and in early Middle Ages grammar became one of the liberal arts, a part of the trivium. Later in the Middle Ages grammar was again associated with philosophy, in the school of the *Modistae* it became speculative peripatetic grammar of Latin, connected with logic and cognition theory, with the aspiration to be universal. In the Renaissance, grammar fell into arms of philology once more, developed great precision and erudition, and was gradually applied to a number of contemporary languages, both European (Provençal, Spanish, Italian, French, English, Polish, Old Church Slavonic, Croatian, etc.) and non-European described mostly by missionaries (Tarascan, Quechua, Nahuatl, etc.). In the following centuries it was also applied to Asian languages (Japanese, Vietnamese, Chinese, Hindi, Sanskrit, etc.). During the epoch of Rationalism in the 17th century the French Cartesian Grammar of Port-Royal once again brought grammar into the realm of philosophy and logic, and again aspired to be universal. Traditional descriptive and prescriptive grammar in the 19th century gave way to the new historical and comparative grammar, which invested great efforts into becoming strictly scientific, and this later turned into modern linguistics. In the 20th century this independent new science split into the diachronic (e.g. Indo-European comparative grammar, etc.) and synchronous linguistics of different structuralist schools (cf. e.g. Robins 1997). However, in the second half of the 20th century the most prevalent trends in linguistics once again associated with philosophy in some way: the generative and transformational grammar with its aspiration to universality on the one hand, and, the cognitive linguistics as a part of the multidisciplinary cognitive science on the other, consisting of philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, psychology, neuro-science, and the study of artificial intelligence.

It is apparent that the goal during periods in which the study of language was associated with philosophy was to look both for the expression of thought in language, and for the universal rational principles in language. This amounts to the claim that, although human languages are different, our reason underlying them is one and unique. On the other hand, during periods in which the study of language was associated with philology, the stress shifted to the use of language in literature and culture, the description of all specific features of a given language, and its specific use by individual authors. During periods of the independence of linguistics, linguists are most interested in the multiplicity of languages and their genetic, typological and cultural relationship. These approaches may be taken as complementary.

[1]
Cf. e.g. Matasović 2005, 22–46.

[2]
It is worth mentioning that Rousseau also wrote an *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, which was published in 1781, but was written probably some twenty years earlier, starting already in the title from the plurality of languages.

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Interdisciplinary cooperation with other sciences has produced new fields like sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, etc., including cognitive science.

An interesting conclusion in this respect can be suggested by the research into the universals in languages, according to Ranko Matasović:

"What is universal in the grammars of languages is usually nothing specifically linguistic. Universal grammatical features, such as the structure of statements linking different arguments, are directly connected with the structure of the human mind (intellect), i. e. with the way the mind perceives the world around us." (Matasović 2005, 102–103)

This suggestion is in accordance with what is apparent as the typical approaches of philosophy, philology or linguistics alone to the study of language.

Comparable developments in the extra-European study of language were skipped over so far, but they may be occasionally mentioned in the following summary survey of linguistic perspectives. Greek philosophy discovered that the structure of our languages and the parts of speech within them largely correspond to our conceptual categories and thus may have stimulated their recognition: nouns correspond primarily to substances, adjectives to properties, verbs to activities. This was recognized by Aristotle as well as by the Indian Vaiśeṣika philosophers. Our language corresponds in some way to our cognition, and our cognition corresponds in some way to the objective reality. This is what the Peripatetics and Scholastics considered *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, and this concept was developed within the mediaeval school of grammarians known as the *Modistae*. The fascination with the general concept of language in relationship to human intellect persisted in the 17th century rationalist Port-Royal grammar, and was revived in generative and transformational grammar in the 20th century. The inadequacy of language in discussing metaphysical issues was claimed by Ludwig Wittgenstein, who advocated a return to the ordinary language in common use, similar to the Madhyamaka school of some 1,800 years earlier. On the other hand, John Langshaw Austin and John Searle claimed that the task of language was not only to support cognition, but also to stimulate action, to "do things with words", as the Indian Mīmāṃsakas did roughly two millennia earlier, especially regarding rules for ritual activities.

