

INTD0111A/ARBC0111A

The Unity and Diversity of Human Language

Lecture #14
Oct 31st, 2006

Announcements

- Reminder: One-page LAP proposal due on Nov 7th.
- Midterm exam showed very good understanding of most of the issues we covered in class and in Baker's book. And the average score is 184.
- So, thanks for the good work.

Announcements

- I added total scores on the grade sheet so everyone knows where they stand in the course as of this date. Simply divide your total score by 4, and that will be your total percentage. Then use the grade table on the website to know what your letter grade would be if the course ended today.

It was Phrygian, not Hebrew

- The word that the child uttered was "bekos", and it meant "bread" in Phrygian, an extinct language. So, that was the pharaoh's conclusion on what the first human language was.
- Thank God there are no more pharaohs around.

So, do you speak English?

- Yes!
- And so did Shakespeare:
A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.
- Translation?
Not really!

So, do you speak English?

- Yes! And so did Chaucer:
*Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droght of March hath perced to the roote.*
- Translation?
- hmm ... yes, please!
When April with its sweet showers
The drought of March has pierced to the root.

So, do you speak English?

- Yes! And so did the guy who wrote *Beowulf*:
Wolde guman findan þone þe him on sweofote sare geteode.
- Translation?
What language was that again?
- That was English, but an "Old" version of it, and the translation runs as follows:
He wanted to find the man who harmed him while he slept.
- Well, at least there was a "him" in that Old English.

Languages change over time

- So, you get the point: Languages do change over time, leading to another aspect of linguistic diversity: diversity across time.
- There are two main questions with regard to language change:
First, how does a language change?
Second, why does a language change?
- It is probably more reasonable to answer the "how" question before we attempt to answer the "why". So, let's do that.

Language = Lexicon + Grammar

- Remember that a language has two components: a *lexicon* (simply a list of words) and a *grammar* (a system that manipulates the lexicon in several ways).
- The grammar of a language would include rules that affect pronunciation (phonology), word formation (morphology), sentence structure (syntax), and meaning (semantics).
- If so, then language change is expected to occur across the board in all these areas, which is indeed the case. Let's see how.

Lexical change

- The lexicon of a language undergoes change in either one of two ways: "**word gain**" or "**word loss**".
- New words are always added to the lexicon of every language, almost on a daily basis.

Processes of word-formation

- There are systematic word-formation processes that take place across human languages. Depending on the language, some of these processes might be available in particular languages, whereas others may not. But the result is the same: new words are always created and added to the dictionary of the language.

Derivation

- The most productive process of word formation in a language is the use of *derivational* morphemes to form new words from already existing forms, as we discussed a few weeks ago.
- So, for example, from *govern* we derive *government*, from which we can still derive *governmental*, from which we can yet get *non-governmental*.

Word coinage

- Word coinage happens when a name of a product acquires a general meaning and gets used to refer to anything that has the same function of the original product:

kleenex, kodak, nylon, Dacron

Conversion: Have you folks been *menued* yet?

- Conversion is the extension of the use of one word from its original grammatical category to another category as well.
- For example, the word *must* is a verb (e.g. "You must attend classes regularly"), but it can also be used as a noun as in "Class attendance is a must".
- Same applies to "vacation", a noun that can also be used as a verb, and "major", an adjective that can be used as a noun and a verb.

Borrowing

- New words also enter a language through borrowing from other languages. English, for example, borrowed a lot of French words as a result of the Norman invasion which took place in 1066, and that's why the English lexicon has a Latinate flavor to it, even though English did not descend from Latin.
- Here are some examples of foreign words that found their way into English:

leak, yacht (from Dutch)
barbecue, cockroach (from Spanish)
piano, concerto (from Italian)

Loan translations

- Related to borrowings are *loan translations*, where a new word or expression is created via translation of a foreign term, rather than actual borrowing of the term in the language, e.g.,
marriage of convenience (from French *mariage de convenance*)
perros calientes (from English *hot dogs*)

Compounding

- New words are also created through the common process of compounding, i.e. combining two or more words together to form a new complex word. Here are some examples of compounding:

post + card → *postcard*
post + office → *post office*
book + case → *bookcase*
sister + in + law → *sister-in-law*

Acronyms

- Acronyms are words created from the initial letters of several words. Typical examples are NATO, FBI, CIA, UN, UNICEF, FAQ, WYSIWYG, *radar*, *laser*.
- Sometimes acronyms are actually created first to match a word that already exists in the language, e.g., MADD (Mothers against Drunk Drivers).

