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Module 5 Homework

Section 1

The four categories of competence are:

1. Politeness. Politeness is an understanding of all the rules governing a culture's use of language (from lexicon and pragmatics to morphology and inflection) and using those linguistic tools in the proper situations to achieve desirable communicative results and to understand a given context and employ the language that best suits a speaker's needs and the situation. An example of this in American English would be using sir and ma'am (though those have fallen out of favor to a degree), may instead of can, and please instead of give me. Politeness can be used to defer to someone in power, or to show mastery over others by using a more 'proper' dialect.
2. Speaker Roles: Speaker roles is a way of describing how a speaker will change their interactions (which, like politeness, includes everything from lexicon to inflection) according to the environment. An example of this would be a group of teenagers using idioms and jargon in a group at lunch, but then using more formal language when in the classroom or while speaking to the principal (let's say they are on a school committee and are planning an event—their speaking roles with the principal while trying to get a theme approved would be vastly different).
3. Turn-Taking: Turn taking is how frequently and under what contexts speakers wait before beginning their part of the conversation. The length of the pause is usually determined by the situation, culture, and status of the speakers. Interestingly, the book cites that in Western Apache, a quick response to a question is disrespectful because it shows that the speaker has not given

time to contemplation before answering. Contrast this with boot camp or basic training in the US military where immediate responses to superiors is not only respectful, but required (unless you want to do endless pushups).

4. Adjacency pairs: Adjacency pairs are utterances produced by two different speakers where the utterance of the first speaker provokes the second speaker to respond with another utterance that is related to the first. A good example of this would be one person saying “hey, how are you” and the second person saying “I’m great, thanks. What about you?”. A bad version of this is person one asking “hey, how are you” and the second saying “no, I didn’t take my ostrich to the movies yesterday”.

Each of these categories can and does deal with power. Politeness can be used to show deference and directness to an individual, but being overly polite in a social situation where it is not warranted can show condescension and annoyance. For example, two children fighting over a toy might employ this. The child with the toy may say “not until you say please” before giving the object back, after which the second child might say “please may I have the XXX, sir?” through clenched teeth, thereby doing what the first child asks, but in a very snarky and condescending way. Speaker roles can show power in a conversation by expecting a subordinate to follow the rules dictated by the individual in charge. Using the high school group and speaking to a principal again, the principal might expect the high school group to defer to his or her authority and speak accordingly. Whether or not the group addresses the principal formally or not might determine whether he or she grants the group’s request. Turn taking is similar to roles, in that someone who does not wait their turn can likely show that they do not care what the first speaker has to say (talking over someone generally implies the one being interrupted is inferior). It can also be used positively in a moment of excitement (if speaker A begins saying something but speaker B says “yeah, yeah, yeah, but did you hear about what Tony said!?”). Finally, adjacency pairs can be used positively or negatively. If someone does not care what the first speaker is saying speaker B

will respond with something irrelevant or try and start their own discussion. This shows that speaker B has the power and does not care about speaker A's discussion.

Section 2

1. The vowel usage between the two groups varied dramatically. The Burnouts emphasized the Northern Cities Shift, with the girls displaying the most advanced shift compared to boys. The Jocks, on the other hand, used the more standard vernacular. This suggests that the Burnouts' usage of a more extreme or fringe pronunciation matched their fringe and counter-culture identity in school and society.
2. The jocks primarily came from middle to upper class communities and as such used a standardized linguistic variation while the Burnouts came from predominantly lower class/working class families suggesting the jocks sought more conformity to middle class standards.
3. The linguistic styles of the two groups extended to other forms of communication besides just verbal options. The book states that "Boys had greater access to extralinguistic ways of signaling group membership, by either playing varsity sports or cruising in their cars". The expression of sportswear from the jocks and cruising from Burnouts allowed the boys more ways of expressing themselves and thus, accounts for the more normalized speech patterns compared to the girls.