However, there is not only one language of mankind, but there are many languages of many types and many families. The polymaths of antiquity and the Middle Ages were aware of the multitude of languages, but their serious study began only in modern times, during the period of far-reaching colonizations and religious missions. This began to result in new synthetic insights in the 19th century with Friedrich Schlegel and Wilhelm von Humboldt and their language typology, which later continued in the work of great linguists of the 20th century, such as Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, Leonard Bloomfield, Joseph Harold Greenberg, etc. Humboldt, Sapir and especially amateur linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf considered the issue of whether the different structures of languages induce different modes of thinking, or different worldviews.[3] On the other hand, as mentioned above, in the 19th century comparative and historical linguistics became the most demanding linguistic discipline with Rasmus Rask, Franz Bopp, Jacob Grimm, August Schleicher, and later Karl Brugmann, Berthold Delbrück, Hermann Paul, August Leskien, Antoine Meillet, etc. The break came with Ferdinad de Saussure who was a great Indo-Europeanist on the one hand, and the founder of modern structuralist linguistics on the other. His dichotomies, such as that between language and speech, helped to make linguistic concepts considerably more intellectually precise.

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Yet another approach to the language is deserving of mention. Almost as old as the philosophy of language, it was philology that began analysing literary texts in the Hellenistic period, and which produced the first Greek, and later Latin, grammars. Philology investigates literary languages and evaluates their development in relationship to the development of the cultures they express and communicate. This language development must be very clearly distinguished from the language change studied by historical linguistics. The relationship between language and cognition, or language and expressivity or precision, can be best understood within a broader framework on the basis of a clear dichotomy between language development and language change. Modern cognitive science partly includes the consideration of the relationship between language and culture, due to its multidisciplinary connection of philosophy and anthropology with linguistics, as well as psychology, neuro-science and the study of artificial intelligence. However, philology with its traditional multidisciplinary coordination of linguistic, literary, cultural and historical disciplines still retains its importance in connecting language, culture and human thought, especially when complemented with philosophy. The paper will attempt to illustrate through some eloquent examples how philosophical reasoning and philological experience can shed ample light on the question of the relationship between language and cognition.

In the following discussion, I shall attempt to concentrate on languages in a historical perspective, on their change and development. Although the study of these processes does not completely answer the question of the relationship between language and cognition, it will be demonstrated how language change, as it is usually understood, gradually reduces the cognitive potential of languages, whereas language development enhances this potential. If we are interested in cognition, we must make a distinction between these two processes.

What is *language change*? The Romance languages originate from Latin. How did Latin change into the Romance languages? Concerning vocal expression, linguistic change regularly begins on the level of sounds, phonetics and phonology. Phonetic and phonological changes give rise to changes in morphology. These then provoke changes in syntax. Concerning content, the change can begin through substitution of one word for another. In case in which common people transmit a language, words from a higher register or a more cultivated style are often replaced with words from a lower register. On the other hand, when words from a higher register are lost in a language, and some more cultivated class of speakers needs them again, they must be created anew if word formation in the language is still alive, or they must be borrowed from some other language.

If a Latin nobleman speaks of a horse or of a path to take, he will use the words like *equus* and *iter* or *via*. If a peasant speaks, he might use words like *caballus* 'nag' and *caminum* 'trail'. As a result, French has the words *cheval* and *chemin* for the Latin *equus* and *iter*.

On the other hand, Latin phonemes underwent, among others, the following changes in French:

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Cf. Humboldt 1835, repr. 1935; Sapir 1921, 1949, Croatian transl. 2013; Whorf 1956; Ježić 1989, 95–122.

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Vowels:

ă, ā > ai / m, n   ă, ā > e   ĕ > ie   ē, ĭ > oi   ŏ, ō, ŭ > eu   ū > ü

Consonants:

V / p, b / V > v   v# > f   #c > ch   c(k) > g   c > s, z, x   ct > it
a, e, o / l / C > a, e, o + u: au, eau, ou

In addition, only the vowels of the first and of the accented syllable were pre-
served; other syllables have disappeared.