Back-formation

- Back-formation of words results when a word is formed from another word by taking off what looks like a typical affix in the language.
- For example, one of the very productive derivational morphemes in English is *-er*, which may be added to a verb to create a noun meaning "a person who performs the action of the verb", e.g. *teacher*, *writer*.

Back-formation

- Sometimes, however, the reverse happens: A noun ending with an *-er* enters the language first and then a verb is "back-formed" from it by taking off the *-er*. This is the case with the verb *edit*, which entered English as a back-formation from *editor*. Same applies to the pair *television-televis*.

Clipping

- Another process of word-formation is clipping, which is the shortening of a longer word. Clipping in English gave rise to words such as *fax* from *facsimile*, *gym* from *gymnasium*, and *lab* from *laboratory*.

Blending

- Blending is another way of combining two words to form a new word. The difference between blending and compounding, however, is that in blending only parts of the words, not the whole words, are combined. Here's a couple of examples:
smoke + fog → *smog*
motor + hotel → *motel*

Eponyms

- Eponyms are words derived from proper names, e.g., "sandwich" from the Earl of Sandwich; "lynch" after William Lynch.

Word loss

- So, Shakespeare used *beseem* (= to be suitable), *wot* (= to know), *fain* (= gladly).
- And technology might drive some words out of use, e.g., *buckboard*, *buggy*, *dogcart*, *hansom*, etc.
- "Two bits"?
- "Ice box"?

Word loss

- Euphemisms can also eventually lead to loss of words:
lavatory, bathroom, restroom, lady's room/men's room, etc.
- Hugh Rawson's *Dictionary of euphemisms and other doubletalk* includes:
act of God *for* disaster
administrative assistant *for* secretary
associate *for* co-worker of lower rank

Semantic change

- Language change may also take the form of changing the meanings of actually existing words. There are three such cases: *broadening, narrowing, and semantic shift.*

Semantic broadening

- The Middle English *dogge* meant a specific breed of dog, but then it was broadened to refer to every member of the canine family.
- Same thing with "holiday" and "cell".

Semantic narrowing

- In 17th century English, "meat" meant "food". Not any more.
- "Hound" meant dog. More specific now.

Semantic shift

- "Knight" used to mean "youth", then shifted to mean "mounted man-at-arms".
- "Lewd" meant "ignorant".
- "Silly" meant "happy", and "nice" meant "ignorant".

Morphological change

- But languages also change morphologically over time. And morphological rules may be lost, added, or changed.

Loss of morphology

- Latin had case markings on nouns. Romance languages do not have any of these.
- Here's how the word for "wolf" inflected in Latin:

lupus	(nominative)
lupī	(genitive)
lupō	(dative)
lupum	(accusative)
lupe	(vocative)
lupō	(ablative)

Loss of morphology: OE

- Old English actually did have case markings, as in the following example for the word meaning "stone" in OE:

Case	OE sing.	OE pl.
Nominative	stān	stānas
Genitive	stānes	stāna
Dative	stāne	stānum
Accusative	stān	stānas

Loss of morphology: OE

- Of all cases, only genitive case remains.
- The loss of the case system was compensated by the use of prepositions, particularly "to" for the dative, and "of" for the genitive. It also led to restrictions on word order, as we'll discuss later.

