Language, Society and Culture – Marcel Danesi

Test #1 chapters 1,2,4

Chapter 1: What is language

- Language constitutes the overarching memory system of the human species
- the ancient Greek philosophers: Language is a part of 'logos', the faculty of the human brain that had transformed the human being from an insentient brute into a rational, sentient creature
- Language: tool for gaining knowledge vs. misunderstanding/conflict-> "have words"

DEFINING LANGUAGE

- 'language' originated from Latin 'lingua' (tongue)
- there are about 6000 languages spoken in the world
- all languages have: 1) a system of distinctive sounds -> most have 20~60 vocal sounds
  2) units known as words
  3) grammatical structure
  4) strategies for using language in various ways (communication&representation)
  5) resources for making new words; new meanings

LANGUAGE AND SPEECH

- language= mental sign system
- speech= use of language to form and transmit messages

- can be vocal or non-vocal

- children by the age 5~6 control the main structure of their native language
- vocal speech made by lowering of the larynx
- 'universal grammar' for language (articulated initially by Plato)
- Poverty of Stimulus model of knowledge

- innatism
- based on a logical inference about the way humans learn

LEARNING TO SPEAK

- language vs. Speech dichotomy is a central one in linguistics
- innatists= children pick up language because it's innate in them
- empiricists= children learn language through imitation
- Noam Chomsky (famous for innatists vs. empiricists) - presence of Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which makes rule-making principles of UG available to all children

- child learns one fact about language and infers other facts without having to learn them one by one

*Universal grammar (UG) is a theory in linguistics that suggests that there are properties that all possible natural human languages have. Usually credited to Noam Chomsky, the theory suggests that some rules of grammar are hard-wired into the brain, and manifest themselves without being taught.

- Stephen Pinker- children are born with a 'language of thought' that makes them little grammarians constantly referring the right syntactic rules for the various speech samples with which they are exposed
- therefore, universal grammatical paradigm mirrors genetic paradigm
- problems with UG theory:

1) it is restricted to accounting for the development of syntax (sentence formation) in the child
2) it ascribes primacy to language, ignoring other faculties

- however, Chomsky is right about one thing: language acquisition is regular and predictable across the world

- children: six months-> holophrastic (one word); mu, ma, da, di, etc

1) naming an object
2) expressing an action or an desire for some action
3) conveying emotional states

- they are imitations of adult words ex) da for dog, ca for cat, etc
- Crystal: imitation is important during language development
- early sentences consists of 2 main classes of words: pivot class and open class

-ex) all-gone milk, see bro-bro... (A+B structure)

- children apply the words they learn at first in general ways-> overgeneralization

-ex) small animals as kitties, big animals as doggies

- in summary, learning to speak in the human species is a regular process marked by uniform milestones or stages, which are intertwined with the course of cognitive growth and motor development
- Vygotsky: children are like 'little poets' because they use words that are associated with an object to refer to that object

- ex) prof's grandson calling an orange cat a juice

- Lenneberg: in normal individuals the ability to acquire language after puberty diminished considerably

- aphasia causes language impairment by its damage to specific language areas in the brain

- the critical period hypothesis

- ex) the case with Genie; who suffered from isolation until the age of 14, she could not speak nor was able to learn how to speak

- development of language in the left hemisphere of the brain during infancy-> lateralization
- the two hemispheres of the brain are divided by *corpus callosum*
- right hemisphere (RH): seat of synthesis, imaginative, spatial thinking

- insight, 3D forms, art awareness, imagination, left hand control, music awareness

- left hemisphere (LH): seat of analytical, reflective, and verbal thinking

- number skills, written language, reasoning, spoken language, scientific, right hand control
- speech is controlled-> 1) Broca's area (muscle movements of the throat and mouth used in speaking 2) Wernicke's area (controls comprehension) 3) supplementary area (several functions that are restricted)

- damaga to Broca's area impairs the ability to perform verbal actions (pronounciation)
- damage to Wernicke's area leads to loss of comprehension
- damage to the left temporal lobe impairs the ability to find words and name objects and things -> anomic aphasia
- aphasia: damages part of the brain that interferes with the language

- do not occur during critical period

- verbal deficits can be caused by Specific Language Impairment (SLI)

- difficulties in area of word formation and recognition
- selection of words is weak -> cat instead of tiger

- Sperry's 'split-brain' studies

- brain is a highly modular organ, with each module involved in a particular task

