A Cognitive Approach to Understanding Linguistic Politeness in American Sign Language

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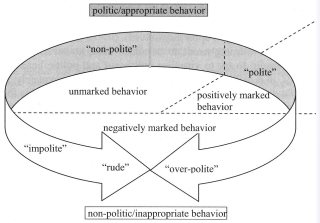
Background

The proper focus of research should be on first order (im)politeness, defined as, "**the ways in which (im)polite behaviour is evaluated and commented on by lay members of a language community**" (Watts 2003, 274).



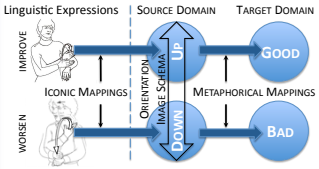
Watts' relational work continuum of politic/non-politic verbal behavior

How do we gain this insight in signed language communities given the difficulties of collecting and transcribing natural signed conversational data?

Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Cross domain mapping–understanding one thing in terms of another. For example:

Prototype: GOOD IS UP

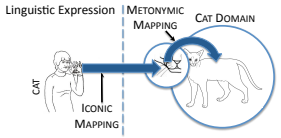


Metaphorical Entailment: BAD IS DOWN

Conceptual Metonymy

A mapping within the same domain. Often a part-for-whole relationship. For example:

WHISKERS FOR CAT



Methods and Analysis

Conducted ethnographic observations of native ASL signers in four states in the mid-Atlantic and southeastern regions of the United States.

Collected evaluative lexical terms and pragmatic markers that were used within and across various types of interactions and conversations.

Analyzed terms for metaphoric usage through the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP and MIPVU) (Pragglejaz Group 2007; Steen et al. 2010), which was adapted for ASL in this study.

Prepared a database of tables formatted in the style of Taub (2001, 103).

Deconstructed iconic depictions of these terms with the aid of native ASL-signing colleagues and reference to Old ASL dictionaries and films, Old LSF dictionaries, Modern LSF dictionaries, and an LSF consultant.

Videotaped a semi-structured interview with one Deaf native ASL-signing informant (Wilcox 2000, Chapter 3).

Proposed a potential conceptual structure based on mapping relationships.

Conclusion

More insight is gained into potential conceptualizations of first order (im)politeness in the ASL community.

HANDSHAPE/ORIENTATION STANDS FOR DISPOSITION