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REVIEW ARTICLE

A FICTITIOUS DEMENTIA-DEMENTIA IN MODERN LITERATURE

ABSTRACT

The accumulating data about brain localizations associated with language processing not only weakens the conservative neurological models, but also suggests a novel Sense concept, which is fairly different from the traditional one.

Author Paul Auster has created works of art that demolished the prevailing opinions regarding what constitutes language. We herein discuss philosophically the approach of Auster, taking into account particulary the works of philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Gilles Deleuze suggests pragmatism instead of communication models for language. According to pragmatism, speech acts are performed not for communicating, but to affect the bodies. Incorporeal transformations are the expression of statements but are attributed to bodies. The purpose of speech acts is not to represent bodies but to move them. An expression does not follow a content, it is on the same level with the latter.

Auster's "Travels in the Scriptorium" conveys the story of an old man, Mr. Blank, who is affected by his own scripts (pragmatism). Moreover, this novel, as a cluster of literary expressions, is also a real act on forgetfulness, since Auster does not represent forgetfulness in the story, but transforms it to an impressive experience of language; that is, the pragmatism of Auster's literature.

Key Words: Alzheimer Disease, Dementia/Diagnosis; Dementia/Psychology; Literature, Modern.

DERLEME

KURGULANMIŞ BİR DEMANS-MODERN LİTERATÜRDE DEMANS

ÖZ

Dil uygulamalarıyla ilişkili beyin lokalizasyonları hakkındaki artan veriler, sadece geleneksel nörolojik modelleri zayıflatmakla kalmaz, ama aynı zamanda geleneksel olandan bütünüyle farklı yeni bir "Anlam" kavramı öne sürmektedir.

Yazar Paul Auster, dili tesis eden şeye dair eski kanıları yıkan eserler vermiştir. Biz burada Auster'in yaklaşımını felsefi açıdan, özellikle Gilles Deleuze'ün çalışmalarını hesaba katarak ele alıyoruz. Gilles Deleuz, dil için iletişim modeli yerine pragmatizmi öne sürmüştür. Pragmatizme göre, konuşma edimleri iletişim için değil ama bedenlere etki etmek için icra edilir. Cisimsiz dönüşümler cümlelerin ifade ettiğidir, ama bedenlere atfedilmektedirler. İfade, içeriği takip etmez, ama onunla aynı düzeydedir. İçerik, el-alet çifti ile ilişilidir, ve pragmatizm, ifadelerle ilişkili gerçek dönüşümlere işaret etmektedir. Olay/Anlam (veya cisimsiz dönüşüm) sözcüklerle ifade edilir ve el-alet çifti ile gerçekleşir. O halde, ifadenin anlamı sensori-motor korteksin aktivasyonuna bağlıdır, yani, el-alet çifti ile ilişkili pragmatik değere bağlıdır.

Auster'in "Yazı odasına Yolculuklar" kendi yazdıklarından etkilenen yaşlı bir adamın, Bay Boş'un hikayesini anlatır. Dahası, bu roman, yazınsal ifadelerin bir kümelenmesi olarak, unutkanlık üzerindeki gerçek bir edimdir; çünkü Auster, hikayede unutkanlığı temsil etmez, ama onu etkileyici bir dil deneyimine dönüştürür; ki bu, Auster'in edebiyatının pragmatizmidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Alzheimer Hastalığı, Demans/Tanı; Demans/Psikoloji; Literatür, Modern.

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INTRODUCTION

Activation of particular brain areas during language processing does not necessarily mean Sense is the product of those areas. The accumulating data about brain localizations associated with language processing not only weakens the conservative neurological models, but also suggests a novel Sense concept, which is fairly different from the traditional one.

Author Paul Auster has created works of art that demolished the prevailing opinions regarding what constitutes language. We herein discuss philosophically the approach of Auster, taking into account particularly the works of philosopher Gilles Deleuze.

Gilles Deleuze suggests pragmatism instead of communication models for language. According to pragmatism, speech acts are performed not for communicating, but to directly affect the bodies. Incorporeal transformations are the expression of statements but are attributed to bodies. The purpose of speech acts is not to represent bodies but to move them. Therefore, an expression does not follow a content, it is on the same level with the latter.

Content is related with the hand-tool couple, and pragmatism indicates exactly the real transformations correlated with expressions. Event/Sense (or incorporeal transformation) is expressed through words and is materialized via the hand-tool couple. Therefore, the sense of expressions depends on activation of the sensory-motor cortex, namely, the pragmatic value that is associated with the hand-tool couple.

