

The Economic Characteristics of Language Choice from the Perspective of Language and Society Interaction

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ABSTRACT

Economic behavior, as the main social behavior of human beings, uses language as direct or indirect medium connecting to coordinate different links. Based on the interactive relationship between language and society, language choice is related to people's economic behavior. Choosing different languages or dialect variants is not only language behavior, but also concerning with language as commodity and element of human capital in different links of economic behavior. First, choosing language as a commodity can reflect its connotative relationship with economy and society. Second, linguistic selection generally follows the economy principle of least effort. Finally, the interaction of socialized language choice and commercialized languages further promotes the social importance of language as human capital.

Keywords: *Language choice, Economic characteristics, Economic principle, Human capital.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is an important tool for human communication and social practice. In a sense, language connects the spiritual and material practices of people and society. The sociality of language is characterized or constructed by the multi-dimensional interactive relationship between man and society. The socialization of the communicative function of language is accompanied by the realization of the social function of language through humans. The economic characteristics of language choice, first is the economy of choosing different languages or language unit levels. People's choice of language is actually to choose the referential relationship between the conventionalized language form and meaning, so as to realize the socialization of its communicative function. At the same time, language shows different choices of language types, structures and functions due to the subjective needs

of users and the objective needs of social context.

The second is the economic characteristic of language as a commodity. Language can be selected as a commodity to give play to the value attributes of its economic resources and produce corresponding economic benefits.

2. ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LANGUAGE CHOICE AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

2.1 *The Economic Characteristics of the Relationship Between Language and Society*

In the economic relations or behaviors constructed by humans, language more or less influences the economic relations or behaviors and the socialization of benefits. The relationship between language and economy is often implicit in the relationship between language and society. In his article entitled "Economics of Language", American economist Jacob Marschak emphasized the importance of language as a communication tool to human economic activities, and pointed out

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that language also has economic characteristics and attributes such as value, utility, cost, and benefit [1]. As far as the relationship between language and society is concerned, human takes languages as carriers to achieve corresponding social functions. The role of language in economic development can be expressed as the direct or indirect economic benefits generated by language as a communication tool, user skills, digital intelligent technology, commercialized industrial system and other forms. The value utility of language in human economic activities firstly connects the economic behaviors or relationships between people and society in the form of communication tools. Secondly, based on the value of tools, it is a necessity to coordinate the economic behavior or relations, such as the establishment of economic contracts, negotiation of cost inputs, forms of trade, production technology, and the composition of labor. The behavior-oriented language choice and its value function of economy are manifested as the economic function characterized by the economic attributes of language. Language can act on the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of economic activities through communication and thinking cognitive tools, institutional and resource characteristics, and achieve its economic functions [2]. The economic connotation of the relationship between language and society is based on the tool functions of language, which directly or indirectly connects or coordinates the economic relationship and the realization of economic benefits of human beings. At the same time, language can be used as a human ability factor in economic activities, such as the management ability factor of the production operator, the language skill factor of the laborer, etc., to produce or create direct or indirect economic dividends and benefit output. The influences of the economy for the function of language as tools and the realization of economic value are manifested in different forms such as language types and economic-related word changes. The economic function of language reflects changes in the interaction between language and economy through language changes and users' selective changes based on social needs.

2.2 The Economic Characteristics of Language Choice

Language choice refers to the choice of language, dialect and style in the process of language use by people of different language backgrounds and language abilities [3]. Users make choices of language types, language units, styles,

dialects or variants based on different social context, communication needs, subjective intentions, language ability and other factors. The purpose of language choice is to complete communication, and its economic characteristic is implicit or externalized in the process of communication. The economic characteristic of language choice is first the economic principle of least effort language use, and the second is language choice driven by the economic nature of language. From the user's perspective, language as a communication tool for "intercommunication", a simple and effort-saving way of using language can reduce the communication time and the "cost" of intercommunication in encoding and decoding. The process of choosing words to express meaning is more or less related to the language choice of the user which is psychologically driven by effort-saving. From a social perspective, language is produced in response to the needs of human communication. People use it as a carrier to participate in social practice. As a medium, it can also be used as a commodity and different forms of social products to circulate. Language choice takes mother tongue and other languages as objects, and its motivation is mainly to select languages or variants that are coordinated by users and social needs to realize people's social participation. The economy of language choice is first characterized by the convenience of mother tongue communication and the strategy of alternative language selections. The strategic choice is actually the economical choice of "exchanging ideas" or "using words to achieve results". On the other hand, language as a commodity and language-related technology, services, and resources promotes the direct participation of socialized language in economic activities and produces corresponding economic benefits and social value. The economic attribute of language drives language as a commodity and different forms of production factors to become a "commodity" selected by users and used for social circulation. Thus, when language is selected as a commodity, it shows, in different degrees, the economic characteristics of language choice.

3. ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE CHOICE

3.1 Monolingual and Language Unit Choice

The language, phonetic and meaning system, combination of expressions and meanings, and

usage rules follow the usage principle of "conventions" [4]. The intergenerational inheritance of language conventions itself embodies the economic principles of language choice. The diachronic evolution of different languages can show that language use is a cross of diachronic and synchronic changes. Objectively speaking, language evolution is an adaptive change to the needs or changes of users and society. Therefore, the macro-social level of the economic principle of language choice is mainly the choice of its social functions. The relative stability of different language expressions, grammatical rules and social and cultural conventions constructs the convenience of interpersonal and social communication among users. The choice of language types, first is to choose an interoperable language. The communication of homogenous monolingual users is the most effort-saving and economical. Both parties do not need to pay "costs of worry", that is, they aren't worried about possible communication failures caused by language barriers. Even so, there are still economic principles of choice in the communication process of homogenous language, which can be observed in the omission of theme based on the context, the use of acronyms, the style of spoken and written language, and the difference or omission of words. In fact, the selective difference of language unit level based on "economical effort-saving" in verbal communication is more common, such as the dialogue "C1: What is the price of the strawberry? B: Strawberry 🍓: 28.9; C2: Tomato 🍅: How much? B: Tomatoes' price is 4.69 C2: Tomatoes' price has increased like this". The background of the conversation is the convenience store online shopping group, the customer C1 in the group did not use the "?" in the conversation, but C2 chose to use the "?". Store B responded with numbers directly, and did not choose to use the expression "28.9 yuan/per jin, 4.69 yuan/per yuan". Based on shared knowledge and communication context, the commodities mentioned in the dialogue are all sold in units of "jin", so intertextuality omission is used; The use of "?" is also based on this motivation. At the same time, words can express inquiries in spoken language, and question marks are marked only when they are presented in the form of written sentences. The emoticons appearing in them emphasize their expressive effects and attract attention in a multi-modal form as an auxiliary communication strategy. From the perspective of language economy principles, emoticons increase the length of the language symbols of sentences, attract the attention of the audience and increase the

difficulty of the audience's understanding. However, from the perspective of communication strategies, language choice also includes the choice of symbolic auxiliary modes, and it also shows the relativity of the economic principles of language choice. Abbreviations are also a manifestation of the economic principle of language choice, such as 世贸组织-WTO- World Trade Organization, 5G, AI, VR and other countries, institutions, scientific and technological terms, professional terms and other different forms of written and spoken language abbreviation.

3.2 Multilingual Choice

The choice of language units or types of multilingual multilinguals varies according to the user's intentions and contextual needs. Language choice and use are often effort-saving and concise to meet the communication needs of users in a way that conforms to the conventionalized expressions. Language contact triggers multilingualism and the possibility of users' language choice. The formation of multilingual ability is related to the abundance of language resources in the user's language knowledge base, which in turn triggers the extraction of language resources, mutual transfer, and the selection of language and language units. More specifically, it is the choice between languages or the mixing of language units, such as functional or structural code switching, the generation of language variants, Pidgin language and its Creoleization and other language phenomena. At this level, the economic principle of language choice highlights the function of language as a communicative tool. Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea is the Pidgin language with English as the interlanguage. For example, some Tok Pisin's words, aplai-apply, alkohol-alcohol, baik-bike, duti-duty, fifti-fifty, etc., are influenced by English in pronunciation and word formation. The Pidgin language can be attributed to the "language choice" of the need for communication. In the absence of a common language, choosing a main language or dialect and blending into the respective language components to form an interoperable language or variant is usually the result of the users' choice in purpose of communicative needs. In this regard, the economics of language choice are manifested in the choice of language structure or its integration by communicative needs, and the choice of adaptation to users' psychology, language reality and social reality [5], which takes "psychological cost + practical cost" as the mechanism to realize the economy of language use and its choice.

4. LANGUAGE CHOICE AND ITS SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CORRELATION CHARACTERISTICS

The economic value of language is reflected in the number and scope of users. Some studies regard language as "hypercollective goods", the more users there are, the greater its value [6]. A language has a large number of speakers and a wide range of uses, which means that it has a higher chance of being selected and used. The fundamental reason for choosing a language as a communicative language or a circulated commodity is that the use value and economic value of the language can satisfy the needs of individuals or groups in communication and society. In other words, the probability of the language being selected as a "commodity" increased, and it is more likely to create economic benefits and returns. As a result, the economic characteristics and social performance of language choice include the choice of language as a direct commodity or language-related commercial activities, and language as the economic characteristic of laborer's ability, form of human capital expression and the indirect economic value and benefits it may produce.

