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The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 30 Oct 1998

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Gap — 30 Oct 1998, 17:17

Hello!

I've not yet seen SF which gets Linguistics right at all; the tendency is to go wild on the wildest version of Whorf's hypothesis, or to get some basic concept wrong. As an MSc in Computer Science, it's the same for computing. This is not to say that there couldn't be a tool for programming the mind via language (indeed, advertising and so on show that there is), but it's not going to be Sumerian.

This post is interesting, because I recently saw a book by Jack Vance called The Languages of Pao, which said something like "The first science fiction book based on the science of linguistics" on the cover. I have no idea what the story is about. Since Wolfe says he was influenced by Vance, particularly the Dying Earth books, I wondered if there are any stories where someone has noticed any emphasis on linguistics.

The Languages of Pao is a very interesting book where the language is used to reunite different cultural groups. I live in Montreal (I'm sure you notice that I'm not English) and I think that I'll start to teach this language to all people in this town...I'm sure (if you are aware of the political situation here) this will help us to understand each other! ;-)

What about C.S. Lewis's "Out of the Silent Planet"? The main character is a philologist and a significant portion of the book is about language learning. Does that count as "linguistics"?

There is Wolfe's whole "I'm just translating this old manuscript from the future" conceit, which is fairly old hat (except maybe the "from the future" part. Have other authors done that before? Wolfe seems to play it pretty much as a joke.)

Some other example of the use of linguistics as a tool in a SF text can be found in this 2 famous work: 1984 and Flowers for Algernon.

Gap

<http://www.dsUPER.net/~gape>

"la vie est trop courte pour être prise au sérieux"

n.b.: sorry for my so poor English...but I've begun to read this list a long time ago and now I just want to say at least a little "hello" even if it's not understandable...