

Linguistic Perspectives and Cultural Status of King Gojong in Russian Diplomatic Mission¹

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Abstract

Linguistic and cultural diversity is inherent in many societies around the world and, despite its importance, this diversity is typically neglected in many educational settings. In the field of language education, the historical prevalence of the monolingual theoretical framework has corroborated with the notion that learners should attain language proficiency based on the native speaker model, which has been mistakenly used as reference for language development. The signing of the peace treaty between Japan and China in 1895 led to the fact that Japan took control of the Korean state and carried out socio-economic reform in this country in its own Japan interests. Russia left unanswered the requests from King of Korea Gojong to the Russian government to send military instructors and advisers. In Korea, Queen Ming, who was brutally murdered by the Japanese in 1895, was a symbol of opposition to the policy pursued by the Japanese state. After these tragic events, King Gojong, together with the heir to the throne, decided to move to the Russian diplomatic mission and continued to remain there until October 1987. Attempts by King Gojong and Queen Ming to maintain the independence of the Korean state, as well as the move of the king along with the heir to the Russian diplomatic mission are assessed differently in South Korean and North Korean historiography now. Overall, due to the multidisciplinary nature of the analytical tools and theoretical frameworks that Cultural Linguistics draws upon, it has significant potential to continue to shed substantial light on the nature of the relationship between language, culture, and conceptualisation.

Keywords: Linguistic; Culture; Perspective; King Gojong.

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1. Introduction

As a sub-discipline of linguistics with a multidisciplinary origin, Cultural Linguistics explores the interface between language, culture, and conceptualisation (Palmer 1996; Sharifian 2011, 2017). Cultural Linguistics explores, in explicit terms, conceptualisations that have a cultural basis and are encoded in and communicated through features of human languages. The pivotal focus on meaning as conceptualisation in Cultural Linguistics owes its centrality to cognitive linguistics, a discipline that Cultural Linguistics drew on at its inception.

The term Cultural Linguistics was perhaps first used by one of the founders of the field of cognitive linguistics, Ronald Langacker, in a statement he made emphasising the relationship between cultural knowledge and grammar. He maintained that “the advent of cognitive linguistics can be heralded as a return to cultural linguistics. Cognitive linguistic theories recognise cultural knowledge as the foundation not just of lexicon, but central facets of grammar as well” (Langacker 1994, p.31). Langacker further maintains that “while meaning is identified as conceptualisation, cognition at all levels is both embodied and culturally embedded” (2014, p.33). In practice, however, the role of culture in shaping the conceptual level of language and the influence of culture as a system of conceptualisation on all levels of language was not adequately and explicitly dealt with until the publication of *Toward a Theory of Cultural Linguistics* (1996) by Gary B. Palmer, a linguistic anthropologist from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. In this book, Palmer argued that cognitive linguistics can be directly applied to the study of language and culture.

Central to Palmer’s proposal was/is the idea that “language is the play of verbal symbols that are based in imagery” (1996, p.3), and that this imagery is culturally constructed. Palmer argued that culturally defined imagery governs narrative, figurative language, semantics, grammar, discourse, and even phonology. Palmer’s notion of imagery is not limited to visual imagery. As he puts it, “[i]magery is what we see in our mind’s eye, but it is also the taste of mango, the feel of walking in a tropical downpour, the music of Mississippi Masala” (1996, p.3). He adds, “phonemes are heard as verbal images arranged in complex categories; words acquire meanings that are relative to image-schemas, scenes, and scenarios; clauses are image-based constructions; discourse emerges as a process governed by reflexive imagery of itself; and world view subsumes it all” (p. 4).

Technically speaking, a language is made up of several parts of speech. These include grammatical words such as prepositions, articles, tenses, moods, plurals, etc; and lexical words entailing nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives. The latter category is also termed by pragmatists as constituting conceptual terms, i.e. they designate or denote objects in the world. Upon hearing a lexical item, one can associate it with a concept. Conversely, the former category of words does not create concepts, but rather indicate how we should relate the concepts between them. In

other words, they give us instructions on how to manipulate concepts. Language change primarily concerns conceptual terms (Namaziandost, Sabzevari, & Hashemifardnia, 2018).

