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THE LINGUISTIC GENES OF ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

Languages are living organisms consisting of linguistic genes. There are different linguistic genes as there are diverse biological genes. All languages are dominated by their linguistic genes, which are ultimately sets of inherited information. Yet English is an excellent example of this theory of language.

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The Biological Theory of Language

Many linguists and philosophers developed biological theories of language. For instance, Noam Chomsky said that language is a biological faculty similar to seeing and hearing. And he held that there is a universal grammar common among all languages, and this universal grammar is innate in the sense that it is born in our biological genes. Ruth Millikan also articulated a biological account of language, according to which, language is a biological phenomenon. She defended the view that the principles of language construction, such as the principle of saying the truth or being coherent, are biological because their main function is to ensure the continuity of the conversation. In light of this biological conception of language, Millikan stated that some linguistic forms, such as the conditionals, persist because their production is useful for the survival of both the speaker and the receiver. And this is very similar to what happens to living organisms, which gain useful traits for maintaining their survival.

If the biological paradigm of language were true, then we would expect that languages have linguistic genes, as living organisms have biological genes. This conclusion is in fact true. For example, English has an interesting set of linguistic genes. One linguistic gene of English language could be inferred from the two words "constitute" and "constitution". The word "constitute" means to form, establish or create, while "constitution" means the system of laws by which a state or an organization is governed. Yet the word "constitution" is linguistically derivable from the word "constitute" and vice versa. Since these two words, namely "constitution" and "constitute", are derivable from each other, it follows that they form a linguistic gene

embodying the information that a constitution is that which enables the creation of states and organizations, and the process of creating is based on a certain constitution, i.e. set of laws.

Another example of a linguistic gene in English comes from the two words "dictate" and "dictator". The word "dictate" means to speak or read to someone who writes it down, to say with authority, to give orders and to make something necessary. And the word "dictator" refers to a person who rules a state with absolute power. Now, these two words constitute a linguistic gene because they are linguistically derivable from each other. And this linguistic gene implies the information that a dictator is that who speaks with authority, gives orders and makes things necessary. Since the word "dictator" is linguistically derived from the word "dictate", it follows that, according to English language, a dictator is that who dictates.

### **The Different Categories of Linguistic Genes**

There are at least three different categories of linguistic genes. The first category consists of words linguistically derived from each other. A linguistic gene belonging to this category is composed of at least two words and a derivative process connecting between both of them. For example, the words "reality" and "realize" are linguistically derivable from each other. And in virtue of the fact that they could be derived from each other, they form a single linguistic gene. In this example, since "realize" is linguistically derivable from "reality" and vice versa, it follows that English language implies that the act of realizing is the act of knowing reality, and reality is that which is realizable. In this sense, this linguistic gene, which consists of the two words "reality" and "realize", contains a specific set of inherited information that to realize is to know reality, and reality is that which could be realized. And since these two words, namely "reality" and "realize", constitute an inherited set of information, it follows that they in fact form a linguistic gene similar to biological genes, which are sets of inherited information.

The second category of linguistic genes consists of the fact that the same word might have different meanings. If a certain word has diverse meanings, then it is a linguistic gene implying certain information obtained through connecting the distinct meanings of that one single word. For example, the word "place", as a noun, means a particular position in space. Yet, as a verb, it means to put in a particular position. Therefore, English language entails that a place is that which enables us to put or situate certain things. In this example, the word "place" itself is a linguistic gene implying the information that places are those which enable us to put and situate certain objects. And it is a linguistic gene in virtue of the fact that it has two different meanings. And its possession of two diverse meanings provides the rationale behind inferring its inherited information.

Similarly, time, as a noun, means a period during which an event exists or continues to exist. But, as a verb, it means to plan, schedule, arrange and organize when things should be done or occur, such as in the sentence "The events of the festival were timed perfectly". Thus, according to English language, time is that which enables us to plan and organize our lives and the occurrences of events. In this example, the word "time" is a linguistic gene possessing the information that time is that which enables us to organize the occurrences of events. And it is so due to the fact that it has two diverse meanings.

The third category of linguistic genes is based on etymology. In this category, a linguistic gene is formed in virtue of the origin of words. For example, the word "world" originated from old English "woruld", which means "human existence, the affairs of life and a long period of time". Here the linguistic gene consists of two words, namely "world" and "woruld", and an etymological relationship between these two words. And this linguistic gene implies the information that the world is conceptually related to human existence and the affairs of life. Since the word "world" is etymologically derived from the word "woruld" which means human existence and affairs of life, it follows that the words "world" and "woruld" and their etymological relation entail the information that the world is conceptually related to human existence and the affairs of life. Hence, the two words "world" and "woruld" and their etymological relationship form a single linguistic gene containing the previous inherited information.

The examples of this third category of linguistic genes are tremendous. For instance, the word "human" in English is ultimately derived from the Latin word "humanus", which means "of man, human" and "humane, kind, gentle, polite, refined and civilized". Here we have a linguistic gene which is composed of the

two words "human" and "humanus" in addition to an etymological relationship between both of them. And this linguistic gene entails the hidden information that a human being is that who is civilized. This is so because the word "human" is etymologically derived from "humanus", which means civilized.

#### **The Universality of the Linguistic Genes**

All languages are sets of linguistic genes. But linguistic genes are sets of inherited information, exactly as biological genes are. Therefore, all languages are sets of inherited information. For example, both English and Arabic consist of linguistic genes containing inherited information. For instance, in Arabic language, the word "Ma-ri-fa", i.e. knowledge, is linguistically derivable from the word "orf", which means tradition. Thus, according to Arabic language, knowledge resides in tradition. In this sense, Arabic implies the inherited information that knowledge exists in tradition. And it has this inherited information due to the fact that the word "knowledge" in Arabic language is linguistically derivable from the word "tradition" in Arabic. In this example, the linguistic gene consists of two words, namely "Ma-ri-fa" and "orf", and a derivative process connecting both of these words. And this linguistic gene itself is a set of inherited information implying that knowledge resides in tradition.

There are many examples of linguistic genes in Arabic language because of its strong derivative process. For instance, the Arabic word "In-saan", i.e. human being, is linguistically derived from "Na-saa", which means "He forgot". Hence, from the viewpoint of Arabic language, a human being is that who forgets. Yet those who forget are those who think. Therefore, from the perspective of Arabic, a human being is that who thinks. Here the linguistic gene is composed of the two words "In-saan" and "Na-saa", and a derivative mechanism connecting between them. And this linguistic gene of Arabic is an inherited set of information entailing that human beings are those who think and forget. All of this shows that Arabic language is a collection of linguistic genes possessing specific inherited information. Similarly, English language is a set of linguistic genes containing inherited information, such as the implied information that time is that which enables us to organize the occurrences of events, and places are those which enable us to put and situate certain things or objects.

In conclusion, English and Arabic consist of linguistic genes possessing inherited information. This paves the way to conclude that all languages are sets of linguistic genes. Languages are properties of living organisms. But living organisms are sets of biological genes. Thus, it is natural that languages are sets of genes similar to our biological genes.

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