Language & Communication

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Language acquisition: process of learning language (narrow window of opportunity)

Seemingly a distinctly human capacity, or is it?

Start clip at 1:50, (1, 4 & 7

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lrv1CrGq3o&feature=related

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Dhc2zePJFE&feature=related

Distinction between verbal speech & language

Human food & air tracts connected: expands ability to make the sounds used to speak
Linguistic Diversity

- Accents: none of us & all of us speak w/ one, based on frame of reference
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CErb461jHA&feature=related
- Dialect: regional or class based version of a spoken lang.
- Unfortunately, this diversity is oft. viewed as suspect in the U.S. &/or threatening
Nonverbal communication

• There are many ways to communicate besides what we convey with speech &/or signing:
  • Body language, clothing, body art, touch
  • Kinesics: study of facial expressions, body position, posture, eye contact
  • Proxemics: study of cultural use of space

http://www.languagetrainers.co.uk/blog/2007/09/24/top-10-hand-gestures/
Universal Grammar

- Chomsky: lmtd. set of organizational rules common to all languages
- Support for this idea?
- Multilingualism, code switching (move seamlessly btwn languages), pidgins
Sapir-Whorf

- Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: different spin on language.
- Different languages produce different ways of thinking.
- English: 3 tenses, linear view of time.
- Inuit: cyclical view of time (2 tenses).
- Support for this idea?
- Lost in translation (concept).
- Ultimately: are all ideas translatable? (some require many more words in 1 language than another.)
Sociolinguistics

- Sociolinguistics: examines relationships between social & linguistic variation
- Consider extralinguistic forces: political, social & economic factors shaping language
- Gender contrasts: difficulty in use of forceful words between & . Ex. fudge!, phooey & damn
- Color distinctions: what color is this? ?
- Of course, not always so clear cut
• Tannen: comparing men & women’s speech
• Report: (reciting info) vs. rapport (social connect’ns)
• According to Tannen, who does what?
• Ex. College party over the wknd, how will each convey what happened?
• Criticisms for Tannen: prob’s w/ this analysis?
• Gender stereotyping, we have to be careful not to overgeneralize, may not be accurate
• Tannen’s more recent work, however, quite sound
• AE: read about analysis of metamessages
• How we don’t typically say what we mean, or mean what we say…
Language Change

- Change occurs in standard language form as well as in casual slang, even in the grammar.
- Vocab changes: often generational, to "burn" something in the 1960s? Today?
- Other examples? ("Floss")
- Change through culture contact, remember pidgins?
- Over time a pidgin may be lost (replaced w/ dominant lang.) or become a creole.
Bilingual Education

- Stigmatization of nonstandard speech
- Linguistic Society of America: dialect of English, systematic & rule-governed, not simply bad grammar & it is no better nor worse than S.E. (copula delet’n rule)
- Oakland school district’s 1996 decision
Ongoing debate surrounding bilingual ed. Today
Why so controversial?
Immersion classroom simulation
Remember: goal for these programs is not to teach multiple languages (which is not such a bad goal 😊) but rather, to assist students in becoming more fluent w/ the mainstream lang. by using their home lang.