

## Language – consumption and change

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### 【要旨】

### 言語の消費とその変化

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「消費」という言葉は、物が費やされ消えるという意味であり、最近の大量消費主義などでは過度で搾取的な使用というマイナスイメージを連想させる。本稿の目的は、語彙拡張を実例として挙げながら、「言語の消費」つまり言語使用が消費の一般的なイメージと異なり、根本的な増強効果を有するという点を明らかにすることである。

Vilem Matshesiusによると言葉が果たす役割は基本的に二つある。すなわち、ネーミングの役割とコミュニケーションの役割である。本稿では言語使用者が言語使用によってそれぞれの役割を果たす際、語彙をより豊かにすることを説明する。例えば、ネーミングの役割によって、新しい概念を表す新語、派生語、複合語、省略語などの新しい単語が形成される。換喩・隠喩によって既存の単語の意味が拡張される。さらにネーミングの役割とコミュニケーションの役割との両方に直接関係する意味変更プロセスとして、語義墮落と意味の向上が挙げられる。またコミュニケーションの役割を果たす際にも意味拡張が認められる。その具体例としては主観化が挙げられる。コミュニケーションの具体的な場面における誘引的推論から、単語の新しい意味が生まれる現象である。このように、言語使用は語彙の拡張または意味拡張の元であることから、非常に創造的な消費と言えるのである。

The topic of the present collection is consumption. I would like to address this topic in connection with language. That is also why we shall start with the word consumption itself. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines consumption as “the utilization of goods in the satisfaction of wants or in the process of production resulting chiefly in their destruction, deterioration, or transformation.” The image painted by the dictionary editors is one of having commodity A, using it for one’s pleasure in a way which leaves the user either with nothing at all or with commodity B, with the user gaining the main benefit. I would like to suggest a different picture.

I would like to argue for a definition where a) commodity A as well as the user benefit and b) instead of destruction and deterioration we encounter enrichment with only an occasional loss.

There are many theories of functions that language is used to fulfill, Jacobson’s six functions (expressive, conative, referential, poetic, phatic, and metalinguistic) or Halliday’s three (ideational, interpersonal, and textual), but here

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we shall use as the basis of discussion Vilem Mathesius' (1932) two functions: the naming and the communicative functions.

I would like to point out the ways in which consumption of language enriches both speakers and the language itself. Namely, I would like to show how use of language promotes language change - lexical change in particular. We will go briefly over the different types of language change, their mechanisms and motivations to prove the point.

## 1) Naming function of language

Language is obviously the tool we use to understand the world around and inside us. However, it is not only a static ready to use tool. We are constantly extending the repertoire of language, sharpening it or adjusting it so that language does the job we expect it to do.

The simplest example is enriching the system. It is a common place procedure, our reality keeps changing, becoming more complex so words have to follow the changing reality. In this respect we have been experiencing a boom in different semantic areas. We have new vocabulary pertaining to modern technologies, eco or bio culture. We have new sports, new entertainments, and new sciences. There are several ways to deal with the conceptual newcomers. We can devise a new lexeme, look elsewhere for inspiration or use what we already have in the system.

The first strategy is coining a new lexeme (ださい、マジ、事故る). This is often connected with a particular language variety (the language of youth and professional jargon, among others). The second strategy, which has been extremely prolific in Japanese language history, is borrowing (タブレット、エコカー、グルメ、フリスビー). But even with borrowing, many a time creative spin is called into play. A foreign lexeme is borrowed and adjusted to fit the Japanese reality (カステラ、スマート、コンサート). We have translation calques (常識、変動費、鉄道) in which it is understood that the conceptual content is borrowed but expressed using Japanese vocabulary. Japanese has quite a few grammatical calques as well.

The third possibility is a new combination of existing morphemes. Language as a system is ready for this eventuality and offers different systemic possibilities for how to technically accomplish this task. We have compounding (引き取り、竹林、国々), derivation (言語学、丁寧さ、お寿司) and abbreviation (就活、短大、とりせつ).

The fourth option is coining a new meaning for an existing lexeme, that is, using an existing lexeme for a new meaning or concept differing from the original – in other words, semantic extension. In this respect, primarily metaphor (近い：町、未来、親戚) and metonymy with all its subtypes (取っ手、手間、手渡し) function as creative but also heuristic mechanisms. Further proof of an intrinsically creative attitude to language is another this time non-intentional mechanism of lexical change - folk etymology (気球). We also come across relabeling of "old" concepts motivated by pragmatic notions. The original label is for some reason - usually stylistic, socio-linguistic or language economy - not good enough anymore. The most prominent mechanisms we witness in this area are melioration (かわいいい、いとおいしい) and pejoration (おまえ、きみ、旦那).

