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Does 'language' form our 'thought'?

Received March, 13, 2014; Revised March, 18, 2014; Accepted March, 22, 2014

Abstract. As early as 1799, Humboldt initiated to wonder the gravity of 'language'. Indeed, there exists much diversity in linguistic forms in human societies and, translation is necessary in order to share literary works, among different language users. During the process of translating culturally-colored discourse, some important features of a given society may well be revealed. As an empirical example, a script of rakugo, which is the traditional Japanese performance art of telling comic stories, is used as the data for analysis because rakugo can be regarded as a genre of natural, spoken Japanese discourse. In fact, Katz (as cited in Wardy, 2006) suggests that linguistic relativity threatens universal inter-translatability. In this study, focusing on zero personal pronouns, the notion of linguistic relativity is examined, related to the Japanese sense of self and the Japanese worldview that includes seken (life-world). This seems to reveal linguistic relativity (e.g., Humboldt 1999; Sapir 1921/2004) that different perspectives on reality often manifest themselves as specific features of language use in speech communities, as some empirical studies have been conducted, starting with Humboldt's original research (1999) on the Kawi language.

***Keywords**: linguistic relativity, zero personal pronouns, low-context society, high-context society, seken (life-world), Japanese sense of self*

Мацуока Ріеко. Чи формує мова нашу думку?

Анотація. Ще в 1799 році Гумбольдт здивував світ ідеєю «тяжіння мови». Існує велике розмаїття мовних форм в людському суспільстві, тому для того, аби про літературні твори однієї культури могли дізнатися представники іншої культурної спільності, потрібен переклад. Під час перекладу культурно-маркованого дискурсу розкриваються деякі важливі особливості певного суспільства. Матеріалом для дослідження використано сценарій ракуґо – японського літературного й театрального жанру, що представляє мистецтво виконання гумористичних оповідань. Ракуґо можна розглядати як жанр природного, розмовного японського дискурсу. Дж. Кац припускає, що існування лінгвістичної відносності стає на заваді всебічному універсалізму перекладності. Це дослідження зосереджує увагу на нульових особових займенниках, при цьому розкривається поняття лінгвістичної відносності в контексті японського самовідчуття і світогляду японців, яке включає в себе поняття seken (життєвий світ). Лінгвістична відносність, в розумінні Гумбольдта, Сепіра радше виявляється в розмаїтті точок зору, особливостях використання мови в мовленні конкретних спільнот. Прикладом цьому можуть слугувати деякі емпіричні дослідження, починаючи з оригінальних досліджень Гумбольдтом мови Каві.

***Ключові слова:** лінгвістична відносність, нульові особові займенники, низько-контекстуальна культура, висококонтекстуальна культура, seken, сприйняття свого «я» японцем.*

Мацуока Риеко. Формирует ли язык нашу мысль?

Аннотация. Еще в 1799 году Гумбольдт удивил мир попыткой задуматься над притяжением «языка». Существует большое разнообразие языковых форм в человеческом обществе, поэтому для того, чтобы о литературных произведениях одной культуры могли узнать представители другой культурной общности необходим перевод. В процессе перевода культурно-маркированного дискурса раскрываются некоторые важные особенности данного

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общества. В качестве материала для исследования использован сценарий ракуго, являющийся японским литературным и театральным жанром, представляющим искусство исполнения юмористических рассказов. Ракуго можно рассматривать как жанр естественного, разговорного японского дискурса. Дж. Кац предполагает, что существование лингвистической относительности становится препятствием для всестороннего универсализма переводимости. Данное исследование сосредоточивает внимание на нулевых личных местоимениях, при этом раскрывается понятие лингвистической относительности в контексте японского самоощущения и мировоззрения японцев, которое включает в себя понятие seken (жизненный мир). Лингвистическая относительность в понимании Гумбольдта, Сэпира скорее проявляется в многообразии точек зрения, особенностей использования языка в речи конкретных языковых общностей. Примером этому могут послужить некоторые эмпирические исследования, начиная с оригинальных исследований Гумбольдтом языка Кави.

