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## Linguistic Anthropology

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Linguistic anthropology is the study of language in culture and society. The field analyzes linguistic practices as culturally significant **actions** that constitute social life. The situated use of language is exemplary of the meaning-making process that shapes a social worlds saturated with contrasting values and contested interests, with opposed political positions and identities, with variable access to institutions, resources and power. Linguistic anthropology examines the role of social interaction – and the semiotic processes on which it relies – in making, mediating and authorizing those contrasts and differences. Aspects of context enter into this process through linguistic form itself, as form signals speaker alignments and cultural presuppositions that are called into play during social interaction. Presuppositions invoked during interaction can draw on any cultural realm: categories of contrasting identities, folk ontologies, notions of truth, space, time, cosmological order, and morality. Such presuppositions are invariably linked to language ideologies, that is, culturally specific conceptions about language and its role in social life.

Recent research on language-in-context has resulted in new definitions of the field's fundamental concepts: 'language' 'metalanguage' 'discourse' 'context' 'event' and 'text.' Metalanguage is crucial because it makes possible the reflexivity that is a necessary feature of verbal interaction. Reflexivity has methodological as well as theoretical implications. Speakers' categories of speech, events and personae are reflexive in that they create frames of

interpretation for social interaction and are not necessarily uniform within any group. They are indispensable starting points for empirical investigation of talk. Such categories provide perspectival views on interaction and contrast with the linguists' own perspectives and direct observations. Scholarly discourses and debates about language are of theoretical interest as well. Like the metadiscursive categories about language and interaction of ordinary speakers, expert debates also create frames of interpretation; they participate in cultural systems, and often legitimate relations of power.

In concert with some poststructuralist philosophies, yet in quite different ways, linguistic anthropology analyzes linguistic practices not only as the instruments of social life, but rather as the **ground** on which social and cultural conflicts are fought. A key issue has been the creation of cultural authority through communication. As a result, current research in linguistic anthropology has considerable significance in the study of political and economic formations, scientific and religious enterprises, as well as in the more traditional study of group boundaries and social identities. Contemporary linguistic anthropology provides the semiotic concepts necessary to understand how social institutions – including "language" and linguistic structure – are reproduced, authorized, and continually transformed.

## Terms and Turfs

The label 'linguistic anthropology' was coined in the late 19th century by scholars at the American Bureau of Indian Affairs who collected folkloric material among native Americans. Its current use in the United

States dates from the early 1960s, when ‘linguistic anthropology’ became a cover term for the study of language in social life and conversely for the study of social context in shaping linguistic structure and use. Two commitments have remained central to the field, and link it distinctively to anthropology: First, ethnography is its indispensable methodology, though augmented by elicitation, interview and audiovisual technologies. Second, linguistic form and function are studied within a cross-cultural, comparative framework, with attention to human universals along with historical, regional, and power-laden sociocultural differences.

A set of other hybrid labels emerged at roughly the same time, also proposing to study language in social, cultural and psychological terms. Scholars from a number of disciplines came together under labels such as: sociolinguistics (later split into interactional and variationist), ethnography of communication, linguistic stylistics, linguistic pragmatics, psycholinguistics, ethnomethodology, ethnolinguistics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, interactional analysis, sociology of language, and anthropology of language, among others. Some of these terms became alternate designations within linguistic anthropology (e.g. ethnography of communication, interactional sociolinguistics), others have come to mark differences of emphasis (e.g. discourse analysis, pragmatics). Still others, like variationist sociolinguistics and conversation analysis, have developed characteristic methodologies, remaining closely aligned with their disciplines of origin – linguistics and sociology respectively.

The intellectual excitement and energy evidenced by the proliferation of terms, conferences, and edited volumes in the 1960s was an ironic response to the establishment of separate departments of linguistics in American universities in the post-WWII period. These departments provided institutional backing for the formalist study of language as an autonomous phenomenon, putting aside concerns with the contexts of language. They thereby indirectly re-invigorated such contextual questions in other institutional venues. Only psycholinguistics was directly spurred by generative grammar, which legitimated cognitive questions in the face of the reigning behaviorism. The new contextual fields were surely also encouraged by more funding for cybernetics and ‘communication research,’ which became policy sciences during the Cold War.