Loss of a derivational morpheme

- A derivational rule may be lost with or without remnants. If there are many remnants, we say that the rule has become unproductive. This is what happened to the suffix *-t*, which was once used to derive nouns from verbs in English:

draw → *draft*
drive → *drift*
shove → *shift*

Loss of a derivational morpheme

- Old English had a suffix *-u* to make nouns from adjectives:

menig "many" → *menigu* "multitude"
eald "old" → *aeldu* "old age"

- This was completely lost; there are no remnant words.

Adding rules: Borrowing of derivational affixes

- Latin *-bilis* was borrowed into English via French words (e.g., *change* → *changeable*). But it was afterwards applied also to native words, such as *wash* → *washable*.

Grammaticalization

- Grammaticalization is a process whereby a lexical item acquires a grammatical function in the language.
- English *-ly* developed from the word *līc* meaning "body", which then changed its meaning to "having the characteristics of."

Grammaticalization

- Another example concerns the emergence of the inflectional suffix *-(r)ekin* 'with' in Basque which developed from the noun *kide* 'company':
 - a. gure kide-a-n
our company-det-locative
"in our company"
 - b. gure kidean → gurekin (= "with us")

Grammaticalization

- Basque also shows another case of grammaticalization where verbal inflections have arisen from free-standing pronouns:

joan	'to go'	
noa	'I go'	(cf. <i>ni</i> 'I')
hoa	'you go'	(cf. <i>hi</i> 'you')
doa	'he goes'	(no pronoun)
goaz	'we go'	(cf. <i>gu</i> 'we')
zoaz	'you-plur go'	(cf. <i>zu</i> 'you-pl.')
doaz	'they go'	(no pronoun)

Grammaticalization

- A further example comes from Mongolian languages. In Classical Mongolian 'mine' was expressed as in English, by a free possessive pronoun:
morin minū "my horse"
- In the modern language Kalmyk Mongolian, we find:
möre-m "my horse"
- The free form *minū* has been reduced to a suffix *-m*.

New affixes from compounding

- A common source for new affixes lies in compounding. A N+N compound with a certain N in a certain position may become the model for a new suffixation rule due to the fact that the second N is reanalyzed as a suffix. A new affix may thus arise from compounding, as illustrated by the case of Dutch *boer*:

New affixes from compounding

- In Dutch the free form *boer* means "farmer". We find this form as the second part of many complex words where it merely means "supplier/seller of":
groenteboer "one who sells vegetables"
visboer "one who sells fish"
kolenboer "one who sells coals"
patatboer "one who sells French fries"

New affixes from "false" analysis

- New affixes may also arise from a *false* analysis of words that have a morphological structure:

alcoholic leads to *workaholic*,
chocaholic, *shopaholic*

hamburger leads to *cheeseburger*,
fishburger, *chickenburger*

New affixes out of "nowhere"

- In some cases, there's no morphological structure at all, or at least not one that falls within the realm of English morphology:

watergate leads to *Irangate*, *conragate*

Extending affixes to new categories

- Sometimes, morphological change takes place when an affix is used with categories that it normally does not apply to, thereby deriving new words:

-*able* in *objectionable*

-*ese* in *motherese* and *journalese*

- This is an example of change of "input" to the morphological rule.

Extending affixes to new categories

- Morphological rules can also change with respect to their output. An example concerns the diminutive suffix in Afrikaans, a language that stems from Dutch.
- Dutch has a diminutive suffix that can be added to nouns, attributing the meaning 'little':
huis "house" → huisje "little house"
- An extension of the input requirement occurred already in Dutch when it became possible to add the suffix to adjectives (making nouns):
groen "green" → groentje "greenhorn" or "a specific green candy"

Extending affixes to new categories

- In Afrikaans, the suffix can be added to nouns, adjectives and verbs without changing the lexical class of these words. This is a change in output. The rule that used to produce only nouns (from nouns and then also from adjectives) in Dutch, produces nouns from nouns, verbs from verbs and adjectives from adjectives in Afrikaans.

Acknowledgement

- Much of the content on morphological change for this lecture is based on materials and data from Harry van der Hulst's online notes on language change at the University of Connecticut.

Next class agenda

- Syntactic change
- Phonological change
- Reconstruction
- Why do languages change?