Ключевые слова: *лингвистическая относительность, нулевые личные местоимения, низкоконтекстуальная культура, высококонтекстуальная культура, seken, восприятие своего «я» японцем.*

Theoretical background

Linguistic Relativity

Based on Humboldt's argument of internal speech and language that engenders thought (e.g., Humbollt 1999), Sapir and Whorf established the hypothesis of linguistic relativity (Lucy 1997). Although the linguistic relativity hypothesis (Sapir 1921/2004; Whorf 1956) has failed to acquire sufficient support, as Davies (1998) has pointed out, both theoretical (Slobin 1996, 2003; Lucy 1996) and empirical (Davies 1998; Ozgen and Davies 2002; Wassmann and Dasen 1998; Boronditsky 2001; January and Kako 2007) research has been conducted in order to determine the degree to which linguistic relativity may apply. As Pinker (1995/2007) has stated, the notion of language has gained people's attention, and the relationships between language, thought, culture, and reality have been of great interest.

Wardy (2006) stated that cultural differences produce incommensurable conceptual frameworks, because language affects how people perceive their reality and language coerces thought. Lucy (1992) explicated that language is a reflection of culture, citing Boas, the predecessor of Sapir, and argued for the psychic unity of mankind and for a notion of distinct cultures. Boas'position is reflected in the following three robust propositions: (1) languages classify experience, (2) different languages classify experience differently, and (3) linguistic phenomena are unconscious in character, apparently because of their highly automatic production. Boas'essential view is that linguistic classifications reflect, but do not dictate thought. Lucy (1997) also argued that language could be a dependent variable of thought.

On the other hand, Sapir (1921/2004) postulated that language, race, and culture are not necessarily correlated, but there must be some relation between language and cultureand between language and some intangible aspect of race, and that language and our thoughts are inextricably interwoven. Sapir also argued that human beings do not live alone in the objective world, nor do they live alone in the world of social activity as it is ordinarily understood. Rather, they are very much at the mercy of the particular language that has become the medium of expression for their society (Spier, Hallowell, & Newman 1941). In fact, the «real world» is to a large extent

unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. Sapir elaborates on Boas'arguments and claims we anticipate or read experience in terms of language categories which, by virtue of their abstraction and elaboration in the linguistic process, no longer correspond to experience in a direct way. According to Handler (1986), Sapir saw a dialectical interaction of creative personalities and cultural forms, and of expression and tradition, and added that the human mind craves relationships.

Whorf (1956) extended Sapir's ideas, based on the work he carried out with American Indian languages. He suggests that the relationship between language and culture is not simply based on predisposition but is a deterministic one. In his view, the world is viewed differently by speakers of different languages because their languages differ structurally (Wardhaugh 1986). In Whorf's view, therefore, language determines how we perceive and organize the world around us. Whorf argued that language shapes culture and reflects the individual actions of people. Therefore, language shapes a person's view and influences thoughts. People who speak different languages may perceive reality and think differently, because categories and distinctions encoded in one language are not necessarily available in another.

Boas, Sapir, and Whorf agree that language is classificatory, isolating, and organizing elements of experience. Their theory posits that language determines the way people perceive the world and think, something that is called linguistic determinism. In the softer version, their theory has been interpreted as saying that people who speak different languages perceive reality and think differently, because categories and distinctions encoded in one language are not necessarily available in another, which is so-called linguistic relativity. Indeed, this deterministic view of language has been criticized; however, their theory reflects the nature of language and explains the difficulties that translation work entails.

Bloomfield (1923), on the other hand, suggested that we should study people's habits of language−the way that people talk−without bothering about the mental processes that we may conceive of as underlying or accompanying these habits. Bloomfield adds that Sapir's presentation deals with the actualities of language rather than with any hypothetical, mental phenomena.

Empirical studies

Whorf (1956) argued that language manifests basic features that impact on human thought. This is based on research into the Hopi language, for example, into how it treats time. After long, careful study and analysis, the Hopi language is seen to contain no words, grammatical forms, constructions, or expressions that refer directly to what we call «time» , or to the «past» , «present» , or «future» , or to concepts of being «enduring» or «lasting» . Therefore, Whorf argues, it would be difficult for a Hopi and an English-speaking physicist to understand each other's thinking about time (Carroll, as cited in Spier, Hallowell & Newman, 1941).

As another example, a case study of conditionals by Wardy (2006) supports Whorfian linguistic relativity. Wardy (2006) concluded that abstract thought which

springs from hypothetical reasoning does not come easily to Chinese people because of the lack of conditionals in the Chinese language.

A more recent study about conceptions of time by Boronditsky (2001) conducted experiments to examine the differences between Mandarin and English speakers, with results that supported linguistic relativity hypothesis. However, her research was refuted by January and Kako's (2007) study, which replicated Boroditsky's (2001)study. The discrepancy in their studies is due to the fact that Borodisky's participants were native speakers of English and Mandarin while January and Kako's were native speakers of English andbilingual speakers of Mandarin.