Auster's "Travels in the Scriptorium" conveys the story of an old man, Mr. Blank, who is affected by his own scripts (pragmatism). Moreover, this novel, as a cluster of literary expressions, is also a real act on forgetfulness, since Auster does not represent forgetfulness in the story, but transforms it to an impressive experience of language; that is, in short, the pragmatism of Auster's literature.

LANGUAGE AND BRAIN LOCALIZATIONS

Knowledge about the relation between language and brain localizations is growing with the developments in neuroanatomy and neurophysiology. However, the manner of interpretation of this increasing data has not changed on a large scale. One may claim that the opinions in 19th century linguistics about the social function of language, about what defines Sense and about expression usage, have been accepted as a general point of view for an interpretation of pathological data. Moreover, the biology of anatomical localizations has been

adapted to those opinions. For instance, the belief in the necessity of knowing the meaning of each word to set up an ordinary expression is parallel to the neurological theory about speech areas of the brain. The schema can simply be considered as "clear comprehension for regular speech" or "ordered activation of Wernicke's area and Broca's area".

FICTITIOUS DEMENTIA

Literature is one means of demolishing ossified opinions. Extraordinary author Paul Auster gives his readers a different point of view in "*Travels in the Scriptorium*" (1).

An elderly man is sitting on his bed in a room, unaware of his whereabouts. He has no idea how long he has been held in that room. Paul Auster identifies the man as Mr. Blank. The old man does not know who he is. Moreover, all events in the past are indefinite in his mind. Then, the readers realize that the visitors to his room are characters that have been created by Auster in his other books, who are now taking revenge on him (in his old age). In other words, Auster describes his own experience of aging, and tells at the same time a fictitious story of dementia.

Pieces of white tape can be seen around his room, identifying various objects with single words: WALL, LAMP, TABLE, etc. They have been placed to help Mr. Blank with his forgetfulness. In time, the old man perceives that the words do not signify the appropriate objects (although readers cannot be sure of his judgment). The appropriateness between words and objects is dragged into a crisis by Auster. Briefly, the relation between objects and their word representations is decomposed.

Despite the representation function of language remaining in crisis, it continues to function on a different level. Mr. Blank has to finish an incomplete story as demanded by his doctor. Although not at all expected, he successfully writes the story. Language is separated from an outer reality, not representing the objects; nevertheless, a fascinating story can still be assembled. If the idea pursued by Auster is exposed, it is understood that this type of language usage is not inconceivable.

LANGUAGE AND REPRESENTATION

It is obvious that language is not appended to the social reality for representing it, but it is fairly effective on its establishment. Then, the social function of language is not to represent the outer or inner world of human beings, but to set

up a socio-psychical reality for individuals. For instance, to ask "how?" is not responding to any object, emotion or event in the outer or inner world.

Different sense modalities are integrated in transmodal areas (2); consequently, establishment of a relation between auditory images and various sense inputs is possible. However, it is easy to assert that the words heard gain their meaning from visual images, or the Sense (meaning) is determined by the integration of different sense (feeling) modalities. Numerous expressions not related to any visual or other kind of image are present in language, such as "why?", and yet they are still meaningful.

So what do we mean when we suggest the reality of language, instead of representation of extralingual reality in language? This question can be answered in different ways. Ferdinand de Saussure indicated that auditory images do not signify the object, but rather the concepts (3). Saussure named the auditory image as the "signifier", the concept as "signified", and the signifier-signified block as the "sign". In a sign, the signifier and signified are reciprocally related and each evokes the other. For instance, taken as an auditory image or signifier, the word "tree" recalls the concept "Tree".

In this model, indicating that a word is signifying this or that concept is insufficient, as the Sense is determined by the relations of a signifier with other signifiers. That is to say, a word signified is determined by comparing it with other words that signify contrary meanings. For instance, signifiers like "scare", "frighten" and "avoid", which are designating similar concepts, are limiting each other with contradictions, namely, with conceptual features that one possesses and others do not; thus, their meanings are determined. Furthermore, similar to the reciprocal relation between an auditory image and a concept, each sign is reciprocally related with other signs (to answer the question "what does 'tree' mean?" necessitates different signs). Then, according to Saussure's linguistic model, no extralingual concept (or meaning) exists; Sense is determined by relations in the system. Taking the Sense in this manner is to indicate that language does not represent the outside.