Within anthropology, the new labels joined the much older term ‘anthropological linguistics,’ which was closely tied to fieldwork-based typological research on native North America languages as established by Franz Boas in the early 20th century. Those

who now adopt the label of anthropological linguistics are oriented to linguistics departments, to descriptive work in the structuralist tradition or to historical reconstruction of language and verbal art in unwritten languages. Those identifying as linguistic anthropologists orient to anthropology departments and to language and speech as cultural practice. Many individual scholars are active in both kinds of research. Differences of emphasis notwithstanding, linguistic anthropology and anthropological linguistics have been used interchangeably as labels in textbooks and encyclopedias. The Boasian tradition gives linguistic anthropology significant institutional recognition, intellectual influence and prestige within the discipline of anthropology.

In the hybrid fields of the 1960s, practitioners held themselves accountable to different departmental audiences (linguistics, sociology, anthropology), resulting in different emphases and preferred topics. Collections of articles in the last few decades, however, have usually included scholars from several disciplines, all writing on a single theme. The roster of substantive topics has included: the linguistic marking of social relations and identities; conversational interaction and other speech genres; political processes mediated by speech such as decision-making and dispute settlement; language and nation; multilingualism, linguistic variation and multidialectalism; standardization and literacy; national language policy; narrative, performance, verbal art and ritual; the emergence, circulation and desuetude of languages, linguistic varieties, registers and styles; the acquisition of cultural competence through language; the relation of cognition to linguistic categories as coded in grammars and lexicons; the mechanisms of language change. The last half century has also brought new issues such as the globalization of languages and the effect of novel communicative technologies.

## **Roots and Shoots**

Linguistic anthropology is often called an interdisciplinary field. But considered as an intellectual (rather than a departmental or institutional) endeavor it is rather a set of lineages or kinship lines that are read and invoked for inspiration and legitimation. As in all segmentary lineage organization, naming one’s ancestors is also a means of forming alliances and oppositions in today’s controversies. (What the field would analyze as the relation of narrated and narrative event.) This very brief recitation of family ties is not a history of linguistic anthropology but an overview of a usable past on which current practitioners rely.

The turn of the 20th century is the conventional starting point, especially the work of Franz Boas,

Edward Sapir and their students. They collected textual materials to document peoples whose cultures were rapidly changing under brutal colonial pressure. These scholars were inspired by the previous century's German tradition that considered language as a historical guide to the customs and values of a group. Starting with Boas's studies of verbal art and folklore, poetics has played a continuing role, strengthened by contacts with parallel interests among Prague School linguists. Contact with avatars of European dialectology of the 19th and 20th centuries helped raise concerns about regional distributions of forms, definitions of languages, standardization, dialect boundaries and historical change. A francophone line of structuralist linguistics starting with Saussure, through Benveniste, is perhaps best characterized as the immediate source for the autonomous linguistics that has been linguistic anthropology's intellectual foil. In this respect, at least, American structuralists from Bloomfield to Harris to Chomsky have been the heirs of Saussure. For linguistic anthropology, by contrast, Saussure's project is significant as part of a broader understanding of sign phenomena.

The other sources of sign theory were the Americans C. S. Peirce and to a lesser extent the more behaviorist Charles Morris. The significance of Peirce's semiotics for linguistics was emphasized by Roman Jakobson, himself a central node in a kin network that connected American structuralism to Prague School functionalism and Russian formalism while also helping to bring the work of Bakhtin's decidedly anti-formalist Russian school of poetics and literary studies of the 1920s and 30s to international attention. Literary studies have repeatedly been 'captured' as relatives by linguistic anthropology, or vice versa, as in the mid-century dramatism of Kenneth Burke, the semiotic readings of Roland Barthes, or the writings of Raymond Williams and other neo-marxist critics. There were also the quasi-literary interests of Malinowski in language function and 'context of situation,' not taken up by British social anthropologists but rather by functional linguists and later in the century within anthropology by Gregory Bateson.

Philosophies of language have also been significant interlocutors for linguistic anthropology. Austin's ordinary language philosophy was particularly important as it side-stepped the Fregean concern with truth conditionality. This was followed by Searle and Grice on speech acts and implicatures, and in a different line by Wittgenstein on language games. A later and contrary branch of this lineage is represented by Hilary Putnam and Saul Kripke on the indexicality of reference. Finally, linguistic anthropology rightly claims important kin connections with phenomenologists such as Husserl who inspired sociologists

from Schutz, to Goffman to Garfinkel, though these doubtless also saw themselves as descendants of G. H. Mead, himself very likely a reader of Peirce.