In the area of color recognition, Davies (1998) and Ozgen and Davies (2002) conducted a cross-cultural investigation on language and color perception and found that some differences exist in color perception associated with differences in language. Earlier on, Lucy andShweder (1979) had presented Whorf's contribution in their study on color memory. These studies support linguistic relativity with some universalism.

On the other hand, Lowie (1923) showed how the human mind has arrived at the same form of expression in two historically unconnected regions, using the example of some noteworthy parallels between Taklma and Greek regarding similar morphologies. In the same way, Tatara and Yagihashi (2007) argued that human recognition of physicality is universal and is beyond differences in language. Once it has been represented in the form of language, cultural factors then start to intervene. It is, therefore, effective to compare cultural constituents as well as linguistic homology when analyzing humans. By the same token, Pinker (1995/2007) has taken a position opposing the notion that language shapes our worldview; instead, our mind shapes and constructs our language.

Rakugo study

High-Context vs. Low-Context

Hall (1976) dichotomized societies based on the notion of high-context and low-context. As an example, in a high-context society, such as Japan, very little is said to be coded in language messages because most of the information is believed to be already known, whilst in a low-context society, such as the USA, many more things may have to be explicitly expressed than would be the case in Japanese. If presuming how much needs to be uttered is also regarded as a linguistic activity, this concept can be interpreted as a part of a wider framework of linguistic relativity. Based on this, the process of translating works between Japanese and English would require adjustment.

Seken

Abe (2001) established the notion of*seken* as a concept of life-world similar to that postulated by Husserl. Abe (2001) warned that the notion of individuals in Japan is clearly different from that in Western contexts, because individuals in Japan need to be viewed in the framework of *seken*and, indeed, such individuals cannot be liberated from *seken*. His definition of *seken*focuses on the dynamism among the members of a community, starting with family members, and he adds that each individual has a different *seken*. He also explains that *seken*is not produced, but is

simply existent wherever you are. Furthermore, he elaborates that in modern societies we are expected to live where time and space are quantitative, but in reality we should be aware that our worlds are not so precisely quantitative, but are subjective. Therefore, we need to admit the fact that we live in *seken*, which is a given.

Based on Abe (2001), Sato (2001/2007) elaborated the notion of *seken* using some criminal cases in order to indicate how seriously and powerfully *seken*has been regarded even in judicial matters. Furthering Abe's account of *seken*, he labels *seken*as subjectivity in phenomenology. Sato (2001/2007) also explicated the gravity of *seken*for Japanese people based on the fact that even morals and ethics are constructed within the framework of *seken*. He suggests that the Japanese do not have a sense of self without the notion of *seken*because *seken*is embedded within each individual, which is different from the case of westerners. As a result, he warns that the more individualistic Japanese try to become, the more oppressive they become.

Japanese Sense of Self

Lebra (2004) clarified how the Japanese construct their sense of self, using opposition logic and contingency logic. Following opposition logic, in the process of constructing a Western sense of self, subject and object are sharply differentiated based on the principle of the subject-object dichotomy. Citing the Geertz definition of the Western self, she explicates that the Western self is externally bounded in opposition to the other or non-self world, and is internally integrated into a whole with one's own center. In contrast to opposition logic, Libra proposes contingency logic, where the subject and object share the same space. In contingency logic, the way of looking at the subject and object, or the self and other, there is no self without the other, an operation that Lebra (2004) named» binding» . She further discusses the nature of this contingency logic in constructing the sense of self among the Japanese, as is revealed in their language where zero personal pronouns are ubiquitous.

Findings from Rakugo translation

In the original Japanese script, there are 28 cases (51.8 %) of zero first-person pronouns and 26 cases (48.2 %) with explicit first-person pronouns, out of a total of 54 cases. This means that the first-person pronouns are omitted in more than half the cases in the *rakugo* script. There are 32 cases altogether and 18 cases (56.3 %) have zero second-person pronouns while 14 cases (43.7 %) have uttered second-person pronouns. In contrast to the cases of the first-person pronouns, explicit second-person pronouns are not acceptable in natural Japanese. In fact, there are different types of pronouns in Japanese which correspond to the English «you» ; however, the most common pronoun *anata*or *anta*is sometimes regarded as derogative (Lydia Sugawara, personal communication, 2007, August). Instead of pronouns, people's names or social positions or roles are used. Watanabe (2007) pointed out that the deictic center moves to the social world by addressing the second person with his/her social role or status.