Therefore the following Latin words changed as follows:

amāre > aimer
tenet > tient
debēre > devoir
hōra > heure
nŏvus > neuf
habēre > avoir
brevis > bref
dracon-em > dragon
caput > chef
vicīnus > voisin
factum > fait
alter > autre
cultellus > couteau
bonitat-em > bonté
securitat-em > sûreté
matutinum > matin
liberāre > livrer
rendĕre > rendre

When these changes are seen, it becomes obvious that e.g. the famous French
revolutionary slogan *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* does not contain any strictly
French word, but rather two loanwords from Latin and one adaptation from
Latin (*égalité*). The common people who used this language had not needed a
word for 'freedom' until that time, so they used the words *livrer* and *livraison*
in the more modest sense of 'to deliver, supply' and 'delivery'. Thereafter,
French had to borrow words for lost meanings from Latin.

On the other hand, the four Latin conjugations are still recognizable in
French: *aimer < amāre, devoir < debēre, vendre < vendĕre, venir < venīre*
although the proportion of verbs following them has radically changed. How-
ever, conjugation became mostly unfunctional because of the sound changes
(Adamović & Ježić 1939):

The Latin *debeo, debes, debet* became the French *dois, dois doit* (all equally
pronounced [*dwα*]), and the 1st – 3rd persons had to be supplemented by pro-
nouns: *je dois, tu dois, il / elle doit*.

This already represents a syntactic change, or a morphologization of a syn-
tactic phrase, but the loss of free word order because of the even more radical
loss of declension is even more obvious. Sound changes cancelled the case
endings. Therefore, while in Latin *Petrus Mariam amat / Mariam Petrus
amat / Amat Mariam Petrus*, etc. have all the same meaning, although they
may differ in different stylistic stresses, French has no stylistic variations,
and the only remaining possible word order is S-V-O: *Pierre aime Marie*.

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Thus, French did not 'develop' out of Latin. Latin changed into Italian, Spanish, French, etc. Who could reasonably consider the change from *habes, habet* to *as, a* (both pronounced equally [ɑ]), from *debeo, debes, debet* to [dwɑ], or *aqua* to *eau* (pronounced [o]) development or evolution? Or the loss of words for freedom, equality and fraternity together with their meanings? This is change, and it could be referred to as the 'ruin' of a language rather than 'development', just as the Indian grammarians called analogous changes in Indian languages 'ruin' (*apabhraṃśa*).

However, this does not mean that the French language did not *develop*. It did, however not out of Latin, but out of its own 'ruin'. *What is language development*? Development is documented in mediaeval poetry and novels, in Renaissance poetry and prose, in the classicist literature of the 17th century: Corneille, Racine and Molière, in the works of rationalism, especially of Descartes, in the foundation of the French Academy, and the subsequent development of creativity and the cultivation of language.

The situation was even worse with English. After the battle at Hastings in 1066, when the French-speaking Normans conquered Britain, the Anglo-Saxons lost their social status and their language suffered great losses. The Anglo-Saxons, as is documented in language, could raise calves and cows, sheep or swine (all Germanic / Teutonic words), but the Normans ate *beef*, *veal*, *mutton* and *pork* (all Old French words) when they came to their tables. The losses in morphology in comparison with Old English were dramatic: the present tense of most verbs has only two verbal forms, e.g. *give* and *gives*. The preterite has only one: *gave*. Etc. The losses in word formation were even more dramatic. English cannot form neutral adjectives from nouns like *dog, cat, cow*, or *man* and *woman*. It must borrow the respective adjectives *canine, feline* and *bovine* from Latin, and for human's *male* and *female* from French, or *masculine* and *feminine* from Latin. English can only use compounds instead: dog food, cow dung. The institutions of society and state were completely in Norman hands, and therefore juridical terminology is also of French origin: *judge, jury, court, gaol / jail*, etc. (cf. Old French *juge, jurée, cort / cour, jajole / jeole*) (Bradley 1927).

Of course, the situation changed over time, and English developed into a rich and functioning standard language due to its rich literary production, science, education and political institutions.

What does the language change have to do with cognition? Obviously, when grammatical forms and words disappear, communication becomes more difficult, and mental and cultural content is impoverished or even devastated. This is even clearer with intellectual terminology. English borrowed a great deal of its social terminology from other languages, mostly from French, due to the French-speaking feudal lords of the country, and the bulk of its intellectual terminology from Latin, initially due to the learned clergy, and later to the humanists and classicists. However, this borrowing is already the opposite process. Having become largely unable to create new words, a language like English can enrich its vocabulary and compensate for the losses mostly by borrowing words from other languages. However, if this is done from appropriate sources that belong to the cultural history of the linguistic community, this process can be considered the *recovery*, *development* or *evolution* of the respective language. Modern standard English is a blend of English vocabulary covering the majority of everyday terminology and some more intellectual contents designated by metaphorically extended terms or by compounds, French vocabulary covering many parts of social and cultural terminology, and Latin vocabulary covering essential parts of intellectual terminology.