Relying on all these sources, linguistic anthropology was consolidated in the 1960s through two intellectual strategies familiar from the history of science: The first was a bid to constitute an 'object' of analysis that had not before been the focus of research. Most broadly stated, this object was the process of face-to-face interaction. One can rephrase the argument this way: the primary datum for all the ethnographic and language-based disciplines is the contingent stream of eventful talk in everyday life, along with its concomitant non-verbal signaling systems. Each disciplinary enterprise abstracts from this in a principled manner. What is not within its focus becomes an obstacle to research and is bracketed or theoretically discounted. For instance, Saussure was quite explicit that a synchronic linguistics should (for the moment) ignore what he defined as 'external' though admittedly important facts, instead studying structural relationships of contrast and opposition he defined as 'internal' to language. In a parallel way, the sociocultural anthropology of the 1960s treated language as a vehicle for recounting cultural content, thereby excluding from study the situation in which the telling occurred.

This first project has had considerably success. Linguistic anthropology abstracted something new from that accessible stream of verbal activity, finding systematicity where others had found only noise: Goffman's "neglected situation;" "naturally occurring talk" and 'conversation' as defined by Schegloff and Sacks; the "speech event" and its functions, as defined by Jakobson; studies of performance genres by Hymes, Friedrich, Albert, and Ervin-Tripp; Barth's notion of interactions as boundaries; Austin and Searle's "speech acts," and the organization of "social meaning" that Gumperz and Labov found in linguistic variation and codeswitching. Goffman declared the relative analytical independence of an "interactional order" governed by a separate set of principles not directly related to larger social structures. There ensued a period of description, typologizing, and cross cultural comparison.

The second, more radical intellectual project was a double-edged critique, targeting both linguistics and social science as then constituted. Hymes's dictum was a classic performative, disguised as mere description: "... whereas the first half of the century was distinguished by a drive for the autonomy of language as an object of study and a focus upon description of structure, the second half was distinguished by a concern for the integration of language in sociocultural context ..." (1964: 11). This project continues

to inspire theory and research. It has produced detailed criticisms of mainstream linguistics, sociology and anthropology.

In the argument with generative linguistics, linguistic anthropology retained much of structuralist analysis, but rejected the asocial definition of language. What had been peripheralized became central in a series of changes in focus. Linguistic anthropology emphasized multilingual, stratified speech communities instead of the ideal hearer/speaker; performance instead of linguistic competence; linguistic repertoire and speech act instead of abstract grammar and sentence; speech acts and speech events instead of the disembodied sentence. As sources of evidence, contextually located and tape-recorded interaction replaced intuitions about grammaticality. Some of this dovetailed with European initiatives to study sentence level phenomena through their cohesion into larger units. In mainstream American linguistics, however, the subjects taken up by linguistic anthropology were relegated to subfields such as pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

In sociology, it was methods and epistemology that were attacked by language-centered approaches. Study of interaction highlighted the situatedness of all sociological descriptions, indeed the unavoidable role of the interviewer in shaping the answers that made up a sociological report. This insight about the 'reactivity' of measurement was recognized as important, but was so corrosive to sociological business-as-usual that it was isolated as the workings of a 'micro-order,' to be studied separately from the institutional, organizational and demographic issues that occupied the mainstream of sociology. Without theories of how micro and macro were linked, there was a continuing side-lining of language as subject matter, and the trivialization of interactional process as merely the enactment of patterns determined elsewhere, the faithful reflection of supposedly more powerful 'macro' forces.

The role of linguistic anthropology within anthropology was more complicated. The position of language was significantly transformed in the 1980s in two ways. First, through a redefinition of culture. Rather than a symbolic or cognitive phenomenon (the two previous approaches) culture came to be seen as a set of embodied practices within institutions; practices that, in certain conjunctures, could change the institutions themselves. 'Language' was often invoked as a powerful means of constructing reality. Ethnographies of speaking that analyzed race, gender, ethnic conflict or dispute settlement fit well into practice theories such as those inspired by Bourdieu, by Birmingham cultural studies, colonial studies and Gramscian notions. But even when

recognized as important, linguistic practice was rarely analyzed in any detail.

Simultaneously, a second enterprise was also launched, related to language but largely independent of linguistic anthropology. Under the influence of literary studies, anthropology mounted a reflexive critique of the poetics and rhetoric of anthropology's own prose genres, especially ethnographic monographs. Anthropologists joined continental theorists such as Foucault and Derrida in unpacking and undermining the idea of objective knowledge. Metadiscourse, texts, their materiality, their authorization, their ability to 'objectify' and devalue others, all took center stage in sociocultural anthropology. But these concerns were often separated from the classic ethnographic and comparative goals of the discipline. For linguistic anthropology, the poststructuralist philosophers' discussions of discourse, rhetoric and poetics as shapers of 'truth' and subjectivity rang familiar tunes – if in unfamiliar keys. As a result, they provoked spirited responses. This critical engagement was guided by the internal logic of linguistic anthropology itself during intensive discussions in the 1980s and 1990s. The debates with poststructuralism encouraged a synthesis within linguistic anthropology that was aimed at developing a processual, event-based, political economy of texts in social life, and a semiotic perspective on culture.