Language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. As a means of communicating values, beliefs and customs, it has an important social function and fosters feelings of group identity and solidarity. It is the means by which culture and its traditions and shared values may be conveyed and preserved. Diversity is necessary for evolution and the strongest ecosystems are those which are more diverse. The death of a language is a significant loss because they imply a loss of inherited knowledge. Cultures are transmitted through languages and languages also reflect the history of the people who have used them.

The history of Russian-Korean relations has long roots. Since then in the early 60s of XIX century, Russia and Korea found a common border along the lower reaches of the Tumangan River, the Russian government implemented a policy aimed at maintaining friendly and good neighbourly relations with Korea. This was in the interests of the national security of Russia and, at the same time, contributed to ensuring peace and stability in the region. For a number of objective reasons (the military, financial and economic weakness of Russia in the Far East, huge expenses for the economic development of Far Eastern possessions, distraction for other foreign policy goals, etc.), the struggle to maintain the status quo on the Korean Peninsula, the desire to prevent the capture of Korea by the powers hostile to Russia were the leitmotif of Russian policy toward Korea. At the same time, the northern Korean regions which could be used by other countries for purposes hostile to Russia were the subject of special concern for Russian politics right up to the annexation of Korea by Japan.

However, Korea soon had to sign similar treaties with the Western powers. This was partly due to the ever-increasing influence of Japan. The rulers of Qing China feared that because of this, China might lose its traditional sovereignty over Korea. To contain Japan, as well as the so-called "threat from the north", i.e. alleged "aggression" on the part of Russia, the Chinese government invited Korea to conclude agreements with the Western powers as soon as possible. At the same time, the Western powers, which maintained active trade relations with neighbouring Japan and China, were interested in the "discovery" of Korea. As for the policy of Russia in relation to the Korean state, it remained the same after the signing of the Japanese-Korean treaty. In other words, the Russian state continued to follow a "wait and see policy." This position can be explained by the fact that Russia then paid more attention to the events in the Balkans, the impending Russian-Turkish war. The Russian government was also not sufficiently aware of the true intentions of Japan's invasion of Korea. Russia decided to conclude an agreement with the Korean state when the countries of the West will try to open access to themselves in the "Land of Morning Freshness."

Intriguingly, coherent between-culture differences may not be accompanied by a corresponding patterning of within-culture differences at the individual level (Na et al. 2010). That is, relationships that distinguish between cultures at the group level (e.g., individualistic orientations are linked to low-context reasoning and collectivistic orientations to high-context reasoning) need not and do not similarly distinguish related differences among individuals within those cultures (i.e., among Westerners, more individualistic people are not also lower-context thinkers). This observation offers a perspective different from studies that link individuals' cognitive measures (e.g., contextual information produced in drawings) and their cultural styles (e.g., cultural tests of context sensitivity) on the expectation that culture-level differences found between groups will also predict individual differences within groups (Istomin, Panakov, & Heady, 2014; Abedi, Namaziandost, & Akbari, 2019). Further research is needed to clarify the (sometimes counterintuitive) interrelations of cultural and cognitive orientations at these different levels of analysis. So far, the general lesson from this growing body of research is that culture and concepts involve multiple, correlated dimensions that vary with different forms of subsets of larger groups (e.g., religion, residency, class), all of which can be expected to interact in complex ways.

2. Methods

When writing this work, the following methods were used:

- 1) Analysis of research literature on the topic;
- 2) The method of specific situations (case method) in the analysis of examples;
- 3) Instrumental observation;

In addition, when writing the work, such general scientific methods as analysis and synthesis were used to determine the goals, resources and tools of the concept under consideration, as well as a structural approach.

3. Results and Discussion

Language and culture are intertwined like the two-sides of the same sheet of paper. They breathe, blossom, shrivel up and die due to many reasons. Both of them are sensitive and adapt to prevailing circumstances. Language gives full expression to people's values and norms, and since values and norms are dynamic by nature, language has to be in tandem with cultural transformations. Technological, political, economic and social innovations require language to enrich its lexicon to capture the new realities. Indeed, our minds create mental representations of values thanks to language. The collapse of a value system may sound the death knell to the language in question. The death of a culture will almost certainly be followed by the demise of the language associated with that culture.

