

Short writing

Science, Anthropology



Anthropology The specific article under examination is ‘English Is an Optimistic Language, Study Suggests’ (Parry). There are a number of reasons I found this article interesting. One of the most prominent reasons is that I have an interest in language and linguistics. While many individuals believe that language simply communicates reality, upon further examination it’s clear that different languages communicate culture differently. In choosing this article I was interested in discovering more about how different languages communicative these different aspects of culture and perspective. Another reason I found this article interesting was that as a student I recognize that writing is an important element of communication, as well as scholastic and professional success; as such, I believe that it can benefit me as a writer and communicator to understand various sociolinguistic and rhetorical aspects of the English language.

The study functioned by mapping a large segment of spoken English as a means of determining the emotional significance of the word usage. While the researchers had anticipated there would be an even distribution of language along negative, neutral, and positive parts of the spectrum, the research demonstrated that a disproportionate amount of the words fell near the positive end. The research is significant as it attests to prominent sociolinguistic elements. The researchers make the qualitative jump that the emphasis on positive word usage seems to be correlated with the development with the English language as one of utility. The researchers contend that as language is a fundamentally social activity the preponderance of positive words should come as limited surprise. Still, they also argue that while limited negative words were used when they were

implemented they seemed to be in more meaningful contexts. From this perspective the researchers argue that there is seemingly a ‘ don’t cry wolf’ effect in occurrence, wherein language users restrictively use negative language to communicate necessary and meaningful occurrence; conversely, it seems positive language can be implemented more in terms of a general expression of optimism.

In conducting this specific study there were a number of methods that the researchers implemented. As it would be impossible to simply map the entire English language, it was examined in usage patterns as recorded from, “ two decades of material from The New York Times, 18 months worth from Twitter, manuscripts from Google Books produced between 1520 and 2008 and music lyrics from 1960 to 2007 — for a total of 10, 222 words” (Parry). The researchers then attached an emotional significance to specific words on the positive to negative spectrum. Still, one questions if there may be a bias from this limited subject matter. The article does not make explicit where the research was originally published. It does note that the primary researchers were Chris Danforth and Peter Sheridan Dodds. Ultimately, such research opens the door for future investigations into examinations of real-time insights in social mood as expressed through language. For instance, the article note that current research is being conducted into Twitter attempting to construct a hedonometer that will provide a real time account of society’s mood.

References

Parry, Wynne. " English Is an Optimistic Language, Study Suggests." Live Science. N. p., 2012. Web. 24 Jan 2012. .