Three different functional languages have been blended into a unique linguistic system wherein their lexical wealth serves three main functional styles of the standard language (and many secondary ones). This language is a construct built and developed out of the resources of its cultural (and social and political) history. Viewed in this way, English is much less a national language, and much more a national (and nowadays international) linguistic tool creatively developed out of the European heritage of the English people from antiquity to present day.

Changes similar to these in the Romance languages and English can be nicely illustrated through examples from Indian languages. The Middle Indo-Aryan (Indo-European Indian, MIA) languages (Prakrit and Avahaṭṭha) underwent great phonetic and phonological changes, which necessitated a thorough reorganization of morphology and syntax, which was finally achieved in the New Indo-Aryan (Indo-Aryan, NIA) languages. A period of deterioration or 'ruin' (*apabhraṃśa*) of the Old Indo-Aryan (OIA, Vedic), was accompanied by the standardization of a slightly simplified literary version of Old Indo-Aryan, Sanskrit, which served for millennia as the universal Indian language of education, science and literature. On the other hand, this 'ruin' was later followed by the change and ensuing development of the New Indo-Aryan (NIA) languages, such as Hindī, which needed and still need many loanwords, especially from Sanskrit, to answer the cognitive, cultural and civilizational needs of the changing times.[4] All of these New Indo-Aryan languages first experienced a degradation of their linguistic potential and thereafter development in the process of their standardization until present day.

Let us briefly illustrate how the change into Middle Indo-Aryan worked. After the phonetic changes in the Prakrit language Māhārāṣṭrī, famous for its love poetry, a nice stanza runs as follows:

amiaṃ pāuakavvaṃ paḍhiuṃ souṃ ca je na jāṇaṃti /
kāmassa tattataṃtiṃ kuṇaṃti te kahaṃ na lajjaṃti//

The Old Indo-Aryan rendering would run like this:

amṛtaṃ prākṛtakāvyaṃ pāṭhituṃ śrotuṃ ca ye na jānanti /
kāmasya tantratantrīṃ kṛṇvanti te kathaṃ na lajjanti //[5]

"Those who do not know to recite or to listen to the immortal poetry in Prakrit,
and yet produce learned treatises on love, how are they not ashamed?"

Are the expressions (*amia, pāua, souṃ*, etc. for *amṛta, prākṛta, śrotum*, etc.) still recognizable to somebody who is not well acquainted with the respective sound changes? The distinctiveness of sounds and sound sequences has dramatically decreased.

The sound changes that occurred in this illustration can be outlined as follows:

ṛ > i, u
V/C/V > VV
#CC > C
vy > vv
VṭhV > VḍhV
VthV > h
#y > j
m, n > ṃ

A rule stating that a semivowel is assimilated to a stop or a siblant: tr > tt sy > ss

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A metrical rule requiring that a syllable cannot have more than two morae did not permit a long vowel in front of more than one consonant: $\bar{V}CC > \bar{V}C$ / VCC / $\bar{V}CVC$[6]

In spite of this, the poetry composed in Prakrit was considered 'immortal', as exquisite as the Italian *dolce stil nuovo*. This poetry helped Prakrit (in this case Māhārāṣṭrī) develop into a literary language (however, it was never used for scholarly or scientific purposes).

Let us now outline an example in which the impoverishment in vocabulary was promptly counteracted through the creation of new terminology by means of metaphorical shifts in meaning. The Buddha preached in Middle Indo-Aryan, Prakrit. He teaches that there are five categories encompassing our complete possible experience: our sensory experience of the outer world (rūpa), our feelings (vedanā), our perception (saññā < OIA saṃjñā), the forces structuring our consciousness (saṅkhāra < OIA saṃskāra) and consciousness itself (viññāna < vijñāna). All five of these are called upādānakhandhas (< OIA skandha) 'the trunks of clinging'. This looks strange. Therefore, Indologists translated it into English in a more understandable way as the 'five aggregates'. However, why are there 'trunks' in the original? Because they all branch out in a certain number of branches: e.g. feelings branch out into three main branches: pleasure, pain and indifferent feeling, perception diverges into six branches: the five senses and the mind as organ of thinking, etc. Moreover, the trunks of trees cling to the soil with their roots. We cling to this world by taking roots with these five kinds of objects or five faculties oriented towards the objects of this world. This system of analogies gave rise to the term upādānakhandha. To translate it as 'aggregates' means to miss the point of analogy, respectively the point of the metaphor.

