

BEYOND THE SAUSSUREAN CONCEPT OF SPEECH CIRCUIT

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Abstract: When modern linguistic agrees with the Saussurean conception of speech circuit as the basic model of communication, vast numbers of various communications will drop out of consideration; especially the speech among the linguistically weak people and minorities. In this paper the author tries to think of a more general and impartial communication model from a philosophical or speculative viewpoint, not a sociological one.

Keywords: asymmetrical communication, a speaker = a listener, a message-donator, a message-donatee.

1. WHY SHOULD LINGUISTICS BE TO BLAME?

Modern European rationalism has given innumerable numbers of benefits to us to improve the living conditions, and covers wider range of people than before so as for them to be able to deserve and enjoy the right for the citizenship in the society. On the dark side of the same coin, however, the ideal still does not reach some groups of people, so that it cannot escape from the criticism on the fact that it has, though on no purpose but as a result, helped to discriminate the weak and the minorities such as the uncivilized, the insane, the disabled, what is called aliens or foreigners, women and children by grouping them into the one derogatory category called the abnormal or the irrational. As well it has some tendency to make them drop out of consideration as if they were theoretically insignificant and of no account. In this sense, the rationalism has not served as the emancipation but the oppression of those people.

Modern linguistics, as a branch of the rationalistic sciences, must have committed the same fault. In this paper the author takes up the concept of Saussure's speech circuit as an

illustration, and try to show it's blameworthy for any linguistic theories to ignore such people. From the humanitarian viewpoint, Saussure is only concerned with the idealized model of communication, while he leaves many other deviant cases untouched. He seems to think the ideal communication means the one between rational communicators in a homogeneous community which is formed and grouped by the common language. In the author's view, however, such idealized case is just exceptional. Communication by nature lies in such cases as Saussure leaves out of account. His key concept is a homogeneity; it's nothing but the cause to create the discrimination in a human society.

It is true that idealization is indispensable when building up a linguistic theory, but it's not a right attitude for us to see the bare fact through the theoretically biased viewpoint and regard the theoretical fact as actual state of affairs. The idealization for homogenization, systematization, unification or centralization would cause us to mistake non-biased differences for inferior deviations, and as well we would tend to cross out the different people. We must face and deal with the reality itself to resume the richness of the varieties, multiplicity and diversities, and search for the world in theory and practice where people from various cultures or with different sense of values can respect one another and live peacefully together.

2. SAUSSURE'S SPEECH CIRCUIT - HOMOGENEITY

In Saussure's theory, a homogeneous speaker and community of the speakers play a crucial role. In his mind, the concept of a homogeneous speaker has strong relations with these points:

A speaker A & a listener B have no differences as linguistic subjects. (Namely, A is interchangeable to B as to their functions.)

A & B are supposed to have the same language.

A & B are put in complete symmetry.

Both the A and the B are what I call < speaker = listeners >. Everyone agrees there are two listeners in the communication, not one, because the A not only speaks, s/he also listens to her or his own voice. So, the A's a supposed listener, too. That means the B can be interchangeable to the A when s/he functions as a listener. In other words, the B is a mirror image of the A. In this sense they are homogeneous; the A doesn't need the B as the other listener in a true sense of the word 'dialogue'. Thus, when the A talks to the B, s/he feels as if s/he says to him- or herself, and so supposes the B will understand A just the same way as s/he understands him-or herself. In principle, the B plays the same function as the A, so the communication can be regarded as a self-contained monologue, even if it's done between two persons. The author calls that kind of communicator .

In the speech circuit, between the A & the B, they have to share the same language if they want to communicate with each other. If the two (but one in the author's sense) communicators share the same language, the communication will be almost 100% successful in theory. On the other hand, if not, it will be almost 100% unsuccessful. According to Saussure, however, the two communicators never fail to share the same language because they are what the author calls < speaker = listeners >.

Next, let's go into the concept of a homogeneous community of speakers. It cannot be separated from these points:

A speaker A, B, C,, & X have no differences as linguistic subjects.

