Can Language Ever Be 'Correct' and Does it Matter?

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Abstract: The paper reviews the research conducted on debates regarding language correctness extensively. The objective of the article is to provide a conceptual theoretical framework based on the 'correctness fallacy' and to determine where 'language correctness' matters or not from sociolinguistic point of view. The article investigates the perspectives of the 'correctness fallacy', 'linguistic segregation', 'political correctness' and 'grammatical correctness'. The study uses data from research articles, journals, and books in a qualitative method to draw a primary conclusion of 'language correctness'. The findings tried to answer the conclusion that a language can ever be 'correct' or that it matters.

Keywords: *Correctness fallacy, grammatical correctness, language correctness, linguistic segregation, political correctness*

Introduction

Language correctness is a term to use to interfere with the spontaneous overflow of language practice. Language correction comprises intentional and conscious government intercession as well as speaker's ordinary clarifications or rephrasing of speech in communication (Swann et al., 2004: 168). Specifically, most studies in the field of language correctness may be classified as follows: a) grammatical correctness and b) political correctness. A large and growing body of literature has investigated on language correctness. More attention that is recent has focused on the provision of political correctness of language.

Research Question

According to Glesne & Peshkin (1992), qualitative research is conducted for contextualization, interpretation, and understanding of perspectives. The major objective of this study was to investigate 'grammatical correctness' and 'political correctness' of language in sociolinguistics point of view. This research seeks to address the following question:

a) Can language ever be 'correct' and does it matter?

Research Methodology

According to Hussey and Hussey (1997), methodology refers to all overall approaches to the research process, from the theoretical underpinning to the collection and analysis of the data. Furthermore, research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem and the science of studying how research is done scientifically (Kothari, 2004). This study was conducted in analytical research that analyses a conceptual theoretical framework based on the 'correctness fallacy' from a sociolinguistic perspective. In this study, secondary data was analysed to obtain answers to the research question. Secondary data were collected from several published sources in the study. In the final phase, qualitative data were integrated into a coherent whole (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003).

Findings and Discussion

Grammatical Language Correctness

In particular, the term "correct" is used based on grammar in language practice and communication. Historically, Webbe (1622) first questioned the necessity of grammar in human communication. Furthermore, Webbe stated that no man could run rapidly to the mark of a language that is shackled with grammatical precepts. Webbe also suggested that grammar could be picked up through simple communication. Moreover, the issue of the necessity of correctness in language has been investigated by many scholars and has been found to have contradictory findings. More importantly, Waismann (1952) wrote that it is in vain to establish a language to stem living development. Waismann also insisted, "Correctness is the last refuge of those who have nothing to say". According to Mcgrath and Spear (1991), language correctness is the intention of making a language context natural and universal.

"Concern with correctness, whether mechanical, logical, or rhetorical, is in no way illegitimate or suspect. Virtually all educators assess student writing for correctness of spelling, grammar, or logic. What generates the distinctive pedagogies of clear and correct writing is not a concern with correctness that no one else shares, but the rather less widespread notion

that rules are somehow context-neutral, that they can be taught by themselves and then applied elsewhere" (Mcgrath & Spear, 1991).

In a similar way, Benom (2015) supported the assumption that the correctness fallacy refers to the assumption that there is always a unique correct answer to any question asked. Considering this, Benom promoted language correctness as a "myth of homogeneity," which means that all people would behave in the same way in a given situation. On the one hand, Newman (1996) considered language correctness as a description of actual usage based on the vast majority of native speakers as a canonization of usage.

Likewise, Nordquist (2019), in prescriptive grammar, correctness is the notion that certain words, word forms, and syntactic structures meet the standards and conventions (rules) prescribed by traditional grammarians and against which it is called grammatical error. A number of researchers identified grammatical correctness as a barrier to language learning. In contrast, Rossiter (2021) claimed that complexity is not an inherent quality of grammar; grammar can be made quite simple or highly complex, depending on how it is presented.

Overall, language correctness makes a variety of languages so-called "standard" the norm. When a variety or individual variety is considered "correct" and all others are "incorrect" based on grammar, it establishes a linguistic hegemony among the speakers. Indeed, "standard language" or "correct" language is an outcome of stereotypical language policy and attitude. In fact, no language form can ever be "correct" or "incorrect" based on grammar; rather, power and politics determine a language form as "correct". Whether a piece of language is "right" or "wrong" is often a misleading idea. In practice, language may be better described as "appropriate" or "acceptable" for a given register or context. The pattern of a language is based on an arbitrary convention. Therefore, imposition of one pattern on others violates the linguistic human rights. Even more, no language should be called "correct" or "incorrect" based on an arbitrary norm or pattern; rather, it may be called "more usual" or "less usual".

Political Correctness in Language

Initially, Orwell (1946) initially introduced the term "politically correct speech". First, the term "politically correct" is associated with language correctness. Wilson (1995) stated that the US Supreme Court (1973) used the term "politically correct". Consequently, Cameron (1995) used the term "speech code" as a linguistic guideline for political correctness. Furthermore, Mills (2008) stated that "political correctness" is characterized as excessive attention to the sensibilities of those who are seen as different from the norm (women, lesbians, gays, disabled people, and black people). Concerning this, Lin (2010) extended the term and investigated the difference in the use of politically correct language between native speakers of English and non-native speakers. Another point to consider is that Plancic, Zanchi and Cudic (2013) first made a correlation between language correction and euphemism to promote the idea that no speech should be hurtful to others in any regard. In the same way, Phumsiri and Tangkiengsirisin (2018) claimed that politically correctness refers to the idea that someone who is politically correct believes that language and actions that could be offensive to others, especially those relating to sex and race, should be avoided. Similarly, the purpose of being politically correct is to help people avoid offensiveness in multicultural communication, and the language should be gender inclusive (Phumsiri & Tangkiengsirin, 2018). Therefore, language correctness should deal with how to use a language to avoid racism and sexism and avoid the racist element of a language.

Grammatical Correctness vs. Political Correctness in Language

"Grammatical correctness" is based on academic's "linguistic segregation", while "political correctness" is intended to prevent linguicism. The basis of "grammatical correctness" is a selected convention that is imposed by an academic weapon. However, "political correctness" is based on linguistic equality, linguistic human rights, and humanism largely. The ultimate objective of promoting the so-called "correct" language is to create a linguistic hierarchy in the name of standardization. The philosophical aspect of political "correct" language universally may be dealt with in every language worldwide, as well as universal human rights.

Conclusion

This study set out to determine, there are two things to keep in mind: grammatical correctness is a stereotyped linguistic attitude, and conversely, political correctness in language is necessary to keep a language free from racism, sexism, hegemony, linguistic discrimination, etc.

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