A large body of research takes advantage of language differences by trying to trace their cognitive consequences (or antecedents) (see edited collection in Malt & Wolff, 2010; Neisi, Hajjalili, & Namaziandost, 2019). In the following section, we highlight cross-linguistic research that analyses how words can speak to the nature of concepts. Introducing language in terms of cognitive consequences or antecedents implicitly construes the relationship between the two as ordered, from cause to effect. These causal influences have been hotly debated since Whorf (2012) introduced the idea of linguistic relativity, which holds that the language we speak determines the concepts we think. Today the debate is often reframed as a system of mutual influence in which concepts and language reciprocally interact (Fausey, Long, Inamori, & Boroditsky, 2010).

The signing of the Shimonoseki Peace Treaty in 1895 between Japan and China according to which China renounced its traditional patronage of the Korean state, actually led Japan to take control of Korea and carry out social and economic reforms in it in its own interests. Russia continued to be neutral, meanwhile, and the Russian government did not answer requests from King Gojong to send military instructors and advisers. What is happening in the Korean state could not remain without a response from its residents. In Russia, the biography of the queen has not yet attracted the attention of historians. This is largely due to the extreme scarcity of biographical information. Dynastic chronicles and palace records (the main source of information about wang's wives) usually wrote sparingly about them, most often in connection with marriage, childbirth, or death. There are other reasons - political. They are associated with the strongest Japanese influence on historical science and public consciousness in Korea throughout the entire twentieth century. As we know, Queen Ming was killed in her own bedroom in the Gyeongbokgung Palace on the morning of October 8, 1895, as a result of a conspiracy organized by the Japanese envoy to Korea, Miura Goro. Therefore, of course, one did not have to expect an objective assessment of her personality and role in the history of Korea from Japanese historiographers. After death, the queen felt a victim to yet another conspiracy, a conspiracy of silence. Little was written about her in her native country and practically nothing abroad. Changing the evaluations and the appearance of the first books about her led Queen Ming to become a new banner of Korean nationalism, a means of propaganda, and her true appearance and role in Korean history became even more mysterious and hazy. This essay aims to acquaint readers with some information about the early stage of Queen Ming's biography, the period of her coming to power, and to draw the attention of researchers to this outstanding and multi-aspect person. The author relies to a large extent on the book of Tsunoda Fusako, which, although it is not a strictly scientific study, is undoubtedly interesting as the fruit of a careful and conscientious study of the very scarce facts and their artistic comprehension.

Many scholars have found the notion of culture to be too abstract to be useful in explicating the relationships that link beliefs and behaviour to language use. Although linguists have had rigorous analytical tools at their disposal, what has not been available to them is an analytical framework for breaking down cultures and examining their components, so that features of human languages could be explored in terms of the relationship between language and culture. Cultural Linguistics, and in particular the theoretical framework of cultural cognition and cultural conceptualisations, is an attempt to provide such an analytical framework (Etemadfar, Namaziandost, & Banari, 2019).

First of all, this framework avoids the abstractness of the notion of culture and instead focuses on exploring culturally constructed conceptualisations. As this chapter has shown, the framework draws on several disciplines, such as cognitive science and cognitive linguistics, for its analytical tools, such as cultural schemas, cultural categories, and cultural metaphors. These analytical tools allow cultural conceptualisations to be examined systematically and rigorously. Furthermore, they enable the analysis of features of human languages in relation to the cultural conceptualisations in which they are entrenched.

As for the essentialist and reductionist tendencies associated with the notion of culture, the theoretical model of cultural cognition and cultural conceptualisations avoids these by, first of all, examining cultural conceptualisations rather than examining speakers and then ascribing cultures to people, or people to cultures. It also views cultural conceptualisations as heterogeneously distributed across the members of a group, rather than equally shared by the speakers. Both language and culture demonstrate a similar pattern of distribution across speech communities, and neither of them is homogeneously held by speakers.

