Arrival (Denis Villeneuve, 2016)

Main Characters:
   a. Dr. Louise Banks
   b. Dr. Ian Donnelly
   c. Colonel Weber
   d. The Heptapods

Questions to consider. Important terms appear in bold.

Introduction:
   1. How does the movie introduction reflect the alien language?

At the university:
   2. What is Dr. Banks’ job?
   3. What does this show us about the relationship between linguistics and translation?

Colonel Weber’s visit:
   4. When Colonel Weber brings the recording of the alien language to Louise, why is she unable to interpret it? What reasons does she give?
   5. What are the assumptions of Colonel Weber during his first visit to Dr. Banks?
   6. What is the significance of the conversation about the Sanskrit word for war?
   7. The movie shows a crucial moment in world/human history. What disciplines are present at this moment? How do Ian and Louise differ on their views on language/science?
   8. How does the relationship between Louise and Ian evolve? How does it reflect the relationship between language and science in the context of the movie? What does it tell us about the relationship between language and science?

First contact:
   9. What aspects are utilized to show the “alienness” of the Heptapods? How do they communicate?
   10. How does Dr. Banks react during her first contact with the Heptapods?
   11. What factors does she need to take into account in order to communicate with the Heptapods? Why does she rely on visual communication?
   12. What are her first steps in trying to establish contact with them?
   13. What does the Kangaroo story illustrate?
   14. Why does Dr. Banks need to start from the very beginning when communicating with the Heptapods?

Communicating with the Heptapods:
   15. What does Dr. Banks call “a proper introduction”?
   16. What role does body language play in communicating? What are the challenges for using body language when the Heptapods are so different anatomically from humans?
17. What is a palindrome? What role does it have in communicating with the aliens?
18. When do the flashbacks/fast-forwards begin? Why is this significant?
19. What are some of the conclusions that Louise reaches regarding communication with the Heptapods, as narrated by Ian? What do these conclusions tell us about the nature of language and communication?
20. What discoveries has Ian made about language while working with Louise? Why is this significant?
21. What different methods does Dr. Banks use to understand the Heptapod language? What effect does studying Heptapod have on Louise?
22. Ian says that immersing yourself in a foreign language can rewire your brain and change the way you think, which Louise confirms (she mentions the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis). What do you think of this statement/theory? How does this scene foreshadow the nature of the Heptapod language and explain Louise’s dreams?
23. What is the role of technology in communicating with the Heptapods?
24. What’s problematic about interpreting the word “weapon”? What’s Dr. Banks’ explanation? What’s the worldwide reaction to the phrase “use weapon”? In order to understand the message of the Heptapods, what does the world need to do? What really is the “weapon”? What does Louise do with the weapon?
25. What role does time play in the understanding of the Heptapod language? When do the Heptapods leave? What is the result of Louise’s understanding of the Heptapod language? Why does she call it the universal language?
26. When does Ian appear in Louise’s fast-forwards? Why?

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