

## LANGUAGE CHANGE AND TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE

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## Abstract

*Language evolves in a socio-cultural environment. Apart from biological evolution and individual learning, cultural transmission also casts important influence on many aspects of language evolution. The roles of transmission spanning the offspring, parent, and grandparent generations in language change. These transmissions are: those between the parent and young generations, those within the offspring generation, and those between the grandparent and offspring generations. The ability to pass knowledge on from one individual to another even across generations -- that makes us unique among animals. True, we also learn by observing what happens in the world around us, for example, by associating events that frequently occur together (or in a rapid sequence). However, human "communication" may constitute such a powerful instrument that it overrides "statistics," as observed*

*Keywords:* Language change, Evolution cultural, Transmission, Linguistic knowledge

*Introduction:*

Relationship between language change and language learning. Language is always changing. We have seen that language changes across space and across social group. Language 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 degenerates. Despite abundant research on language acquisition of its nature and the order of acquisition and the search for interpretation and explanation behind these, there is little evidence to support the notion of language learning faculty isolated from the answer two important issues associated with learning –one, the maintenance of historical continuity and two, the transmission of language change, in particular, the changes in progress. This is important if new understanding in the field of knowledge, cognition and language has to be developed and language acquisition holds an important key to our understanding. Whether a child can be regarded as a perfect linguistic historian or not the historical continuity of language on the one hand and changing and variable nature of language on the other provide a good case in favour of such an argument.

This paper discusses the in the field of research on language acquisition viewing it in terms of how knowledge is transmitted from one generation to the next.

### *Language change:*

Language change is the phenomenon by which permanent alterations are made in the features and the use of a language over time. All natural languages change, and language change affects all areas of language use. Types of language change include sound changes, lexical changes, semantic changes, and syntactic changes.

### *Types of Language Change:*

Language is always changing. We have seen that language changes across space and across social group. Language 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 degenerates. 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. After ten thousand years, the relationship will be essentially indistinguishable from chance relationships between historically unrelated languages.

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. Also, as people observe language change, they usually react negatively, feeling that the language has "gone down hill".

### *How and why does language change?*

There are many different routes to language change. Changes can take originate in language learning, or through language contact, social differentiation, and natural processes in usage.

### *The nature of language change:*

Any treatment of linguistics must address the question of language change. The way languages change offers insights into the nature of language itself. 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 organisation. There is no simple explanation for why languages change. This is an area in which there is much speculation and little proof. The area is an interesting and fruitful one but there are few if any direct answers. For this reason historical linguistics has traditionally been concerned with how languages evolve and not why they do so in one particular direction and not in another.

Some linguists distinguish between *internal* and *external* sources of language change, with "internal" sources of change being those that occur within a single linguistic community, and contact phenomena being the main examples of an external source of change.

Internal and external motivation Language change can basically be assigned to one of two types: either the change is caused by a structural aspect of the language – this is internally motivated change – or it does not in which case one speaks of externally motivated change. Internal change internally motivated change usually leads to balance in the system, the removal of marked elements, the analogical spread of regular forms or the like. In a nutshell it produces regularity in the grammar. As languages consist of different levels, a change in one quarter may lead to an imbalance in another and provoke a further change.

### *Transmission and propagation of change*

If one assumes that language does not exist separate from the speakers who use it, then a major question arises for language change: how will a following generation know what changes are in progress in a current generation? The answer to this is that at any one time there co-exist two or more competing variants. Of these one is dominant and the other recessive. Linguists believe that children during first language acquisition note not only what forms a language possesses but also what the variation among these forms is.

e.g. if one form is more common among older speakers, only used in more formal styles or conversely predominant in colloquial usage, etc. By these means a child can register the direction in which language change is moving and later contribute to this by unconsciously favouring those forms which are preferred in the change. This view of how language change is transmitted enables one to better understand the notion of 'drift' (a slow movement of change in one direction).

Transmission is the process by which information, knowledge, ideas and skills are taught to others through purposeful, conscious telling, demonstration, and guidance. Over the course of a lifetime, this method accounts for only about 10% of learning. Unfortunately, this is the most traditional and, currently, the most predominate method of instruction. However, we are finding out it is not very effective and moving toward acquisition and emergence, and examining the lessons of accretion.

- The first form of learning is transmission, involving a one-way flow of information from the teacher or the textbook to the student. The focus is on accumulating factual information and basic skills.

### *Examples of Transmission in a Sentence*

The equipment is used for the transmission of television signals.