Discussion

Regarding the first-person pronoun omission, the first explanation may be made using the notion of high-context and low-context society (Hall 1976). Based on the

notion of the typical high-context society, Japanese people may be economical with the length of the utterance when the information is regarded as obvious. In the case of first-person pronouns, when the individual talks about himself/herself, listeners should know about whom that individual is talking. Therefore, the first-person pronouns are not supposed to be uttered, especially in the culturally-colored *rakugo*discourse. Second, the theory of linguistic relativity may explain this phenomenon. Based on linguistic relativity, language may classify experience, reflect action, and shape a person's worldview. Thus, the linguistic system of Japanese that allows its speakers to omit first-person pronouns may classify their experiences, reflect their actions and shape their worldview (Whorf 1956). It is consequently hypothesized that Japanese people perceive their existence, in Kuwayama's (1992)terms, in a less self-centered and other-reference oriented way. This interpretation seems to be in accordance with Sato's (2001/2007) argument that the Japanese cannot construct the self without the notion of *seken*.

Regarding the second-person pronouns, theomission of second-person pronouns predominates in the interrogative utterances. As with the omission of the first-person pronouns, the notion of high context (Hall1976) may provide an interpretation for this linguistic phenomenon. In the dialogic interaction, interrogatives are obviously directed towards the second person in general. Therefore, in Japanese, where fewer utterances are preferred and a lot of information is presumed to be known, second-person pronouns are unlikely to be uttered. The common pronoun of *anata* and *anta*, which are less formal versions of *atata*, are sometimes regarded as derogative, as has been pointed out by Lydia (personal communication, 2007, August), a Peruvian living for a long time in Japan. In the *rakugo* script used for the present study, in addition, the Nepalese characters show negative reactions when referred to as *anta*. Instead of using the second-person pronouns, Japanese people use the person's name or their social roles or statuses, such as *oneechan*(«big sis»). As posited by Watanabe (2007), using social roles in addressing the second person may change the deictic center of the social world.

Lebra's (2004) notion of having two sides of being in one individual, that is, the «subject I» and «object me» , may explain the positionality of the interlocutors, which validates the theory of linguistic relativity. More specifically, using the person's name or social role reveals the way in which Japanese people situate themselves in dialogic interaction, which means that language influences perception of the world.

Lastly, zero pronouns in both the first and second persons may affect the way of constructing the Japanese sense of self, which is based on contingency logic according to Lebra (2004), in orchestration with the powerful effects of *seken*(Abe 2002; Sato 2001/2007). These findings may support the linguistic relativity hypothesis. It must be noted that there are other languages with zero pronouns; however, they have different linguistic features. For instance, Latin languages such as Spanish have inflections which suggest the pronouns. There have been some studies on zero pronouns (e.g., Chaudhary 2003) that analyze the relationship with

the construction of the sense of self. Chaudhary investigates the case of Hindi and discusses how zero pronouns are related to their concept of self. Here, in this study, zero pronouns in the *rakugo*script may be considered to influence the way in which the Japanese construct their sense of self, requiring the involvement of *seken*, the life-world. In addition to *seken*, Japanese spoken discourse may shed some light on 'uncertainty', which may require 'epistemicity', through zero pronouns, to promote a certain degree of politeness (cf. Ohta 1991). This interpretation may justify linguistic relativity.As Humboldt believes, since there are diverse linguistic forms, language affects how human beings think (Adler 2009).

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ПСИХОЛОГО-ПЕДАГОГІЧНІ ЗАСОБИ КЕРУВАННЯ ПРОЦЕСАМИ ФОРМУВАННЯ НАВИЧОК АУДІЮВАННЯ

Received March, 16, 2014; Revised March, 18, 2014; Accepted March, 28, 2014

Анотація. Статтю присвячено проблемі розвитку навичок аудіювання в навчальному процесі з вивчення іноземної мови. Автори діляться досвідом використання допоміжних психолого-методичних засобів; серед них тести, опитувальники, шкали діагностики та самодіагностики. Надано докладні пояснення щодо конструкції, можливих методичних прийомів та організаційних аспектів «Шкали діагностики та самодіагностики рівня аудіювання іншомовного тексту». Шкала самооцінки сприйняття і розуміння іншомовного тексту забезпечує викладача об'єктивними відомостями про рівень розвитку цієї навички в групи загалом та в кожного студента зокрема і є засобом залучення в процес слухання, допомагає правильно диференціювати й оцінювати навички та вміння членів групи, що, у свою чергу, стимулює розроблення і використання різноманітних методів і прийомів навчання аудіювання, тобто до

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