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Phonological Deletion In Text Messages: A Cognitive View

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to represent the evidence of various correspondences between phonology and cognitive linguistics and to show the advantages of cognitive grammar than generative grammar. The article evaluates the hypothesis holding that connectionist theories (e.g. cognitive grammar) don't have any directionality in their formulations due to their cross-dimensional correspondences and this can be their exclusive feature. This research can be considered as a theoretical and descriptive study. The samples were chosen from among English abbreviations, specifically short messages. In prominence view, arranging data is determinant in ordering things and events in the mind. This point of view is based on "figure and ground" that can be used in phonology as well. The rich- get richer and the poor- get poorer' is catchphrases frequently used in economy and I use them in my paper. We can use the proverbs as principles in phonological deletion. The results also refer to the principle, according to which vowels are expected to undergo reduction in unstressed positions. Corroborating the "bathtub effect" (a principle in psychology) in consonants deletions was another emerged result. After assessing the samples, the hypothesis was approved and it was shown that having a cognitive approach to various linguistic modules causes some exclusive and attractive features which the generative grammar theories don't have them. Also, it was revealed that a cognitive principle affects the pattern of deletions in text messages.

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1. Introduction

Cognitive linguistics is an approach to the study of language that tries to explain facts about language in terms of known properties and mechanisms of the human mind. The important point behind this area of linguistics is that the

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human language ability is not separate from the rest of cognition and that use of language in understanding similar cognitive abilities to those used in other non-linguistic tasks.

As it has generally been conceived of since its inception, cognitive linguistics argues that language is embodied and situated in the sense that it is embedded in that experiences and environments of its users. Since cognitive linguistics was born in the mid-eighties by Lakoff (1987) and Langacker (1987), most studies in this school of linguistics have focused on semantics and grammar; albeit the work of Lakoff and Langacker contains references to phonology. However, phonological work in cognitive linguistics with exceptions such as the work of Nathan (1986,1994,1996,1999), Taylor (1989,1990,2002) or Bybee (2001) has been sparse in comparison with the attention paid to other area of study like semantics or grammar.

Cognitive phonology is the study of the sound made in verbal language. It is an attempt to classify various correspondences between morpheme and phonetic sequences and is a part of cognitive grammar. This approach is explicitly designed to model phonology as a cognitive activity and so to demonstrate the kind of psycholinguistic approach. Cognitive phonology claim that experiences affects representation, in that high frequency forms and phrases have stronger representation in memory and so they are resistant to analogic change. Low frequency forms are more difficult to access and may be subject to change or less. Schemas that apply to more items are also stronger and more productive. Cognitive phonology has many attractive features; one of them is that other aspects of grammar are directly accessible due to its subordinate relationship with phonology and various aspects of syntax, semantics and pragmatics feasible.

2.Cognitive Phonology VS. Generative Models

The need for derivations and rule ordering in phonology is an artifact of the classical theory of generative grammar, which has assumed that grammars are symbol manipulation devices. Such devices have to start somewhere and then proceed in a step-by-step fashion. They cannot “look ahead.” Cognitive grammars, by contrast, are not of this form. They contain constructions, not generative rules. Constructions state constraints on cross-dimensional correspondences. Such constraints are simultaneously satisfied in any sentence.

Cognitive approach claims that mental representations of linguistic objects have the same properties as mental representations of other objects. The result of this claim is that mental representation of linguistic objects do not have predictable properties abstracted away, but are based on categorization of actual token. Such a claim is completely opposed to the accepted wisdom of generative models, where predictable properties of units are posited and are abstracted away via the process of derivation. As mentioned before under specification approaches are claimed to have psycholinguistic validity through the minimization of storage space: cognitive phonology opposes this view (Ball 2003). Derivation and under specification are viewed as simply attempts to achieve descriptive elegance; cognitive phonology does not object to redundant storage: indeed, it claims that this is in fact what happens. Generalizations over forms are not separate from the stored representations of forms, according to the cognitive approach, but emerge directly from them. Generalizations are expressed as relations among forms based on phonetic/semantic similarities. So multi morphemic words are stored whole in lexicon (non- derivationally).

Cognitive phonology also states that categorization is based on identity or similarity. Categorization organizes the storage of phonological percepts. Cognitive processes are the behavior of nonlinear dynamical systems and can best be studied using dynamical modeling and dynamical systems theory. Other units such as morpheme, syllable, phoneme/segment are not basic units of the theory, but are emergent: they arise from the relations of identity and similarity that organize stored units. In other words, as links between similar items in storage become stronger, these items - which may be phoneme-sized, morpheme-sized, etc.- become stronger and emerge as units of storage. Storage in cognitive phonology is highly redundant (as opposed to the attempts at descriptive elegance of other approaches), so schemas may describe the same pattern at different degrees of generality.

3.The Research Method

This research can be considered as a theoretical study regarding its aim, and as a descriptive (non-experimental) and casual-comparative study regarding data collection. The samples of the study were randomly chosen from among English short messages which are written by native speakers. The original corpus included 60 text messages

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