We are receiving a live transmission from the scene of the accident.

The transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next

My car has a manual transmission

This car comes with automatic transmission

Although the presence of change in progress still provide us with some of the greatest intellectual challenges for explanation and understanding, equally and perhaps even more challenging and puzzling (confusing) is absence of change hence historical continuity. The transmission of knowledge across generation is not necessarily complete as far as language is concerned. Only then we can account for both the phenomenon of change as well as absence of change. There is great deal of research to show that children acquire and transmit historical patterns as far as they perfectly match their parents' of language use. However, children also at a very early age appear to show sensitivity to the patterns of social variation, and so produce the relevant social pattern and participate in the ongoing changes in the speech community. It is important to note that such patterns are abstract and productive patterns and are part of the rule systems of the language. An understanding of how language patterns are transmitted across generation can provide a good understanding of how knowledge itself is transmitted across generation and the relationship between language, cognition and society. To show how such language specific variation is transmitted, the paper examines variation within family involving members from four generations ranging in age 8 to 85 years. Language has important bearing the issues of language change and language transmission. The former not only oversimplifies the issues of language acquisition but also confounds the transmission of linguistic knowledge from one generation to the next and transition of language from one state to the next.

The issues was not a homogeneous or heterogeneous speech community as he believed in linguistic heterogeneity. Children, whose environment denies them access to a well formed normal linguistic input, resort to their natural cognitive faculties to recreate a grammar. Such break downs or gaps in the normal transmission of language arise when people from diverse linguistic backgrounds are displaced on mass from their places of origin

and placed together in a situation without having a common language. Which were supported by slave and indentured labour one important assumption implicated that language development proceeds linearly from one generation to the next such that every generation build s up on the linguistic input received from its immediate predecessor. Hence, numerous mutually unintelligible languages on the plantations gave way to a common language- a elementary form of dialect, which in turn though impoverished was the only basis upon which the next generation could built its language. Since the children could not possibly have learnt a language from the impoverished data they had no option but to make maximum use. Though it is true that what the immigrants used as their second language, the successive generations of locally born adopted it as their first language, it is equally well known that did not necessarily acquire it from their pidgin speaking parents, nor did Creoles develop in single generation. Creole was acquired as the first language because it was already there very much in the environment as a language used on the plantations by the white Overseers an management directly in touch with the labour, by the house salves and by appointed baby-sitters who looked after the children too young to be engaged as labour on the plantations. In fact, I would like to argue that to imagine a continuous life cycle of language growth without disturbance and a neat linear concept of generation even within a family are both illusion.

It is common knowledge that children are not born knowing how to speak, and that they acquire the language of their social environment, that is the language they hear around them. Which language and the number of language children acquire are completely determined by the environment. It is, therefore, logical to conclude that languages are perhaps entirely learned. This does not however deny that such learning may be the computational properties of human mind pertaining to data organisation in order to account for the observed organisation of language. I take the position that structure of language and language use are not mutually exclusive as language us is not devoid of structures and structures are usable. Whether there are syntactic transformations, logical forms, functional structures, metrical grids and prosodic trees, if so, what their properties are and if not, how else to account for the structure of language. It is well known that children appear to have no problem in learning a language using the same natural data that naturally and casually comes their way that some linguists reject as performance data therefore as irrelevant data for the purposes of studying language.

A language results because of this interaction between the innate processor and data it receives. Linguistic continuity will remain as long as both the ingredients are present in good

health. Thus a particular language itself is not genetically pre-wired and for this reason a language is also not transmitted from one generation to the next, though systematic relationship and differences across generations can be observed. It also appears that the computational properties of human mind include quick inference and very fast processing in terms of leaps and bounds so that what is learned appears to be always ahead of what is exposed to. This leads to both errors and shades.

### *Conclusion:*

To conclude, what I have hoped to have shown through the data obtained from the study of speech community is an example of the presence of striking linguistic variation in the use of a single variable in language in a speech community. Systematic but sharp gaps within and between generation, complex age gradations, internally determined change but middle class youth being the innovators of the two most recent changes and above all, the four patterns coexisting perhaps in every family and in the speech community suggest that the issue of transmission of linguistic knowledge across generations and transmission of change from one state to the next, acquisition of variable linguistic patterns are complex issues and deeply rooted in a complex and heterogeneous language and society. The variable linguistic patterns that can be uncovered only through empirical studies and probabilistic modelling cannot be simply transmitted from parents to children but have to be understood as collective social, cultural and linguistic endure which ensures both continuity and change.

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