- Obler and Gjerlow: there are no language centers per se but rather 'network nodes' that are stimulated; eventually one of these is stimulated enough that it passes a certain threshold and that node is 'realized', perhaps as a spoken word

LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

- the difference between society and culture is a very important one: within a society, there can be more than one culture but without culture, there would be no human society in the first place
- society: collectivity of individuals who, although they may not all have the same ethnic origins, nevertheless participate, by and large, in the same system of daily interaction based on a common language and way of living
- culture: complex meaningful practices, developed over time, that encode a specific world view or way of understanding the world ex) American culture)
- study of race and ethnics are consequence of world exploration during 16th and 17th centuries

- Carolus Linnaeus: first to consider categorizing the apparent varieties of human beings
- Johann Friedrich Blumenbach: humanity have 5 races; Caucasians, Mongolians, Ethiopians, Americans and Malayans
- race and ethnicity are not viewed by social scientists fundamentally as historical or cultural notions, not biological ones
- Johann von Herder and G.W.F. Hegel: all societies are intrinsically valid, equal and rational on their own terms
- nation-> ex) special event in the city of Siena, the city gets divided into contradas, streets within the city.

- the contrada is felt by the Sienese to be the critical component of social identity

- languages tell us more about societies than do elaborate social theories and historical analyses

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

- culture has taken over from nature in guaranteeing the survival of the human species and in charting its future evolution
- ethnographic- studying the characteristics of each culture's language, artifacts, modes of dress, rites of passage, religious and mythological systems of belief,rituals,ceremonies,and indigenous art forms

- Herodotus- first significant accounts of the cultures of virtually the entire ancient Middle

- Khaldun: differences between nomadic and city-dwelling Bedouins- environment changes the cultures

- culture was held together by the unifying force of religion, and it rose and fell according to 'cultural laws' that could be empirically discovered by an observer since they reflected both a group's pattern of adaption to habitat and the kinds of representational system it had developed over time

- Darwin's nature selection

- specific organisms evolve/adapt to the nature
- all related organisms are descended from common ancestors.

- Taylor-> culture: a complex whole including knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capability of habit acquired by human beings as members of society

- first to differentiate qualitatively between culture and society

- Boa's cultural relativism

- culture was so powerful that it shaped world view

- cultures influence beliefs, attitudes, world view and even sensory perception to varying degrees
- Malinowski: symbols, codes, rituals, and institutions that they might at first seem had universal structure properties that allowed people everywhere to solve similar life problems
- Dawkins wrote *The Selfish Gene, The Blind Watchmaker, River Out of Eden*

- cultures enhance survivability and future progress by replacing the functions of genes with those of cultural units that he calls *memes* (direct imitation of the word genes)
- memetic code is responsible for cultural progress, advancement, and betterment

- Wilson: characteristics such as heroism and altruism should be understood as evolutionary outcomes
- Foucault: human beings have sought to understand and define their identities and their states of consciousness by ascribing them to nature, human effort or God
- cultures are restrictive in that they impose upon individuals born into them as already-fixed system of knowledge
- cultures are liberating as they provide the resources by which individuals can seek new meanings on their own
- visual illusions provide strong evidence to support the notion that cultures mediates perception

- Carl Jung

- culture as a computer software

- computer in default mode until it is formatted

Chapter 2: Studying language

THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO LANGUAGE

- first attempt to describe a language scientifically -> Panini
- Aristotle-> division of sentences into subject and predicate
- Thrax ->nouns, verbs, articles, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs, participles
- Port Royal Circle – 'universal' grammar of French

- they saw the sentence 'an all-knowing God created the visible world' as made up of smaller sentences:
- God is all-knowing
- God created the world
- the world is visible

- Wilhelm von Humboldt's innere Sprachform (internal structure) particular structure of the language spoken

- every language has its own innere Sprachform, which determines its outer form and which is a reflection of its speakers' minds. Therefore, the language and the mind of people are inseparable

- Grimm, Bopp and Rask: initil /p/ sound of Latin pater (father) and pedem (foot) corresponded regularly to the initial /f/ sound in the English cognates father and foot.