SENSE AND BRAIN

Saussure's model is called structuralism. According to structuralism, Sense is determined in the system; thus, the problem in language usage is to comprehend, to know the meanings of expressions heard. This usage is also designated as Communication. However, whether there are brain areas or not, the main problem is which words heard are utilized to recall and oppose other words, thereby gaining meanings as to structuralism; in short, a dictionary.

However, it is proven that Wernicke's area does not contain a dictionary (2). The fact that areas associated with Wernicke's area also do not contain a dictionary in which words gain their meaning invalidates the above-mentioned model. In reality, hearing an auditory expression causes sensorial and motor patterns to appear in the sensory-motor cortex; then, a mental concept emerges (4). Again according to Saussure, signifiers indicate concepts; however, he required a dictionary to put forward the meaning of concepts. However, one should seek sensorial and motor patterns; in short, Events associated with excitations. Later, we are going to claim that the Sense is nothing other than the Event (Sense = Event).

PRAGMATISM

Gilles Deleuze suggests pragmatism instead of a communication model. Words express the Sense, but the meaning expressed is the attribute of things (Event). If the Sense is explored in words, one will inevitably be dragged into an endless and nonproductive struggle; that is to say, numerous signs will ceaselessly be required. Once again, if Events are explored in things (in content), it will soon be understood that they cannot be posited on any one location of things. Despite the fact that Sense is expressed by words, they are not on the same level; similarly, Events happen on things, but they are not on the same level with the things. Events are incorporeal (5).

Then, Event(s)/Sense(s) is inhabited neither in words nor in things, but they are independent paradoxical individualities that live on the surface of words and things. According to pragmatism, speech acts are performed not for communicating, but to directly affect the bodies. Incorporeal transformations are the expression of statements but are attributed to bodies. Therefore, an expression does not follow a content, it is on the same level with the latter. In other words, an expression is related to a content and words are related to bodies, but this relation is not representation (6). Consequently, the smallest unit of language is the order word, and order words are comprised of one or more words. All expressions that lead to incorporeal transformation on things are order words in a wide sense, so language is the set of all order words.

The parallelism of expression and content is present in the following assemblages: language and technology, symbol and tool, supple larynx and free hand (7). Content is first of all related to the hand-tool couple, and pragmatism designates es-

pecially the real transformations responding to expressions. Event/Sense (or incorporeal transformation) is expressed through words and is materialized by the hand-tool couple. An injury in Wernicke's area inhibits reaching a concept, namely the emerging mental sensory-motor patterns; otherwise, an index of words does not disappear (2). Therefore, the Sense of expressions depends on activation of the sensory-motor cortex, namely, the pragmatic value that is associated with the hand-tool couple. Of course, one may utilize words for expressing the concept (Event); however, a concept cannot be reduced to expressions (8).

There are studies demonstrating that the hand area is activated during speaking (9) and reading (10). Those data have been interpreted as the proof of usage of manual gestures in the primitive stages in language evolution (11); however, this manner of interpretation regards only the type of symbol (auditory image, visual image, gestural image). Yet, the data can be taken for pragmatic usage of language, namely, the functional hand-tool couple associated with language. In short, pragmatism gives to language a different value (pragmatic), it does not suggest the communication model, since it does not require a dictionary in the brain.

TRANSFORMING CONTENT: FORGETFULNESS

Language as representation of objects is in a state of crisis for Mr. Blank; however, it continues to function on a different level. Mr. Blank, the elderly representation of an author, can set up a story, despite the fact that his language is separated from an outer reality. However, "*Travels in the Scriptorium*" is not content with such: Paul Auster desires to transmit the power of expressions, in other words, their pragmatic reality.

The elderly author Mr. Blank is being disturbed by characters of his own scripts. These characters visit his room seeking revenge. Furthermore, the character of the story that he is currently writing also participates in the game. The problem here is not just the separation of language from an outer reality, language also has an action on bodies. Mr. Blank is being disturbed and even moved; his body is being dragged into complicated games with the influence of characters that he created.

Auster's "*Travels in the Scriptorium*" tells the story of an elderly gentleman, Mr. Blank, who is affected by his own scripts (pragmatism). Moreover, this novel, as a cluster of literary expressions, is also a real act on forgetfulness since Auster does not represent forgetfulness in the story, but transforms it into an impressive experience of language (as *forgetfulness* is the content of the text). That is, in short, the pragmatism of Auster's literature in modern literature.

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