The overall project of linguistic anthropology remains the reshaping of linguistic theory from an interactionalist and culturalist perspective, and the revamping of anthropological investigations of meaning and action from the perspective of a semiotically grounded understanding of language, culture and social institutions. Within these broad aims, the last twenty years have brought substantial revisions in theoretical concepts.

## **Concepts and Controversies**

The orienting concepts discussed here are not strictly separable; there are overlaps and echoes among them. Each section traces continuities with earlier formulations, discusses points of recent controversy and consensus, and then outlines briefly the implications of current approaches in linguistic anthropology for both linguistic and anthropological theory.

### **Indexicality, Metalinguage, Materiality**

The multifunctionality of language was a pillar of 1960s linguistic anthropology. Jakobson (1960) enumerated emotive, poetic, metalinguistic, phatic and conative (action) functions. These operate simultaneously. Depending on the nature and goal of interaction, some are highlighted more than others. Yet

linguistic anthropologists observed that in many cultural contexts experts and laypeople alike privileged referentiality, believing that the naming of things in the world and predication about them was the pre-eminent role of language. Early linguistic anthropology proposed the category of 'social meaning' to designate what is communicated through a disparate set of formal linguistic devices in which picking out a referent is only secondarily involved, or absent altogether. These included Labovian phonological markers of class or regional identity, speech levels, grammatical alternates specific to males vs. females, avoidance registers, and codeswitching between languages and dialects.

The conceptual unity of these phenomena has been clarified through more concentrated attention to the non-referential, metalinguistic and poetic functions of language. This has been done through a foundational critique of structural linguistics, fortified by a culturalist reading of Peircean semiotics.

The structuralist tradition of grammatical analysis, no less than western common-sense, implicitly relies on the assumption of a stable referentiality for linguistic units. Saussure created a semiotics in which signs link a concept (signified) with a sound image (signifier) in systems of value-creating contrast. But he left unanalyzed the circumstances under which signs would be instantiated. His form of structuralism is able to explicate the workings of grammar as a system of oppositions, sequences and substitutions. But severing an abstract system of types (*langue*) from their tokens in contexts-of-use (*parole*) had serious limitations. Most importantly, it could not analyze what Jakobson called 'shifters': linguistic phenomena whose referential value is not entirely fixed within an abstract system, but relies in part on features of the situation in which they are used. There is no type-level stability in the reference of 'I,' it varies with the instance of utterance, always identifying the speaker of the moment. More generally, not only reference but also the interpretations of speech acts, implicatures and presuppositions are necessarily linked to events of speech.

Thus, speech as social action is not adequately described as the 'putting to use' of a separately analyzed grammar. On the contrary, grammar is full of devices – deictics, tense, mood, evidentials – that gain their interpretation only in part from type-level contrasts, and in part as tokens of use in specific contexts. These phenomena make an autonomous grammar impossible in principle: to describe them fully one needs pragmatics. That is, the speech event in which they occur must be analyzed in ethnographic detail and systematically linked to linguistic form.

To do so, Jakobson drew on C. S. Peirce's triadic semiotic theory in which a sign is linked to an object

for an interpretant. Indexical signs, for Peirce, stand for their objects by virtue of a culturally noticed, real-world contiguity. In contrast to symbols, defined by Peirce as signs that stand for their objects by virtue of a general law, indexes simply point to their objects; they signal through a co-existence between the sign and the objects and speech events of its occurrence. In these terms, shifters are partially indexical, partially symbolic. As Silverstein (1976) argued, the linguistic phenomena earlier identified as having "social meaning" (e.g. phonological variants, codeswitches) are non-referential indexes, relying for their interpretation on their contiguity (indexicality) with contextual features of the speech event in which they occur. That is how a phonological variant can signal the social relations of the speakers in an event, their relation to the topic of talk and/or the nature of the event itself. Non-referential indexes can be placed on a continuum with shifters. Indeed, the philosophical work of Putnam and Kripke showed that any act of reference necessarily has an indexical component. Referential indexes (shifters) and non-referential indexes have two further significant properties. They need some metadiscursive frame in which to be interpreted (see next section). And they can be either presupposing or creative. If presupposing, then their use signals that some aspect of the context is taken for granted as existent; if creative/entailing, then the use of the form itself brings into social relevance (into apparent 'existence') the objects or categories with which the form is culturally associated.

