*The Indigenous Child’s Use of Language in her Home*

What is language used for anyway? The indigenous child uses language to belong, to connect, and to create a reality within which to grow and prosper, as afforded her by her language partners. Examining how language use affects the indigenous child’s construction of her own language use potentially leads us to enriching her early language environment with language that liberates and empowers her construction of her [new] native tongue. This interactive workshop reviews research and practice on language acquisition environments in Texas, Solomon Islands, and in Cameron. What is language used for in your place?

Among various frames to describe language functions, consider Jakobson (1960), Tough (1974), Halliday (1977), and Baron (1990). Baron's set of five language functions comes from looking at the child, and the speakers around the child, and how they present morsels of language with which the child constructs his or her own language.

AFFECTION

CONTROL

INFORMATION

PEDAGOGY

SOCIAL EXCHANGE

Analysis of the child's linguistic environment uncovers certain affects of speech by caregivers. These adaptations in caregiver speech tend to highlight the salient features of language for the child to notice. Notice the phoneme, the morpheme, and word upon word. But what of the pragmeme?

The pragmeme, the smallest unit of communicative competence '…knowing when to speak, when not to, what to talk about, and with whom, when, where, and in what manner to interact' (Hymes, 1972) sits just below the visible surface of everything we speak. We know cause and effect; the presence of engaging responsive interactions creates an environment where a child can acquire communicative competence, and gain the pragmeme, and we know where it's not gained. But we don't know the pragmeme.

What is language used for in your place? How do children acquire communicative competence, catch the pragmeme?

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