

Human Voice, This Mystery

Prof. Terumichi HORIUCHI
English Phonetic Society, Japan

Summary:

Human beings and chimpanzees are very much alike, and scientists say there is only 1% difference between them. Contrary to our expectations, the difference lies not in brains but in tracheas (windpipes). Those of human beings are bigger and longer than those of chimpanzees. That means more air is inspired and expired as breath.

About breath there are interesting descriptions in the Bible. In the Genesis it says God made a man out of soil and breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live. In other part it says life exists between incoming breath and outgoing breath. Thus breath plays key role in our life. In Hebrew and Greek, breath and spirit are the same words. In Hebrew it is 'Luahf' and in Greek, 'Pneuma'.

With breath and mouth organs human beings produced voice, and with heritage and through learning we train our voice to reach the level of language which convey our culture.

My contention is to realize the gift of voice and train it so that it can perform proper function as a tool of conveying our thought and culture. This is a kind of practice of speech and it may be called speechology.

It includes the following practical methods:

1. Try to read aloud.
2. Encourage recitation.
3. Make public speaking as possible.
4. Learn theories of phonetics; such as about pronunciation, accent, intonation, prominence, assimilation and so on.