However, the New Indo-Aryan languages have completely reorganized their morphology due to the sound changes that destroyed the OIA morphology, similar to French and English. While they do not normally use Prakrit loanwords, they do use Sanskrit as abundantly as French or English use Latin loanwords in order to compensate for their losses in vocabulary, which largely occurred in India during periods of foreign rule, first during Turco-Afghan Muslim rule and then during British rule. During these periods only Sanskrit functioned as the native language of literature, science, culture, and civilization, similarly to Latin in Western Europe.

On the whole we can either make distinction between language change and language development, or we can refer to both processes as language change – but with a distinction between language 'degradation' or 'ruin' and language cultivation or development. It is alarming how much attention modern linguists have paid to the former and how little to the latter, because it is language cultivation or development which is connected with the progress of culture that has somehow fallen out of sight. In short, *language change in the sense of deterioration* is the spontaneous erosion of the distinctive features (usually beginning at the phonetic level) and lexical wealth of a language, and it reduces

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Some of these, especially if spoken by Muslims, such as Urdū, have accepted many loanwords from Persian and Arabic and some from Turkish instead of Sanskrit.

5
Ananthanarayana, H. S. 1973, p. 35. See also: *Das Saptaśatakam des Hala*, ed. Albrecht Weber 1881, p. 2, stanza 2.

6
Bloch 1933; Turner 1966, repr. 1989; Bubenik 1996; Cardona & Jain 2003, 2007.

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the tools of cognition in a language. *Language development*, on the contrary, is not a spontaneous process, but a conscious effort to answer the intellectual, emotional and sensory needs of a linguistic community that is in the process of developing its culture and adapting or harmonizing its linguistic tools to answer the needs of this cultural progress. Therefore, linguistic change in the sense of deterioration takes place in the common language, while linguistic development mostly takes place on the levels of educated and cultivated communication, like arts, philosophy, social and political organization, and the sciences. Language development enhances the cognitive potential of a language or its ability to express and communicate intellectual and cultural values.

We may illustrate the results of such linguistic history of both the ruin or change and the development of languages through the example of a passage both philosophical and linguistic translated from Greek into English and German.

Plato, *Cratylus* 402 A–B:

"Τὸν Ἡράκλειτόν μοι δοκῶ καθορᾶν παλαί᾽ ἄττα σοφὰ λέγοντα, ἀτεχνῶς τὰ ἐπὶ Κρόνου καὶ Ῥέας, ἃ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἔλεγεν.

Πῶς τοῦτο λέγεις;

Λέγει που Ἡράκλειτος ὅτι πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει, καὶ ποταμοῦ ῥοῇ ἀπεικάζων τὰ ὄντα λέγει ὡς δὶς ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν ποταμὸν οὐκ ἂν ἐμβαίης.

Ἔστι ταῦτα.

Τί οὖν; δοκεῖ σοι ἀλλοιότερον Ἡρακλείτου νοεῖν ὁ τιθέμενος τοῖς τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν προγόνοις 'Ῥέαν' τε καὶ 'Κρόνον'; ἆρα οἴει ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου αὐτὸν ἀμφοτέροις ῥευμάτων ὀνόματα θέσθαι; ὥσπερ αὖ Ὅμηρος 'Ὠκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσίν' φησιν καὶ μητέρα 'Τηθύν' · οἶμαι δὲ καὶ Ἡσίοδος."

Plato with an English translation by H. N. Fowler, Loeb 1926, pp. 67–69:

"SOC. I seem to have a vision of Heracleitus saying some ancient words of wisdom as old as the reign of Cronus and Rhea, which Homer said too.

HER. What do you mean by that?

SOC. Heracleitus says, you know, that all things move and nothing remains still, and he likens the universe to the current of a river, saying that you cannot step twice into the same stream.

HER. True.

