

Re: More Etymology!

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- *From:* "Peter T. Daniels" <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 17 Feb 2007 06:16:29 -0800
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On Feb 17, 4:17 am, "Franz Gnaedinger" <f...@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Feb 16, 3:58 pm, "Peter T. Daniels" <gramma...@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

Kindly excerpt from your above maanderings exactly those passages that you believe constitute an "argument."

Perhaps you don't recognize my arguments because they walk about in casual wear instead of a suit?

When closeted in that Benedictine monkish cell, did you not study Euclid, to learn how to set forth an argument? Or Aristotle, to learn the simple patterns for convincing someone to your view?

I clad my arguments in common language and not in academic terminology (apart from a few terms I tailored myself, for example verbal morphospace, a loan from biology). Let me give you a line up of my arguments in favor of permutations in language. You may then choose one paragraph, or a quote from one paragraph, for further discussion. As Google swallows my long messages I divide my reply into three parts, hoping they will get through.

There is no need to do so. I will restore them to a single message, in case there's anything worth replying to in the next two.

(part 1)

First argument. Our long words consist of syllables,

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This is a self-evident fact. We could call it an axiom.

which, in my opinion, testify to short words of early language –

This is an opinion. There is no room for opinion in an argument. (The known facts of language change also suggest that it is a mistaken opinion, but as it is an opinion, and thus has no place in an argument, it is irrelevant.)

comparable to the eukariotic cell that originated as symbiosis of bacteria (Lynn Margulis, for example in her publication *Early Life*, a book I keep at home).

Analogy and personal anecdote have no place in an argument.

Short words of one or two or three letters or phonemes limit language,

Another opinion; clearly contrary to fact, so not acceptable as an axiom or even as a postulate. (We didn't explore Non-Euclidean Geometry until centuries after the standard kind had been mastered.)

yet, as every restriction, also allow some specific possibilities, in this case a small and overseeable number of permutations that may have played a similar role in early language as rhymes in recent poetry.

Speculation, not argument.

Second argument.

Whoa, there hasn't been a _first_ argument yet!

children love playing with words.
Many children go through a phase when they talk backward, and some really excell at it.

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There is a sizable literature on language play, and without some hint of what you mean by "talking backward," this assertion is meaningless. If you refer to uttering a sentence by uttering all its phonemes in reverse order, there is no evidence that such language play exists.

So this is an assertion that is either meaningless or false.

Ask around among your friends, and you'll be amazed at how many played that innocent game as kids. An ex of mine saved the joy of word playing into her adult life. When she comes across a pleasant word she warbles variations of that word, effortlessly and happily turning it around in every which way, and making new sense of the variations. You can tell she is in a good mood when she does that warbling.

More anecdote. But unless you made note of the "every which way," you cannot state that one of the "ways" was to reverse the order of utterance of the phonemes.

Note that if such a phenomenon existed, there would be no need to investigate techniques of phonemic analysis — one would simply utter an utterance backward and discover exactly how to analyze clusters, length, sandhi, etc., etc.

Third argument.

Still waiting for a first argument.

Permutations lost their importance with our long words, yet rudiments can still be found. British English *_metre_* means a unit of length (I am 1.72 metres or 172 centimetres tall), while British English *_meter_* means a device for measuring an amount of gas or electricity. These permutations (–re versus –er) have related meanings. German *Topf* and *Pott* have both the same meaning, namely pot. As you will easily recognize, they come from inverse forms.

I will easily recognize no such thing; I would prefer to learn what the cognates of the two words are, in order to know whether they have any etymological connection whatsoever.

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Pott is of old usage,
and now more often used for an old ship. You
could never use Topf for a ship, really never.
So the word has doubled into a pair of inverses,
and one of the two initially equivalent inverses
has began to take on another but still somehow
related meaning. This process reflects the brain's
evolution: doubling of areas, then, by and by,
taking over specialized tasks (more in my last
argument).

Even if there were the slightest grain of truth in this speculation,
it would have nothing whatsoever to do with the topic of the argument
you are supposed to be making.

{Part 3 happens to fall on the other side of the ten-messages
boundary, so I can't scroll to it to be sure, but I see that Part 2
contains nothing but further irrelevant anecdote and no arguments, so
I shall not comment on any further parts.]