By linking shifters and non-referential indexes, a Peircean analysis provides a conceptual unity to social indexicals and thus to what used to be called 'social meaning,' thereby clinching the case against an autonomous grammar. It also provides conceptual materials for an alternative theory of linguistic structure. Classic empirical studies of indexicals include Errington's work on speech levels in Java; Silverstein's re-analyses of Labovian phonological variables and of T/V pronoun usage in the history of English; Irvine on Wolof registers; Ochs on indexicals of gender and stance in language socialization; Duranti and Agha on honorifics; and Haviland on Australian avoidance register. Brown and Levinson handled politeness phenomena, which are also of this kind, with a decidedly different approach.

The presumption that referentiality and propositionality are the pre-eminent functions of language is part of an ancient western ideology. Not as old, but still powerful is the related idea that meta-language and poetic forms are mere ornaments to reference. Because language has so often served as a model of culture, these widespread assumptions have implications for anthropological theory. For instance,

Levi-Strauss borrowed from structural linguistics the idea of distinctive features; ethnoscience borrowed generative grammar's idea that there are rules of competence. Interpretive anthropology borrowed from philology the notion of text. In each of these otherwise different cases, it was the referential capacity of language that served as the model for culture. Culture, like grammar, was seen as organized symbolic content that could be extracted from the real-time social action and historical positioning in which it was created. This taken-for-granted move of decontextualization reproduced the Cartesian assumption of a chasm between world and word. Accordingly, approaches in anthropology that emphasized practice, political economy and materiality were assumed to be opposed to those concerned with meaning, representation and ideation.

In contrast, a linguistic anthropology that places indexicality and speech-as-action at the center of attention provides a different synergy with sociocultural anthropology. Propositionality, however significant, is recognized as a feature peculiar to language. It is least like the rest of culture. Instead, the indexical aspects of linguistic practices, as interpreted by meta-discourses, are among the best examples of cultural meaning-making. Indexical signs are not only linguistic; they are also gestural, visual and sartorial, among other modalities. They are not 'reflections' of some other, more (or less) important reality. Rather, they are constitutive of the real-time creation of social-material reality through interaction. Peircean semiotics, with its tripartite emphasis on the **object**, as mediated by the sign and interpretant, insists on the materiality of communication, and conversely on the semiotic organization of material practices.

### Context and Contextualization

Speech events were a fundamental unit of early linguistic anthropology. Studies focused on their constituent features (e.g. speaker, hearer, topic), social functions and cross-cultural typologies (e.g. Gumperz and Hymes, 1972; Bauman and Sherzer, 1974). In the last few decades, the structural description of speech events has been transformed into a more flexible concern with the 'context' of discourse and performance, bringing several important changes in the understanding of context. Good overviews of these issues are offered by Bauman and Briggs (1990), and Duranti and Goodwin (1992). The notion of 'context' as a set of social, spatial and physical features surrounding talk was commonsensical but inadequate. It implied the possibility of infinite regress in the number of features; it neglected the perspective from which context was viewed; and it assumed a

firm divide between talk and context. The problem of infinite regress arose from the effort of the analyst to list exhaustively the factors that might affect the nature and form of the talk. In order to choose which of the many features are relevant, one must address the question of perspective. Features defined from the point of view of the analyst are useless for understanding social process; it is the selective attention by participants to aspects of the social surround that analysts ought to be describing.

Conversation analysts such as Schegloff, Sacks, Jefferson, Heritage, Charles and Marjorie Goodwin took as an axiom the importance of discerning what participants orient to on a moment-by-moment basis in the local management of sequential talk. Participants need not share perspective among themselves any more than they do with the analyst. They might well have to negotiate a definition of the situation. Context then becomes a joint accomplishment. Infinite regress is avoided because it is the participants who together signal when 'enough is enough,' or defeat each others' attempts to include more (or less) of the surround. Such signaling is not necessarily propositional speech, yet is certainly communicative. Talk itself signals the frames for its own interpretation, supplying the cues for what is to be taken as its own context. There is no firm divide between a strip of talk, its co-text (linguistic context) and its sociocultural context.