4.1 Choosing Language as a Commodity and Its Commercialization

Language, as a direct or indirect medium through which economic activities can be organized and carried out, also has commodity characteristic. Language and its derived products can be transformed into different forms of commodities and industrialized due to user and social needs [7], [8]. The conversion of language into a commodity is due to its participation in the process of social production and consumption as an exchange item. The choice of language as a commodity is closely related to its use value and market value. Within the background of globalization, traditional language translation, with the support of artificial intelligence, digital media and other language technologies, makes language as a commodity continue to be integrated into the social production process and form a corresponding industrial chain, creating economic benefits. Market demand drives the process of converting languages into commodities and their industrialization, such as translation services in cross-language economic trade, including the choice of language for communicative language, contractual language, import and export commodity manuals, etc.

Choosing different languages to participate in economic activities actually realizes the commercialization of languages in an explicit or implicit way. Language translation or the industrialization of language services with language as the content has already constituted a link in the operation of social economy. The language selection of language products varies according to the needs of the audience, economic agents, and social needs. For example, the subtitle translation of film and television works and the foreign translation of literary works are demand-oriented based on their importing country, region and audience languages, thereby increasing their market value and share. In other words, language products comply with market rules and meet market demand as the leading factor in order to achieve their expected economic value and benefits. The use value and economic value attached to the language has become an important factor for choosing a certain language as a commodity in circulation. Language training is also a way of language commercialization, such as the economic benefits obtained by language training institutions using local languages as training media or foreign languages as training content. For example, according to New Oriental's 2019 financial report, the annual net income was US\$3.096 billion, an increase of 26.5% year-on-year; the annual operating profit was US\$306 million, an increase of 16.2% year-on-year; only in the fourth quarter of 2019, the number of students increased by 33.9% year-on-year, and the number of learning centers increased by 152 compared to 2018.[9] The organization's language training started with English training, and its business has gradually expanded to school curriculum guidance and language training courses in different languages such as English, Japanese, German, French, Korean, and Italian. The increase in the types of training languages is actually the choice of languages based on market demand as commodities. The expansion of its training scale and the coexistence of similar institutions have made language training form a chain of industrialization. Therefore, the transformation of language into a commodity is an adaptation to the needs of users and society. The choice of commodity language is guided by market demand, and the industrialization of language socializes the social and economic value of language commodities.

4.2 Language and Its Choice as an Element of Human Capital

Language is a very important form of human capital, language ability and skills depend on people and need to be obtained through physical and social costs, at the same time, the language can bring benefits to its users [10], [11]. Relevant studies also show that the language ability of workers, such as mastering multilingual skills, is beneficial to improving their economic benefits [12], [13], [14]. Thus, language, as a component of human participation in economic activities, runs through different forms of economic activities in the form of human capital. From users' perspective, language intercommunication is not only a constituent element of different links in coordinated economic behavior, it is also an economic behavior of capital investment as a selective investment in the improvement of language ability and skills as human capital. Mother tongue investment includes natural environment and school education acquisition. It takes the individual's own, inherent, and inherited language as the primary choice, which constitutes a basic inherited language investment. The acquisition of multilingual skills is a selective investment in human capital. For example, English is the main global language, and many non-English-speaking countries will also choose English as a foreign language education language. Choosing to acquire English or other non-native languages and dialects requires first of all learning time or capital investment. Secondly, the motivation of choice is mainly instrumental, which are communicative needs driven or for practical needs such as employment, education etc. The cost input and benefits of different forms of language choice are based on the subject's rational or instrumental value prediction or the existing "cost-benefit" social value expectations. All in all, language is a component of human capital of economic behavior participants. Mother tongue is its most basic language ability and skill capital. In the mother tongue social environment, mother tongue "investment" is the least labor-saving and the lowest cost. The contact of language or dialect variants caused by globalization and population movement makes languages and variants come with the possibility of being selected based on intercommunication or economic behavior media needs to varying degrees. When the selected language completes its communicative function, its attached economic characteristic, value status, universality and other factors drive the user's natural or purpose-oriented language skills or

language ability to improve, participate in economic behavior and obtain economic benefits. Correspondingly, language choice is not only the choice of language as a communication tool, but also the realization of specific economic benefits by the subject's choice of language and its social added value, and the direct or indirect realization of the economic value of the selected language in the form of human capital components.

5. CONCLUSION

Language serves people and society. Language choice is not only a speech act directed by users' communicative purposes, but also a social act directed by multiple interests. As far as the interaction between language and society is concerned, language choice is related to the coordination of verbal communication in different links of economic behavior. Language can also be used as a commodity to participate in social production, distribution, exchange and circulation, resulting in specific economic benefits. The economic characteristics of language choice takes the user's concise and effort-saving language and language unit selection as the economic principle of language use, and the choice of language as a commodity and human capital element is based on the realization of social function, economic value and economic benefits. Therefore, the social performance of the economic characteristics of language choice is the user's communication-oriented choice with language as the object, and the choice of a specific language as a commodity and its commercialization. At the same time, human capital as a social expression of language elements and their choice relates language elements in the interaction between human and social economy. And it also functions in social and economic operation in the forms of user language ability or skills.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Yueping Wang.

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