From the perspective of Cultural Linguistics, political discourse is not free from cultural influence and is in fact heavily entrenched in cultural conceptualisations (Sharifian 2007, 2009a). For example, when people attempt to translate from one language into another, such as for the purpose of international negotiation (see also Baker 2006; Hatim & Mason, 1990), they are very likely to need to convey cultural conceptualisation found in one language by means of cultural conceptualisations found in another. In other words, the process of translation or cross-cultural rendering of cultural conceptualisations can be difficult since languages encode the culturally differentiated and hence historically entrenched ways in which speakers have conceptualised their world in the past and continue to do so in the present. As a result, finding sets of words that successfully capture equivalent cultural conceptualisations in another language can become complicated, depending on the degree to which the two cultures have been in contact and, as a result, have similar although perhaps not identical cultural conceptualisations (see Avruch & Wang 2005).

4. Summary

The Japanese assassination of Queen Ming prompted King Gojong with the heir to the throne to flee or move to a Russian diplomatic mission in order to ensure their security. The Korean king stayed in the Russian diplomatic mission until 1897. King Gojong's choice fell on Russia because it bordered on the Korean state and could quickly provide assistance if necessary. It was also not profitable for Russia to strengthen Japan on its border.

5. Conclusions

With respect to communication, again two views emerge. One, promoted arduously by philosophers like John Locke and Bertrand Russell, espouse that language is essentially for communicating thoughts. The other view claims that language is part and parcel of thought, i.e. language plays a cognitive function, and is not a mere vehicle of thought. Interestingly, studies on animals demonstrate that animals can think too, and yet they have no language like ours.

Similarly, studies in aphasia, especially among patients afflicted with William's Syndrome, show that language can be grossly impaired leaving cognition intact. Consequently, the two extreme views need reconciliation. A moderate view expressed by Vygotsky and later Piaget posits that language is not a *sine qua non* to cognition, but it plays a vital role in developing the human mind. This is the position adopted in this discussion.

Culture is a product of the human mind and it is defined, propagated and sustained through language. The relation between language and culture is indisputably symbiotic.

Cultural cognition embraces the cultural knowledge that emerges from the interactions between members of a cultural group across time and space. Apart from the ordinary sense of emergence here, cultural cognition is emergent in the technical sense of the term (for example, Goldstein 1999). In other words, cultural cognition is the cognition that results from the interactions between parts of the system (the members of a group) which is more than the sum of its parts (more than the sum of the cognitive systems of the individual members). Like all emergent systems, cultural cognition is dynamic in that it is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated within and across the generations of the relevant cultural group, as well as in response to the contact that members of that group have with other languages and cultures.

By the end of the XIX century, the Korean state was so weak that it could not defend itself. In addition to the small royal guard, Korea did not have an army; accordingly, in order to protect himself and the heir, King Gojong had to seek and ask for protection from Russia. All this led to the strengthening of the influence of the Russian Empire and the weakening of the positions of Japan and China. The move of King Gojong to the Russian diplomatic mission, as well as the efforts of Queen Ming and King Gojong to maintain independence, are interpreted by the historians of

South and North Korea on the pages of their works both positively and negatively. Thus, in Korean historiography, there is no single assessment of these events. The Korean question has become an important part of Russia's foreign policy in the Far East since signing Kanghwa agreement in 1876. Korea, which until then remained the only state in East Asia to pursue a course toward isolation in its foreign policy, turned out to be the object of a fierce struggle between the powers for it. There was a threat of its transformation into a military strategic bridgehead of aggressive states for an attack on the Far Eastern outskirts of Russia. Since that time, the leitmotif of Russia's policy in Korea has been the desire to have a friendly neighbour in it and to prevent the establishment of hostile forces there, to preserve the independence and self-support of the Korean state. Russian diplomacy tried to prevent the imposition of enslaving treaties by Korea by the Western powers. For the same purpose, Russian diplomats sought China's commitment to respect the inviolability and territorial integrity of Korea.

To sum up, language is a central aspect of cultural cognition as it serves, to use the term used by Thiong'o (1986), as a "collective memory bank" of the cultural cognition of a group. Many aspects of language are shaped by the cultural cognition that prevailed at earlier stages in the history of a speech community. Historical cultural practices leave traces in current linguistic practice, some of which are in fossilised forms that may no longer be analysable. In this sense language can be viewed as storing and communicating cultural cognition. In other words, language acts both as a memory bank and a fluid vehicle for the (re-)transmission of cultural cognition and its component parts or cultural conceptualisations.

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