It is not context, then, that is of interest, but contextualization: how participants attend to on-going discourse, conveying their assessments, evaluations, presuppositions as well as predictions about the definition of the activity that is occurring, the event-specific roles of the participants, the intentions of speakers, the direction the activity is likely to take, as well as unexpected switches in all of these. This process relies on culture-specific folk theories about social actors, intentions, events and goals, while recreating those very categories in the process of communication. These theories are not necessarily shared. What Putnam observed about the lexicon is equally apt here: in any group there is likely to be a division of linguistic labor and of the expertise it requires. In addition to local knowledge, contextualization relies on the universal metacommunicative capacity of language, and on the universal ability of speakers to attend to and respond to metamessages about the relationship of talk to its surround.

The several concepts that have been crafted for the analysis of this metacommunicative process differ in certain respects, but bear a family resemblance. Lucy (1993) provides a good review of these. Bateson proposed 'framing' to denote metamessaging that signals some activity to be play or not-play. This is

common even among many non-human animal species. Chafe and Fillmore made linguistic use of this formulation. Goffman (1979) extended it with his notion of the footing or stance taken in an interaction, and the participant roles or role fragments – such as ‘author’ ‘animator’ ‘principal’ of an utterance – that are thereby evoked. Philips described participant structures, and Cicourel proposed the notion of schema for related phenomena. Gumperz (1982) introduced contextualization cue to name the many kinds of linguistic signals (e.g. prosody, codeswitching) from which one infers what kind of activity is in effect. Silverstein (1993) distinguished between metasemantics, by which speakers define the meanings of words, and metapragmatics. Metapragmatic discourse is explicit commentary or evaluation of language use (e.g. that some event was gossip). Metapragmatic function, by contrast, is implicit signaling to suggest which cultural frame or activity is in effect. Bakhtin (1981) and Voloshinov proposed literary analysis of reported speech and voicing as metacommunicative devices that present the perspective of one speaker on the speech of another. Bauman (1986) showed that performance is itself reflexive: the speaker assumes responsibility for speaking well, thereby drawing attention to the code and poetic forms through which speech genres are created and thus expectations about them are signaled.

A crucial aspect of framing or voicing is the possibility that frames can be embedded in other frames; they can be transposed and projected both forward and backward in time. Furthermore, speakers create interactional tropes, treating interlocutors and events ‘as though they were someone/something else,’ thereby achieving novel communicative and social effects. As part of such effects, voices can be reported in quotation or in various forms of indirect discourse. Social interaction is thus an endless lamination of narrated events and the narrative events within which the stories are told. For linguistics this implies a complexity in patterns of pronouns, tense, evidentials, discourse markers and anaphora that signal such embeddings of frames. These cannot be handled without theorizing indexical phenomena. For socio-cultural anthropology the embedding of frames and their interpenetration during narratives and conversation allows analysts to understand processes such as the relationality of personhood and the fragmentation of selves, as well as subject formation, role-distance, and the cultural conceptualization of what counts as authenticity. It is a small example of the reality-constructing processes involved in reported speech that the speech reported need never have happened, or not in the way reported. Yet the report – culturally framed as, say, gossip, journalism,

court testimony, or oracle – can have far-reaching consequences in shaping subsequent social relations.

Framing and the propositional content of talk always occur simultaneously. Metamessages allow the analyst to track participants’ interactional moves in an encounter. These moves (the interactional text) include the open-ended set of acts that can be done with words: promises, teases, threats, and the unnamed, more general alignment or antagonism among speakers. These acts are accomplished in part by small observable behaviors such as sequencing, body position, and conversational repair. But they are just as importantly accomplished by the ways in which the names for objects and actions that are the subject matter of talk are selected from the many equally accurate denotational labels available. As Schegloff (1971) pointed out for the limited case of place-names, how one formulates a label is always relative to a particular event of talk, that is, indexical. Selection of a term that picks out a referent involves a delicate (and not always conscious or aware) negotiation of social relationships, assumptions about participants’ levels and types of knowledge, hence their identities and social location. In turn, the use of one rather than another referring expression is creative/performative. The difference between ‘dine’ ‘take a repast’ ‘chow down’ or ‘put on the old nosebag’ is not only a matter of lexical register. Each claims a speaker identity, positions speakers with respect to each other, with respect to the event, the referent, and to the cultural discourses indexed by the labels selected. Framing and the indexicality of reference together accomplish contextualization: the moment-by-moment means through which interaction creates and transforms social relations.

### Text and Entextualization

There is an irony in the effort of linguistic anthropology to discern how participants contextualize stretches of discourse. For scholars themselves spend most of their time ripping snippets of discourse out of context in order to translate, transcribe and analyze them. The process of decontextualization is a key (reflexive) step in social science methodology. Yet the examples of transposition, reporting the speech of others, and embedded frames discussed earlier show that decontextualization is just as familiar from everyday life. It is the flip side of contextualization. This is what Bakhtin evocatively characterized as our mouths being full of other people’s words. It has been a focus of analysis in linguistic anthropology for the last two decades.