(All are interchangeable to one another.)

A, B, C,, & X are supposed to have the same language.

X & Y are put in complete symmetry.

X can be A; Y can be B.

It is easy to see Saussure thinks what is true of the A is also true of the B. Then, the community of those speakers must necessarily be homogeneous, which is his theoretical requirement. So, every member of the community is obviously < a speaker = listener >, and all the communications in this model are like monologues.

The community forces on its members these three kinds of entrance requirements for the membership. The first one is whether s/he has the ability to talk rationally with others. The next one is whether s/he has the ability to talk normally with others. The last one is whether s/he has the ability to talk meaningfully with others. (Here the author is not saying this from the viewpoint of pragmatics.) But in fact, all these three requirements mean nothing but the same thing; the standards of being able to be reasonable, to conform to the norm and to follow the semantic rule-system are really the same idea, in that those who fail to meet the standards would be expelled from the community members. That is, < a speaker = listener > must be rational, normal and meaning-recognizable. Those who are not come to forcefully suffer from the discrimination, elimination and so on. The entrance requirements draw an invisible line of demarcation between the rational and the irrational, the normal and the abnormal, and the intelligible and the unintelligible. Furthermore, the distinction turns into the discrimination, and the latter people are thought to be unable to participate in a variety of language-games even though they talk. So long as Saussure persists in the homogeneity of the < speaker = listener > and the same quality of the community, the discrimination of the irrational, the abnormal and the unintelligible will never disappear in the world. It's a structural defect Saussure inevitably invites to his theory.

3. A NEW PERSPECTIVE - NO MORE DISCRIMINATION

There are some other ideas against Saussure. For one instance, Derrida's deconstruction of the concept of speaker will be good, insisting that a communicator cannot be < a speaker = listener > because meaning cannot be transparent even to a speaker him- or herself on account of the differences. The author likes here to propose his new model, in which the basic type of communication is considered as asymmetrical. He'd like to characterize his new model as < a speaker is not a listener >. As a result, a community of speakers is seen as heterogeneous and diverse.

In a certain person's history, communication starts between communicators in asymmetrical relations. In a communication between a mother and her child, their relations are not horizontal but rather diagonal; in principle this case can be characterized as < a mother = an exclusive speaker > and < her child = an exclusive listener >. In this sense, communication

flows from an exclusive speaker into an exclusive listener, which the author captures as original and fundamental communicational situation.

The following points are important when the author applies the above situation extensively to the whole case of communication, saying that a speaker is utterly different from a listener B:

A listener B is supposed to be the absolute other to A. (When a speaker A starts conversation, s/he cannot presuppose that a listener B will understand him or her.)

A listener B is supposed not to have the same language as A's in principle. (S/he might have the same language, but no one knows that.)

A speaker A & a listener B are put in complete asymmetry.

In this model, a speaker plays a completely different function as a listener. The author will call the speaker < a message-donor >, and the listener < a message-donatee >. One of the most important points here is the hypothesis that since the two persons have no common language, no one is sure at the starting point whether the communication will be successful or not. < A message -donator > starts the conversation without knowing in advance whether his or her message will be comprehended just the same way as s/he intends. By the term < a message donatee >, the author likes to emphasize to all the readers that < a message- donatee > is not necessarily supposed to understand < a message- donator >. Then, what is true of the latter is not always true of the former. The two persons are of the different qualities. The communication between such two doesn't mean a monologue but a dialogue in the true sense of the word. Then, a community of speakers is thought to be heterogeneous and diverse, where so many varieties of people do communicate one another.

Strictly speaking, it is even unnecessary in the author's view to hypothesize the community in advance of communication. The common language and the community is what is to be found after the fact that innumerable numbers of actual communications are done. Originally, there's no shared language or community. Both concepts are no more than ex post facto theoretical constructs. When we try to consider communicational intercourse, all we need at the starting point is nothing but the fact. The actual linguistic exchanges must not be seen through the pseudo-factual theoretical devices. (In everyday speech, we realize that each speaks his or her own idiosyncratic language. This person's language is sometimes slightly but sometimes quite different from another's. At the same time, however, we cast no doubt to the communal imagination that we have a common language. What the author like to point out here is the implausibility of the imagination held by the community members. Everyday we speak without no guarantee of successful communication. We just speak.)