- Schlegel's comparative grammar

- the sound correspondence between languages led to conclude that these languages have descended from the same documented language called Proto-Indo-European (PIE)

- proto-> language that had left no documentation ex. Cave inscriptions

- the protolanguage made it possible for the first time to explain regular differences in sound between related language

- ex) (English) father (Latin) pater (Greek) pater
- assumed that this p->f sound shift in English occurred because Greek and Latin were older languages thus closer in time to PIE.
- however, this change did not occur in cognate languages of English
- ex) (English) thing (Swedish) ting (German) Ding

- differences among languages descended from PIE were explained as sound shifts of various kinds

- Indo-European language family -> main branches (languages closer in time to PIE) and lower branches (modern day descendants of ex) Celtic, Germanic, and Latin)
- neo-grammarian school-> introduced notion of sound law ex) /p/>/f/ and /t/>/□/ (□=th)
- exceptions to these laws-> 'borrowing' (Latin initial /d/ should correspond to English /t/ ex: dentalis vs. tooth)

  - 'dental' was borrowed directly from Latin without modifying the pronunciation of the initial /d/ whereas 'tooth' was a native English version of the PIE word, showing the /d/>/t/ sound law

- Saussure's *diachronic* (study of distinction between the historical study of sounds) and *synchronic* (systemic study of a language at a specific point in time)

- he also proposed that the new science should focus on *langue*, the system of rules that members of a speech community recognize as their 'language' rather than on *parole* (word), or the ability to use the rules in conversation, writing.. etc
- ex with chess-> only people who know the rules can play; this constitutes the knowledge of chess *langue*, the actual use of this knowledge to play a specific game of chess is *parole*
- the goal of linguistics was to understand the nature of language
- notion of *difference*, structures of a language do not take on meaning and function in isolation but rather in differential relation to each other ex) cat vs. rat
- *structuralism*

- Trubetzkoy's *minimal pair*

- ex) what keeps the words rat and cat distinct?
- the pairs allow the linguists to test empirically what oppositions are significant in a language

- Jakobson: opposition theory can be used to explain features of language development

ex) sound oppositions that occur rarely in languages of the world are among the last ones learned by children
ex) nasal consonants like /n/ and /m/ exist in all languages (earliest sounds acquired by children :O)
- moreover, consonants like /k/ in cat or /h/ in horse are relatively rare (last sounds acquired by children)
- therefore, theory of opposition predicts the sequence of acquisition in children

- Bloomfield's 'manual of techniques' -> *descriptive* (describes languages as a means towards understanding the cultures that used them)
- Chomsky: understanding of language as a universal faculty of the human brain could never be developed from a piecemeal description of the sounds, word forms, etc... or widely divergent languages

- we have the access to the rules of *transformational* which we turn sentences with identical surface structures
- ex) 'John is eager to please someone' to 'John is eager to please', 'it is easy for someone to please John' to 'John is easy to please' -> we can perceive their difference in meaning because we unconsciously can reconstruct the deep structures of the two sentences

- arguments against Chomsky:

1) sentences are not the basic units in language but discourse *tests* are
- Halliday's *systematic linguistics* (looking at parts of speech such as pronouns, as 'test-governed' structures
ex) Sarah is a good person. Yes, Sarah is a good person -> Sarah is a good person. Yes, she is a good person
- use of pronoun to connect the various parts of the conversation

- the forms of language are sensitive to, and dependent upon, tests rather than sentences

2) *cognitive linguistics* (relation between language, cognition and culture)

- Lakoff -> having different words for genders

ex) table is masculine in German, feminine in French and neutral in Greek

- today, linguistics is divided into THEORETICAL or APPLIED subfields

ANTHROPOLOGICAL LINGUISTICS

- goal is to study languages by gathering data from native speakers

- ethnography, participant observation

- Boas first founded the first major department of anthropology in 1899
- Chomsky: task of linguists was to describe the 'ideal knowledge' of a language (*linguistic competence)*
- cross-cultural studies of language

ex) English just has 'uncle' to describe your mom's brother, your dad's brother...etc. But in different cultures, they have specific words to describe each

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

- all languages are structured in similar ways
- science of linguistics aim to study or describe languages in a systematic fashion

- instructive to introduce errors into some specific subsystem of a language on purpose

- ex) Johnny is a pboy who loves pizza

- we know that the word 'pboy' does not fit in there because there are no words in English that starts with /pb/