Close analysis of the process requires a distinction between ‘text’ and ‘discourse.’ ‘Text’ is any



objectified unit of discourse that is lifted from its interactional setting. 'Entextualization' is the process of transforming a stretch of discourse into such a unit of text, undoing its indexical grounding by detaching it from its co-text and surroundings, yet taking some trace of its earlier context with it to another setting which is thereby changed and which reciprocally transforms the text itself. Certain formal properties can enhance the likelihood of entextualization. For instance, poetic features of cohesion, or genre conventions can signal a boundary to an interaction, therefore a chunking of text. But any stretch of discourse can enter into interdiscursive relations by which it seems to be recalled, repeated or echoed in further discourse. It can be picked out and seemingly frozen as text, to be involved in further intertextual relations that link it to previous and subsequent versions of text. Interdiscursive and intertextual links create the impression that text fragments 'circulate' across texts, events and among speakers.

The linguistic means of entextualization are the same metadiscursive signals that are essential for contextualization: devices of framing, cueing, metapragmatic discourses and functions. For the purposes of linguistic analysis, it is necessary to study the transformations that discourse undergoes as it is entextualized and then (re)contextualized. Footing or genre might change, as might indexical grounding (as signaled by changes in deictics of person, space and time). The function of the text might also change (e.g. from everyday act to ritualized tradition). New forms, functions and meanings may be emergent in the newly re-contextualized text. And there are questions of access, power and inequality involved in the social arrangements that constrain what sorts of persons and statuses can entextualize in what institutional settings. Processes widely analyzed under other names – translation, codeswitching, glossing, among others – are amenable to further scrutiny in these terms. Furthermore, by cultural definition, some texts are more or less accessible for de- and recontextualization.

The anthropological implications of this line of work extend in at least three directions. First, such analysis can reveal how the social magic of authority – political, legal, epistemic – is created in and across interactions. The relationship between narrated event and the story-telling event in which it occurs is a delicate nexus at which to 'calibrate' voicing through the projected relations of teller to tale, to audience, to source, and to previous and subsequent events and tellings (Silverstein, 1993). Through metapragmatic framing, speakers can construe the interactive event that is recounted as being distinct from the on-going event of talk (reportative calibration), or

as the same event (reflexive calibration), or as emanating from some other epistemic realm such as the sacred, the universal, or mythic (nomic calibration). Within specific institutional settings, these calibrations create different sorts of authority: claims to knowledge, or claims to (and the social effect of) speaking as/for the people, the ancestors, the gods, or the laws of science. Contests over the metapragmatic framing of sources for statements can create (and destroy) the authority of texts and hence the power of speakers. As Silverstein and Urban (1996) note, a significant part of politics is the struggle to entextualize authoritatively. Linguistic practices, then, are the very grounds of politics, not the medium, description or reflection of them. This includes the assignment of responsibility and blame, credibility and doubt. Hill and Irvine (1993) show that across widely different cultural settings, such attributions are managed through metapragmatic devices such as reported speech and the distribution of voices across participant roles.

Second, the processes of entextualization and links among texts (intertextuality) allow a deeper understanding of temporality, spatiality and social connectedness. Despite the undeniably linear, sequential ordering of speech, there is no single 'now' in interaction. Any utterance is weighted with the earlier source from which it can be heard to have originated, and the implicit future recounting in which it might participate. The interdiscursive links among interactional contexts can be extended and projected without temporal limit (Irvine, 1996). Even within a single narration there are often layered successions of retellings which, embedded in each other, can make traditionalization visible as a temporal process. Similarly, study of intertextuality can highlight systematic relations among events in spatial extension, inviting scholars to rethink the relation of face-to-face interaction and what used to be called 'larger social structures.' This will require further theorization of the various kinds of linkages between interactions. For instance, we need to know how circulation – a shorthand term for intertextual links, echoes, repetitions – has differential 'reach' across interactions that are distinguished according to their degrees and types of institutionalization, geographical range, political economic consequentiality, form of mediation as broadcast, print, or face-to-face talk. The phenomenon of translation (linguistic, cultural) deserves considerably more attention in these terms, as it too is a form of multiply layered intertextuality.