SOC. Well, don't you think he who gave to the ancestors of the other gods the names 'Rhea' and 'Cronus' had the same thought as Heracleitus? Do you think he gave both of them the names of streams merely by chance? Just so Homer, too, says 'Ocean the origin of the gods, and their mother Tethys'; and I believe Hesiod says that also (…)."

Platon, Werke, Bd 3, pp. 455–457, translation by Friedrich Schleiermacher:

„Sokrates: Ich glaube zu sehen, daß Herakleitos gar alte Weisheit hervorbringt, offenbar dasselbe von Kronos und Rhea, was auch Homeros schon gesagt hat.

Hermogenes: Wie meinst du das?

Sokrates: Herakleitos sagt doch, daß alles davongeht und nichts bleibt, und, indem er alles Seiende einem strömenden Flusse vergleicht, sagt er, man könne nicht zweimal in denselben Fluß steigen.

Hermogenes: Ganz richtig.

Sokrates: Wie nun? Dünkt dich der viel anders gedacht zu haben als Herakleitos, der aller anderen Götter Urahnen 'Kronos' und 'Rhea' genannt hat? Oder meinst du, es sei von ungefähr, daß er beiden ihre Namen von Flüssen gegeben hat? Wie auch Homeros den Okeanos den Vater der Götter nennt und Tethys die Mutter; und ich glaube auch Hesiodos (…)."

This passage in English translation contains quite a number of Latin words (partly received through French): *vision*, *universe*, *current*…, and French words (of Latin origin): *river*, *ancient*, *reign*, *move*, *remain*, *ancestor*, *chance*… This illustrates how important the interrelation of English with French and Latin

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was to its development. This also indirectly shows how essential it was to the development of French, which originated from the vulgar Latin, to be able to return to the lexical treasures of its Latin source in order to dip out of it.

It could be paradoxically said that English owes a great deal to its writers, to its Bible translators like Coverdale and Tindale, and to its great poets like Shakespeare and Milton. However, it owes a great deal more to the great Latin poets, writers and scholars, such as Marcus Terentius Varro or Marcus Tullius Cicero, as well as to many others, without whom English would not possess the intellectual vocabulary that enables it to communicate civilizational, philosophical, or scientific matters. These Roman authors created the necessary Latin terminology after the Greek model in their times, and thus enabled Latin to communicate intellectual matters in Western Europe for some seventeen centuries. Even today, it could be provocatively stated that Latin and Greek (through its loanwords and through terminology coined in Latin after the Greek model) are not dead languages, but rather living languages that revived dead, or at least intellectually dying, modern European languages, such as French and English, and imbued them with new life. This use of classical resources could be referred to as the renaissance of these languages. That is an intellectually neglected aspect of the cultural history of language development in Europe, as well as in some other parts of the world, such as India.

On the other hand, a different type of language development, serving the same purpose in a less derived manner, can be illustrated through the example of German. Here, almost everything is transposed into German by means of the linguistic resources of the German language itself. If we look for the terms for the respective meanings – in place of the English loanwords *vision*, *universe*, *current… ancient*, *(reign)*, *move*, *remain*, *river*, *ancestor*, *(by) chance…* – we find the German words: *sehen*, *alles Seiende*, *strömend… (gar) alt*, *davongeht*, *bleibt*, *Fluß*, *Urahn*, *(von) ungefähr…* Whatever be the reason (whether isolation from the most violent civilizational storms and trends of history or something else), the German language has largely preserved its morphological creativity and its lexical wealth, and has been able to use it or to develop it by means of its alive and fully functional word formation (through derivation and composition). Therefore, German did not need to borrow words from other languages, and, over time, it substituted even inherited Latin loanwords with terms formed from its own linguistic elements and procedures (from roots, stems, affixes, suprasegmental features). German and some Slavic languages, e.g. Croatian, are examples of the development of literary or standard languages – equally competing with the cognitive and expressive achievements of classical languages, and equally answering to modern cognitive and cultural needs – out of their own elements and following their own grammatical procedures, which have been preserved to a sufficient extent to be able to answer the great majority of cultural needs.

French and English are not to be blamed for the fact that they had to help themselves by borrowing words and expressions to develop their linguistic potential according to the needs of the progress of culture. Equally, German or Slavic languages should not be blamed if they can achieve the same cultural goals referring simply to their own lexical wealth and functioning grammatical procedures, especially to word formation patterns.