Then, how come those concepts appear? Only after the fact of successful communications. If a communication is successful, we can ex post facto hypothesize and make up some sort of average (a language, a rule-system) which they might have shared. (There may be more than one rule-system which they might have followed.) It's an abstract and theoretical system of language which can be called langue.

Every reader may want here to raise such questions as "how does communication happen?" or "what makes it possible?"; in other words, "What's the reasonable grounds for communication?" The author replies as follows: nothing assures us of successful communication. It sounds very strange, but in linguistics the theory has to start from the

starting point. Although we believe something common must be necessary if any communication is to be successful, and also that there really is something common if communication really is successful, still the author thinks communication should be captured as something that does happen without any reasons. It is a bare fact, on which any theory of communication should be based and begin from.

The author takes a chess analogy as an illustration. A chess player A does not necessarily presuppose in advance whether a player B must know how to play the game. Namely, the A can start the game even if the B does not know how to play it. When the A makes a first move, then we can imagine the following two possible cases: 1) the B cannot make an appropriate move back, which only means the game cannot go on any more. In the other case 2), the B can make an appropriate move back, which means that the A can suppose the B can play the game and that the author can hypothesize after that fact that the A & B might shared the same rule-system. (Or, at least, the author can hypothesize the A & B have something in common as to the game. But still, we have take into account that though the B's first move happened to be appropriate, the A & B follow a different rule-system of his or her own. Up to now, the author cannot yet assure that the B can keep on making appropriate moves.) Then, if the B makes an appropriate move back for every move made by the A, the hypothesis is re-approved on each occasion, and the belief that they might have followed the same rules are renewed each time. (If the B makes an inappropriate move on the way, the game and the belief come to be over.) Even if the B keeps on making appropriate moves till the end, the author still cannot be 100% sure they have the same rule-system in common, because the B might make an inappropriate move in another game! (Here the author keeps in mind what is called Kripke's skeptical argument, which he expressed in his writing on Wittgenstein.)

Communication can and must be thought the same way as the above. Therefore, the Saussurean proposition that if two people are to communicate with each other, they have to share the same language, sounds too strong and in a way unnecessary. Also, the converse proposition that if they share the same language, they can communicate with each other, does not seem true. Moreover, the author denies the following proposition with a minor change that since they share the same language, they can communicate with each other. Otherwise, in the author's view, all we can say is if two persons fail to communicate with each other, they might not have shared the same language, which is the contraposition to the second one. No necessary conditions for any communicational theory!

If we consider communication from the author's viewpoint, it's insignificant to raise the three conditions which he mentioned above. All the distinctions are meaningless between the rational and the irrational, between the normal and the abnormal, between the meaning-recognizable and the meaning-irrecognizable. And also, since < a message-donator > and < a message-donatee > are so heterogeneous, it's meaningless to suppose the homogeneous community. As well, < a message donatee > can even be a person from an outside and different community from the one <a message donator> belongs to. There's no meaning to make a distinction between people by the criterion of the rationality, the normality and the intelligibility inside a community as well as between communities. We should be more logical. A communication between a mother and her little child, a teacher and the students, an Englishman and a Japanese, a doctor and a mental patient and so on, all those communications can be considered from the author's new viewpoint alone.

Remember, in every communication a speaker speaks to a person who might not understand him or her. Then, it's not logical to discriminate someone because s/he is irrational, because

s/he is abnormal, and because s/he is meaning-irrecognizable. The author likes to repeat that it makes no difference in communication whether someone is rational or not, whether s/he is normal or not, and whether s/he is meaning-recognizable or not. We're all equal speakers and communicators (language-users) in terms of human rights.

REFERENCE

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