- the study of sounds and how they are combined to form structures such as words falls under the rubric of *phonology*
- phonology-> phonetics (description of the sounds themselves based on observing how the vocal organs modify the airstream in the mouth, nose and throat as they produce the various sounds of a language) and phonemic (identification of those sounds that are capable of distinguishing meaning in a language) analysis
- ex) /p/ is phonetics
- phonological error -> an boy, a egg... etc
- *morphological* subsystem-> level at which words are constructed and made to agree in form with one another when used in combinations of various kinds to form phrases

- a vs. an

- 2 important things about language structure:

1) phonological and morphological levels of language are not independent systems
2) physical effort involved in speaking (parole) has an effect on language structure (langue)
- principle of least effort (PLE) may be operative in determining the actual constitution of linguistic signs and systems

- PLE found by Zipf

- relationship between the length of a word to the rank order in the language
- *higher the rank order of a word (more frequent in use), the more it tended to be 'shorter'
  - study of morphological systems includes determining not only how the words are formed but also what constitutes a word, and how units smaller than words, called *morphemes*
  - in analytic or isolating languages such as Chinese, words tend to be made up of single morphemes
  - in synthetic or agglutinating languages, such as Italians, words may contain several morphemes
  - morphological error -> Johnny is boy a who loves pizza
- concern with infringements of some aspects of 'well-formedness'
  - semantic principle error-> Johnny is a boy who drinks pizza
  - gender-based onomastic error-> Johnny is a girl who loves pizza
  - Semantics: study of the relation between linguistic forms and the meanings they entail
- ex) orologio da polso (wristwatch), orologio da tavolo (table watch), orologio da muro (wall clock)
  - displacement vs. duality of patterning
- displacement: when we hear the word *chair*, it is not necessary for a chair to be within eyesight for us to know what it means-> we know what a chair is in our heads nontheless its different shapes
- duality of patterning: small # of meaningless sounds combined to construct meaningful sequences such as words

LANGUAGE, MIND, AND CULTURE

  - Whorfian Hypothesis (WH): idea that language, thought and culture are interlinks
- raises some questions about social inequalities and structure of language

ex) chairman, spokesman (sexist words)

  - Alpher: in Iroquois language, feminine gender was the default one, with masculine items being marked by a special prefix
- this is related to the Iroquois society being matrilineal (women >>>>> men)

LANGUAGE, DISCOURSE, AND VARIATION

  - subsystem in which we determine what kind of answer we should give to a given question is called *pragmatic* or *discourse* system

ex) What is it that Johnny loves? Pizza. Is it true that Johnny loves pizza? Yes, it is.

  - Pragmatic coined by Peirce
- Grice added the notion of *maxims* as a basis for the study of pragmatics

ex) there is an implicit maxim of *relevance* during conversation by which interlocutors assume that anything spoken is intended to be relevant

- Grice also claimed that conversations must show quality and quantity
  - Hymes: knowledge of language entailed the ability to use a language appropriately in specific interactive settings -> *communicative competence*
  - the study of variation has shown that all languages have *registers* -> modes of speaking or writing that are designed to match the formality of a situation, the medium used (speech or writing), or the nature of the topic involved in a speech act

ex) ways of saying goodbye -> goodbye! Bye! See ya!

- choices are different depending on politeness criteria present in English society

ex2) 존댓말 vs. 반말

  - top register (people you don't know well), middle register (people you are not friends but know ex. Neighbours), low register (friends)

Chapter 4: Language Levels

  - linguists realized that alphabet characters did not always provide a consistent guide to the actual pronunciation of the sounds in words

ex) /f/ sound in 3 ways -> **f**ish, **ph**ilosophy, enou**gh**

- introduced International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA): one symbol will always be understood to represent one and only one sound ex) [f] to indicate /f/ sound represented variously by letters f, ph or gh
  - study of sounds:

1) actual physical description of the sounds used by a language -> *phonetic description*
2) analysis of how these relate to each other structurally-> *phonemic analysis*
3) description of syllable structure
4) description of intonation features, stress patterns etc -> *prosodic analysis*
5) relation between sounds and writing symbols -> *orthographic analysis*

DESCRIBING LANGUAGE

- words that convey a single piece of meaning -> *minimal free forms*
- forms that occur in tandem with others -> *bound forms*
- describing the sounds, words, sentences, and other elements that form levels of systems within the larger system of language is the first step in developing a true science of language