It is not serious when some people, ideologically motivated journalists, or even insufficiently educated linguists, all of which abound in smaller countries like Croatia, reproach that such language cultivation is purism or nationalism. This means that they do not understand linguistic structures and pro-

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cesses, and that they underestimate or dismiss the value of linguistic diversity. On the contrary, these languages do not borrow less loanwords because of the purism, rather French and English had to borrow a great deal more loanwords because of their lack of surviving morphological devices. However, all current literary or standard languages must equally answer the cognitive and cultural needs of modern culture and civilisation, which is becoming more and more international and global, and insofar as these languages are successful in fulfilling this unending task – through inner creativity or through the harmonization of inherited and borrowed elements in their language systems – they are equally international and equally open to answering the needs of communicating this global culture for the sake of their linguistic community.

The different strategies of different languages to satisfy the cognitive, cultural and civilizational needs of the times are usually founded in their linguistic history, which is a part of their social, cultural, and political history. However, it is useful to understand that, whichever of these strategies a language follows, it is important to avoid language change in the sense of the loss of distinctive features, just as it is important to avoid the erosion of fertile soil as much as possible. It is also essential to invest conscious efforts in the arts, in social and political life, and in science and technology to cultivate languages and to enhance their cognitive, communicative and cultural potential. One prominent aspect of this development, although not the only one, is the constant care for terminology. Only such an enhancement of the cognitive, cultural and civilizational potential of languages can be rightly termed language development.

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Mislav Ježić

Jezik i spoznaja:
filozofska i jezikoslovna razmatranja
o jezičnoj mijeni i jezičnome razvoju

Sažetak

Članak daje kratak pregled pristupa jeziku, ili jezicima, tijekom povijesti jezikoslovnih promišljanja. Sažeto prikazuje i odnose između gramatike ili jezikoslovlja i drugih disciplina, osobito filozofije i filologije. Na pitanje o odnosu između jezika i spoznaje ne daje apstraktan i uopćen odgovor, nego otvara uvid u procese, od kojih jedan umanjuje mogućnosti jezika da izrazi spoznaju, a drugi te mogućnosti širi i obogaćuje.

*Radi se, dakle, o dvama oprječnim procesima, svojstvenima svim jezicima: o jezičnoj mijeni i jezičnome razvoju. Treba ih dobro razlikovati jer se obično brkaju. Svaki se jezik s vremenom mijenja spontano, mehanički, a takva je mijena uvelike degradacija jezika ili »propadanje«, kako su to nazivali indijski gramatičari (*apabhraṃśa*). U jezikoslovnome smislu radi se o gubljenju razlikovnosti u jeziku, a taj proces umanjuje mogućnosti jezika u izraživanju spoznaje. Pri tome se priopćavanje osiromašuje ili postaje otežano jer se misaoni i doživljajni sadržaj koji većina govornika ima potrebu razlikovati sužava.*

Razvoj jezika oprječan je proces pri kojem se jezik oporavlja od takva osiromašenja da bi mogao izraziti društvene, kulturne i misaone sadržaje koji postaju bitni u razdobljima kulturnoga uzleta. Nasuprot jezičnoj mijeni, jezični razvoj obogaćuje i istančava spoznajne mogućnosti jezika. Mijena je spontana, mehanička i nesvjesna. Razvoj je, naprotiv, svjesni napor, svrhovito ulaganje u jezik u nekoj jezičnoj zajednici. Taj se napor služi različitim strategijama u jezicima različita ustroja kakav je proizašao iz prethodne jezične povijesti.

Ta su dva procesa osvijetljena u članku zornim primjerima iz europskih i indijskih jezika.

Ključne riječi

jezik, spoznaja, jezični razvoj, jezična mijena, spoznajne mogućnosti jezika

Mislav Ježić

Sprache und Erkenntnis:
einige philosophische und sprachwissenschaftliche
Betrachtungen über den Wandel und die Entwicklung der Sprachen

Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel fasst sehr kurz verschiedene Auffassungen der Sprache in der Geschichte des Nachdenkens über das Wesen der Sprache zusammen. Er entwirft eine Übersicht der sich wandelnden Beziehungen zwischen Grammatik oder Sprachwissenschaft und anderen Disziplinen, be-

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sonders Philosophie und Philologie. Danach wird die Beziehung zwischen der Sprache und der Erkenntnis von einem Standpunkt betrachtet, der keine abstrakte und verallgemeinerte Lösung bietet, sondern die Einsicht in die Prozesse ermöglicht, die das Erkenntnispotenzial einer Sprache vermindern oder erhöhen.

