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Digging Deeper

As a whole, meaning is derived from multiple components. The idea of communication is dependent upon the understanding of meaning being passed from one person to another person. The question here is not if meaning exists, but if meaning is communicable and understood in the absence of pieces to the puzzle, that is a sentence, or conversation in whole. One can see what the image is supposed to be when they see the puzzle only missing a few pieces, but those few piece may be crucial. I am attempting to explore this premise by looking at cross-cultural communication as well as non-verbal communication and/or gestures in communication, and how things may be “lost in translation.”

Goldin-Meadow, Susan. "Symbolic Communication Without a Language Model: The Starting Point for Language-Learning." *Symbol Use and Symbolic Representation: Developmental and Comparative Perspectives*. By Laura L. Namy. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005. 101-21. Print.

In “Symbolic Communication Without a Language Model: The Starting Point for Language-Learning,” I found that one chapter in the book focused on the ability of children to construct meaning and derive meanings without the presence of a “Language Model” (Goldin-Meadow, 102). A “Language Model” is the existence of a grouping of associated objects and things under a symbol, such as, when a child learns the word dog as a symbol that encompasses her cocker spaniel as well as all other “four-legged, barking, furry creatures” (Goldin-Meadow, 101). A symbol is a unit of meaning, and in this, a symbol may be represented in any number of ways, but I am focusing on gesticulations primarily, so in Chapter 5, one discovers the “Starting Point for Language-Learning” (Goldin-Meadow, 101). The chapter talks about how learning a language is mostly based on the grouping that is done between words and their respective objects, as in the case with the child’s grouping of dogs (Goldin-Meadow, 101). The chapter then goes on to see what happens when a child does not have the ability to make these associations, and what the outcome of these situations turns out to be.

As in this book, Bridget’s Narrative highlights the groupings and usage of words. In reference to Bridget’s work, the book shows how as we learn language, in general, we make associations and groupings and this means that when words are used incorrectly, one may not understand the terminology and completely misconstrue the entire meaning of the sentence or conversation. Bridget talks about the phrase, “You are the shit,” this can be understood in the literal meaning, or it can be understood in the way it is actually meant to be, meaning “You are awesome” or “you are the best” (Bridget, Project 1, Mode 2).The book shows how there can be misunderstandings in the misuse or adapted usage of words and phrases that are spoken to someone who is new to the association of the word or phrase with the new, adapted, use and meaning of the word or phrase. The book talks about how meanings do not always translate. Like the children who make their own symbols with their own meaning, societies and cultures make their own meanings for words and phrases too. The slang that different societies use can be directly associated with this same concept of the personal symbols and meanings of children whom make their own symbols for everyday things (Goldin-Meadow, 103-104).

There is a correlation between the little boy, that Goldin-Meadow talks about, using his own symbol of putting his little empty fist to his mouth and acting like he is chewing, and the use of a phrase such as, “Let’s get some *grub*,” the person is not actually going to get some insect larva, the person is actually going to get something to eat. This is the same message the little boy is trying to get across, the want for food (Goldin-Meadow, 103). Therefore, some things that are made symbols are universal, even those symbols that are personal and made individually. This means that the study is wrong on the count of all groupings being simple (Goldin-Meadow, 101). I believe that the book holds great insight into the building and learning of language, but I also believe that the views that were taken in the book are a very broad and general spectrum that, in being so large, has short changed itself by missing the details that make society and the culture of language work.

This can be seen in “The Development of Meaning” by Joan Tough. In “The Development,” I found the information that, although dated, presents the factor of age as being very influential to the ability to conceive of meaning and to process and “practice” the art of language use, whereas Goldin-Meadow talks about children in general not specifying age, and therefore making there be cause for speculation that the source is inaccurate due to its lack of detail and specificity. Without the ages present, “The Development” can refute the arguments made by the author by stating that their research is inadmissible and incorrect, because at age 3 children have different conceptual sense than at ages 5 to 7, meaning that a 7 year-old is more likely to understand the slang words or phrases and make associations with these words and the meaning they are being used to convey (Tough, 89-93).

Tough, Joan. *The Development of Meaning: A Study of Children's Use of Language*. New York: Wiley, 1977. Print.

In “The Development of Meaning,” the author goes through the cycle of language-learning. The author talks about the ability to understand and articulate at the young age of 3 years. In talking about the ability of a child at 3 years, the author sets herself up to begin talking about the maturation and development of language usage with growth and age, specifically ages 5 to 7.

The chapter I am focusing on discusses the distinct differences between language usage at age 3 and the language usage at ages 5 to 7. In this, the author discovers that with a little practice a kid can soon get near perfect social understanding, but is it mimicry or understanding? This is what the author delves into. The source helps me answer my question by pointing out all of the factors that go into the analysis of my question. Age, status, and culture are some of the most important factors. The text can be forwarded by the Gomez narrative. In the narrative, Gomez learns English from Disney movies, I believe that this first started off as mimicry, because she even says that she can quote the movies word for word, but I believe it slowly turned into understanding as context and situational understandings came into place. The factors that are present in the text of this source, such as the learning from movies, are also present in the narrative and therefore find themselves being proven through actual experience from the author of the narrative (Gomez, 1-2).

I can understand that though the author makes good points in this source, the book “Communication and Language” makes me foster a new view on the details that are being presented. This book discusses the facets of language in a modern light. The book would refute some of the findings in the source due to age. The book would show that the source is outdated.

Thompson, Neil, and Jo Campling. *Communication and Language: A Handbook of Theory and Practice*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Print.

This book goes into detail about the theories and concepts that surround and make-up Communication and Language. I found that the source represents the material in a fashion that depicts its interpretation as the definition of the concepts. The book, in general, is a self-proclaimed “Handbook of Theory and Practice.”

**The book can be forwarded by the above sources, but the book can also refute and possibly disregard those same sources. By using the definitions and theoretical findings that are in the book, that are also up-to-date, I can see that the Tough source, while forwarding the Goldin-Meadow source is also being denied accuracy by showing the datedness of the materials. Definitions change and so the sources can both be proved and disproved due to this fact.**

The question I am posing can be answered by using these sources to delve into the concepts that are posed by communication and language. The answer is not simple, but complex, as are the languages that are spoke or not spoken. The idea that all non-verbal communication is universal is not true. The use of non-verbal communication is however. These sources took many case studies that prove this.

KEY:

Blue= Forwarding

Red= Countering

Green=Connections between Sources

Works Cited

Goldin-Meadow, Susan. "Symbolic Communication Without a Language Model: The Starting Point for Language-Learning." *Symbol Use and Symbolic Representation: Developmental and Comparative Perspectives*. By Laura L. Namy. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005. 101-21. Print.

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