We can see that the process of naming is much more creative than the standard notion of consumption suggests. The vocabulary is not simply a stock of labels we keep in our brain and use when it is appropriate. Words are sometimes rather desperate but always creative attempts to capture the fleeting thoughts and images we live in. This

is not only the case with new coinages or stunning metaphors but also with the everyday use of language, because even when the used labels are “ready made” the collage resulting from their combination is unique. To quote Czech poet Josef Kainar, “Cizíma ústy ještě nikdo nikdy nezpíval.” “No one has ever sung through the mouth of another.” (Kainar 2008: 62)

## 2) Communicative function

Naming might be a basic aspect of language but if asked what language is for, most people are bound to reply communication in the first place. I would like to show how language use in communication results again in language change, in changing and enriching the system. To do this, I will briefly outline subjectification and intersubjectification theory as developed within the framework of historical pragmatics by Elizabeth C. Traugott (2007), which describes not only results but also mechanisms of communication use driven language change. First we have to imagine the communicative situation. We have the dyad of speaker/writer and listener/reader who share the standard code and strategies for its creative use. They are both aware of the fact that language is sometimes used to mean only just what it says and nothing more, but sometimes, and especially in Japanese maybe more often than not, it is meant to mean more. The basic principle is the Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change. The lexeme, with its meaning, morpho-syntactic properties, phonological form, has its coded “standard meaning,” which is innovatively used by speakers/writers. It is used to mean the standard thing. Plus the lexeme also suggests some plus alpha, some added value. The recipient is supposed to discern this plus alpha. This sort of use provoking an inference on the part of the recipient might be just a onetime occasion, a so called utterance token meaning. We frequently encounter this phenomenon in creative writing. However when understanding such inference as connected to the coded meaning spreads throughout the community, the result is an utterance type meaning. Just a small step is needed to establish a novel coded meaning and make the lexeme polysemous. Traugott (2007) also argues that this kind of semantic change is unidirectional in that originally objective meanings acquire subjective readings (reflecting the speaker’s personal views and judgments, etc.) and then possibly inter subjective readings (reflecting the speaker’s attitude toward the recipient). One of the examples that Traugott and Dasher (2002) give is the verb 「さぶらう」. It is attested in sources from 700 – 900 AD with a nonhonorific meaning “wait on/for,” in sources 900 – 1100 AD with referent honorific meaning “humiliative ‘be in vicinity of respected entity,’” in sources 1000 – 1300 AD with a referent honorific meaning “humiliative be - existential or locative” and with referent honorific meaning “transitional humiliative ‘be’” and finally also from 1100 AD on with an addressee honorific meaning polite “be.” The last mentioned use has also been the predecessor of the so called *sōrō bun*. The changes tracked by Traugott and Dasher over centuries are clearly demonstrated and well-documented but might appear not very topical, amounting to little more than distant history. However, the same pattern of semantic change can be traced almost synchronically. Onodera (2010) does precisely this with the connective 「だから」. An original conjunction carrying the meaning of objective causal relationship has gradually extended its meaning to more subjective relationships, the most subjective one being an authoritative conclusion, a conclusion not based on a reason, a cause or some kind of evidence explained in the previous clause but on the sole subjective authority of the speaker. The same kind of phenomena seems to be quite widespread and we can expect further studies devoted to subjectification in Japanese.

Again we have a very different kind of use than “the utilization of goods in the satisfaction of wants or in the process of production resulting chiefly in their destruction, deterioration, or transformation.”

In conclusion, I would like to go back to the claim that with language use a) a used commodity as well as the user benefit, and b) instead of destruction and deterioration we encounter enrichment with only an occasional loss. We have limited the discussion to lexis and have gone through the basic well known processes that are inherent in our everyday language use - language consumption. We have seen how they underlie language change. The tool in this case is not just used. It is perfected and enriched in the process. At the same time using the tool called language is not commonplace. It is a creative process potentially full of discovery. The words are obviously not destroyed when used, just the opposite. Language use driven change with a possible exception of borrowings and new coinages gives lexemes new meanings, new dimensions and even though the new labels tend to override the original ones in their relative use, the old meaning are only rarely completely lost. Even if the original coded meanings fall out of use, they still tend to remain as a shading or nuance of the new meaning. In this respect language consumption is of the type where the more that is consumed the better for both the consumer and for the consumed entity.

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