THE PHONOLOGICAL LEVEL

- phonetic inventory of sounds
- this level basically talks about steps we take to make certain sounds

ex) in order to make/f/ sound
1) make lower lip touch the upper teeth
2) expel airstream emanating from the lungs in a constricted fashion
3) keep vocal cords taut (non-vibrating)
...-_-

- 2 basic kinds of phones- *vowels* and *consonant*
- actual pronunciation of a sound vary from speaker to speaker, which may be due to geographic, social or other factors
- phonological analysis:

1) determining which sounds are phonemic by means of the commutation test (test which consists in comparing sounds in minimal pairs(2 words that sound alike) in order to see if a difference in meaning results (ex.sing vs. zing))
2) establishing how allophones relate to each other by means of a complementary distribution
3) determining which features of sound are critical in both setting up phonemic status an predictablealopho9nic variation
- *distinctive feature analysis*

- consonants and vowel phones are physical *segments* of sound
- clusters are known as *syllables*
- another important aspect of pronunciation is *tone*

- use of *intonation* ex) Marie is French (↓), Do you know her? (↑)

MORPHOLOGICAL LEVEL

- description of word construction
- 8 classes of words: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections

- form classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
- function words: prepositions, determiners, auxiliaries, conjunctions

- bits and pieces that make up the single words-> *morphemes*

- if the meaning of the morpheme is lexical (cat, microbe) -> *root morpheme* or *lexeme*
- if purely grammatical (-s,anti-,-ial) -> *grammatical morpheme*

- ex) incompletely has 3 morphemes -> in/complete/ly
- affixes -> words like 'in' 'de' or 'ly'

- prefix goes in the beginning of a word ex) **in**completely

- suffix goes after another morpheme in the word ex) incomplete**ly**
  - two other types of affixes-> *infixes* and *circumfixes*

- infix-> affix that is inserted within another morpheme

ex) fikas (strong) -> f**um**ikas (to be strong)

  - circumfix-> affix that comes as a package since they are attached to a root morpheme

ex) lakna (it is yellow) -> **ik**lakna (it is not yellow)

  - different sounds of plurals-> /-s/, /-z/ or /-əz/ -> *allomorphs*

ex) tops (/-s/), loads (/-z/), churches (/-əz/)

  - Greenberg-> concept of morphological index

- index (I) is derived by taking a representative and large sample of test, counting the words and morphemes in it, and then dividing the number of morphemes (M) by the number of words (W)

I= M / W

THE SYNTACTIC LEVEL

  - studying sentence formation
  - sentences have hierarchy structure

sentence					
subject		predicate			
Noun phrase subject		Verb		Direct object	
Noun phrase		Progressive verb		Noun phrase	
Definite art	Noun	Auxiliary	Present part	Indefinite art	noun
The	Boy	Is	Eating	A	pizza

THE SEMANTIC LEVEL

  - the study of meaning
  - sameness (big/large), opposition (big/little), taxonomy (rose/flower), part-whole relations (handle/cup)
  - *sign*- something that stands for something other than itself

ex) cat -> 'a feline mammal' -> *referent*

- *concrete referent*-> something existing in reality or in real experience and is normally available to direct perception by the senses ex) the word 'cat'

- *abstract referent*-> something that is formed in the mind and is not normally available to direct perception by the senses ex) the word 'idea'

  - literal meaning vs. denotative meaning
  - masculine words vs. feminine words
  - how often the word is used by its certain meaning depends on the culture and society

ex) the word 'bitch' is rarely used to refer to female dog

  - main technique for establishing word meaning of various kinds is by comparison:

1) *synonymy*-> words having the same or nearly the same meaning in one or more of their uses

ex) 'near' and 'close'

2) *anatonymy*-> words having the opposite meaning

ex) 'night' and 'day'

3) *homonymy*-> words with the same pronunciation or spelling but different meanings

ex) 'aunt' and 'ant'

4) *homographs*-> orthographic homographs

ex) 'play' as in 'Shakespeare's play' and 'play' as in 'he likes to play'

5) *hyponymy*-> meaning of one sign is included in that of another

ex) meaning of 'tulip' is included in that of 'flower'

6) *context*-> real world condition or situation that constrains what an utterance means

ex) 'the pig is ready to eat'

- the world 'pig' has at least 3 meanings according to the social context
    - an animal called 'pig' is ready to eat
    - the cook is announcing that the pig is now cooked and ready
    - the person who is fat is ready to eat