



11-823 Conlanging

Orality

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- ◆ *Language differs without a written form*
- ◆ *Orality and Literacy” Walter Ong*
- ◆ *Socrates:*
 - *Criticized the written form noting its inability to defend itself through dialog*

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 - *(He wrote his argument down though)*

A Language Technology Experience

- ◆ *“Speech Interfaces for Information Access by Low-Literate Users in the Developing World” PhD Dissertation, Jahanzeb Sherwani, CMU 2009*
- ◆ *Healthcare workers in rural Pakistan*
- ◆ *Low literacy, so speech should be better*
- ◆ *Not clear what language you should use*
- ◆ *(Always someone else's dialect)*

Healthline

◆ *Lessons Learned*

- *Low literacy users not good with bullet points*
- *Structured dialog is literacy dependent*

◆ *So what should we do*

- *Low literacy people do learn*
- *They do remember things*
- *If it fits their culture/environment*

◆ *Devise information as stories*

- *Related to local environment*

Oral Cultures

- ◆ *So how do oral cultures remember*
 - *Through speech*
- ◆ *But speech is hard to remember, so*
 - *Use rhymes and meter*
 - *Use repetition*
 - *Active voice*
 - *Multi-adjective*
- ◆ *Long Sagas are made to be remembered*
 - *Homer's Odyssey, Beowulf, Mahabharata*

Orality Factors (Ong)

- ◆ *Formulaic Styling*
 - *Once upon a time,*
昔々 (*mukashimukashi*)
 - *Rhythm, breathing, meter*
- ◆ *Additive rather than subordinative*
 - *X and Y and Z*
- ◆ *Aggregative rather than analytic*
 - *“sturdy oak tree”, “beautiful princess”*
- ◆ *Redundant or copious*
 - *“great big giant”*

Orality Factors (Ong)

- ◆ *Conservative or Traditionalist*
 - *The story had always been like this*
- ◆ *Close to human lifeworld*
 - *Close to real life, relevant to real world*
- ◆ *Agonistically toned*
 - *“combative” about battles, struggles*
 - *(car chases)*
- ◆ *Empathetic and participatory*
 - *Wise seniors, part of this culture*
 - *(cf jury system)*

Orality Factors (Ong)

- ◆ *Homoestatic*
 - *Its hard to remember so remove irrelevant*
 - *Ndewura Jakpa (C17th founder of Ghana)*
 - *Had 7 sons, but now only “had” 5 sons*
 - *The story had always been like this*
- ◆ *Situational rather abstract*
 - *Few hypotheticals*
 - *1930s study in Uzbekistan/Kirghizia*
 - *Syllogisms, self opinions, thought problems*

Nursery Rhymes

- ◆ *Still part of our oral culture*
 - *Long term spoken verse*
 - *Passed down through the ages*
 - *Rhymes, consistent*
 - *Though sometimes archaic*

Nursery Rhymes

*Ring-a-ring o' roses,
A pocket full of posies,
A-tishoo! A-tishoo!
We all fall down.*

Nursery Rhymes

*Ring-a-round the rosie,
A pocket full of posies,
Ashes! Ashes!
We all fall down*

Nursery Rhymes

Sing a song of sixpence,

A pocket full of rye.

Four and twenty blackbirds,

Baked in a pie.

Nursery Rhymes

Half a pound of tuppenny rice,

Half a pound of treacle,

[Mix it up and make it nice, |

That's the way the money goes]

Pop! goes the weasel.

Oral Rhymes

- ◆ *Archaic fixed forms*
 - “*four and twenty*”
 - “*posies*”
 - “*treacle*”
 - “*daily bread*” (*Lord's Prayer*)
- ◆ *Archaic Grammar*
- ◆ *Meaning can be obscure*

Songs, Rhymes, Mnemonics

- ◆ *Songs as*
 - *Stories (Ballads)*
 - *Histories*
 - *Instructions Information*
 - *Maize planting song*
 - *Alphabet song*
 - *Washing hands*

Songs, Rhymes, Mnemonics

- ◆ *Sayings/Mnemonics*

- *Red sky at night, shepherd's delight*
- *Red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning*

- ◆ *Facts [sic]*

- *In fourteen hundred and ninety-three*
- *Columbus sailed the ocean sea*

- ◆ *Richard of York Gave Battle in Vain*

- ◆ *May I have a large container of coffee thank you*

- ◆ *Thirty days hath September ...*

Culturally Appropriate

- ◆ *Tamil planting songs*
- ◆ *Military marching songs*
- ◆ *Japanese Haiku warnings*
- ◆ *Sesame Street Songs*

Diglossia

- ◆ *Distinction between formal/informal*
 - *“High” form and “Vulgar” form*
 - *can have a prestige relation*
- ◆ *Written forms usually “high” form*
 - *Standardized (has wider audience)*
 - *May be less literal of actual spoken words*

Diglossia

- ◆ *Speech/Writing*
 - *Different distribution*
 - *Spoken form has more*
 - *first person, active forms*
 - *Written form has more*
 - *Third person, passive forms*
- ◆ *Written form influences spoken form*
 - *More standardized*
 - *Pronunciation: forehead, forecastle, botswain*
 - *Second person singular*

Language Technologies

- ◆ *Writing (2000-3000 years ago)*
 - *Only elite, mostly for taxes*
- ◆ *Standardize writing (Latin/Mandarin/Sanskrit)*
 - *More text beyond tax/laws/religion*
- ◆ *Printing press (Gutenberg 1450)*
 - *First press in England 1475*
 - *By 1500 >20m volumes printed*
- ◆ *Plays (1700s)*
 - *High German standardizations (cf Soaps)*
- ◆ *Newspapers/pamphlets*
- ◆ *Letter Writing*
- ◆ *Typewriters*

The Second Orality ...

- ◆ *Radio, Television*
 - *Broadcast to many*
 - *Causes standardization of spoken form*
- ◆ *Telephone*
 - *Allow wider communication*
 - *More immediate than letters*
- ◆ *Email/short messages*
 - *More colloquial, more immediate*
- ◆ *Twitter*
 - *Beyond written speech*
- ◆ *More people write now than 20 years ago*

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- ◆ *Siri tell me why you think the author named his character “Winston Smith”*