*Deshalb werden zwei entgegengesetzte Prozesse, die in der Geschichte jeder Sprache vorkommen, untersucht: der Sprachwandel und die Sprachentwicklung. Diese Prozesse sollen klar unterschieden werden, obwohl sie oft verwechselt werden. Jede Sprache verändert sich mit der Zeit spontan, und diese Veränderung ist üblicherweise ein Verlust an Differenzierungen in der Sprache – oder wie die altindischen Grammatiker es nannten – ein „Verfall" (*apabhraṃśa*) der Sprache. Dieser Prozess vermindert das Erkenntnispotenzial einer Sprache, die Kommunikation wird begrenzter oder schwieriger, und der Kulturkontext und das Erkenntnispotenzial werden verarmt.*

Die Sprachentwicklung ist der entgegengesetzte Prozess der Erholung einer Sprache nach einer solchen Phase der Verarmung, dank den gesellschaftlichen, kulturellen und intellektuellen Forderungen einer neuen Zeit. Die Sprachentwicklung erhöht das Erkenntnispotenzial einer Sprache. Der Sprachwandel geschieht mechanisch, unbewusst und spontan. Die Sprachentwicklung ist eine bewusste und systematische Anstrengung innerhalb einer Sprachgemeinschaft. Diese Entwicklung wird in den Sprachen verschiedener Struktur, die ein Resultat ungleicher Geschichte sind, durch verschiedene Strategien erzielt. Beide Prozesse sind an ausgewählten Beispielen aus europäischen und indischen Sprachen illustriert.

Schlüsselwörter

Sprache, Erkenntnis, Sprachwandel, Sprachentwicklung, Erkenntnispotenzial einer Sprache

Mislav Ježić

Langue et cognition :
Quelques considérations philosophiques et linguistiques
sur le changement des langues et le développement des langues

Résumé

Cet article donne un bref compte-rendu des différentes approches du problème lié à la langue, ou aux langues, au cours de l'histoire de la pensée linguistique. Il donne une esquisse sommaire des relations différentes de la grammaire ou de la linguistique et des autres disciplines, surtout de la philosophie et la philologie. La question des relations entre la langue et la cognition est élaborée d'une manière qui ne propose pas une réponse abstraite et généralisée, mais qui donne un aperçu des processus qui réduisent le potentiel cognitif d'une langue ou bien l'augmentent et améliorent.

*Il s'agit des deux processus opposés qui ont marqué l'histoire de chaque langue. L'un est le changement d'une langue, l'autre son développement. Il est nécessaire de bien distinguer ces deux notions que l'on confond trop souvent. Chaque langue change au cours du temps de manière mécanique et spontanée et ce changement est d'habitude une « dégradation » ou « un déclin », comme les grammairiens indiens nommaient de tels changements dans les langues indiennes (*apabhraṃśa*). Dans un sens linguistique stricte on pourrait l'expliquer comme une réduction des caractéristiques distinctives dans une langue. Ce processus réduit le potentiel cognitif d'une langue, la communication devient plus limitée ou plus difficile et le contenu intellectuel et culturel s'appauvrissent et se dégradent.*

Le développement d'une langue est le processus opposé où une langue se recouvre progressivement d'un tel appauvrissement grâce aux besoins sociaux, culturels et intellectuels d'une époque nouvelle. Contrairement au changement linguistique, le développement augmente, améliore et raffine le potentiel cognitif d'une langue. Le changement est spontané, mécanique et inconscient. Le développement, au contraire, est un effort conscient, un investissement intentionnel dans une communauté linguistique. Cet effort de développer la langue se sert de stratégies diverses dans les langues de structures différentes, qui résultent de l'histoire précédente de chaque langue. Ces deux processus sont illustrés dans l'article sur la base d'exemples puisés dans les langues européennes et indiennes.

Mots-clés

langue, cognition, changement linguistique, développement linguistique, potentiel cognitif, du langage