Finally, there are methodological implications of this perspective on text. Social science research always involves reflexive language. Jakobson remarked that there could be no linguistics without metalanguage,

as scholars have to ask for glosses, acceptability judgments and paraphrases. The reactivity of fieldwork became an issue for sociocultural anthropologists of the 1980s, (just as it had for sociologists in the 1960s) when they noted that fieldwork is 'dialogic.' It is not the positivistic observation of an object by a subject but an encounter between two subjects – the informant and the anthropologist – with different relevances, values, and different sets of ultimate audiences in mind. Much of the subsequent critical commentary focused on issues of objectification in ethnographic writing. Less attention was paid to the fieldwork encounter itself as dialogic and mutually objectifying. Like any interaction, fieldwork and interview are always susceptible to the confusion of mismatched or even incommensurable metapragmatic signals among interactants that Gumperz called 'cross-talk,' and that is made worse by power differentials. This is less a problem specific to anthropological research than an insight about the nature of human interaction. As Mannheim and Tedlock (1995) have remarked, the people anthropologists study have been 'objectifying' each other well before the arrival of the fieldworker. The task is to specify what kinds of objectification and incommensurability in metacommunication are operating, and how.

### Language Ideologies

Language ideologies are cultural conceptions about language, its nature, structure and use, and about the place of communicative behavior in social life. Useful definitions and exemplary studies are presented in Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) and Schieffelin *et al.* (1998). Ideas about speech and language are common in all social groups and are as culturally diverse as linguistic practices themselves. In the linguistic anthropology of the 1960s the study of language attitudes and native models of politeness, language variation, honorifics and appropriateness were grist for cross-cultural typologies and comparisons. These research themes, along with others detailed below, are unified under the rubric of language ideology.

The term 'ideology,' though polysemous, most often evokes ideas connected to politics and power. Such concerns have a long pedigree in linguistic anthropology. Boas as public intellectual brought anthropological and linguistic evidence to bear against racist science and anti-immigration policies. Overtly political concerns about inequality and race were also present in the 1960s, for instance in the debates among Bernstein, Hymes, Gumperz, Kay and Labov on the existence, value, and consequences of 'restricted codes' in working class and Black speech. Current controversies that have strong political implications

include the increasingly global hegemony of English, the linguistic mediation of inequality, the future of endangered languages, and the stigmatization of multilingualism and of certain accents and dialects. What is different today is scholars' reflexive analysis of communicative processes in their own work and in large scale politics.

Language ideologies always include metapragmatics, that is, local suppositions about the relation of speech forms to speakers' identities and their social situations. But language ideologies are never only about language. They include whatever other conceptual systems are taken to be relevant to language by the speakers and institutions under study. In the analysis of language ideology, as in the study of metapragmatics, there is a split between those approaches privileging explicit, propositional content, and others that focus on implicit ideological patterns inscribed in linguistic, institutional, ritual and other material practices. Language ideologies are never unitary and so the study of ideology commits the theorist to a perspectival approach. As Woolard has emphasized, one must ask: whose ideology is at issue and in what practices and institutions is it sited. There are likely to be contradictions among ideologies. For instance, Bateson's notion of the double bind consists of two contradictory ideological (meta) messages, delivered in different modalities simultaneously. There is also likely to be contestation among ideologies evident at different social locations. Nor are ideologies likely to be shared within social groups in a world characterized by linguistic divisions of labor. In a single population, language ideologies inscribed in the practices of schooling can conflict with or override those evident in families, friendship networks or other institutions, raising questions about the relative authority of different ideologies.

Early discussions of 'linguistic ideology' emphasized the tendency of explicit ideological statements to rationalize and thereby distort linguistic practices. Boas and Bloomfield saw speakers' models of their own speech as obstacles to genuine linguistic analysis. More recently, scholars have noted that there is no access to linguistic materials except through the filter of metalinguistic assumptions – whether these are the assumptions of speakers and/or of analysts. Current use of the term 'language ideology' considers such filters not as regrettable distortions but as part of the perspectival nature of ideologies, their necessary partialness and partiality. This includes the perspective of linguists. Language ideologies are grounded in social position and experience, in moral and political stances. But they are not an automatic reflex of these. Rather, ideology mediates between social position and linguistic practice in diverse domains. Students of language

socialization (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1994) have shown that children do not simply learn linguistic skills. Rather, local ideologies mediate between talk itself and assumptions about the proper relationship between childhood, talk and forms of mothering. Similarly, in the study of literacy, Collins finds that language ideologies add their own contributions as interpretive filters, defining who can be expected to read and write in what way and for what purpose, thereby contributing to the creation of many distinct forms of literacy. The linkage between linguistic practices and categories of identity is also mediated by language ideologies. How are maleness and femaleness indexed in speech? When such indexes appear in interaction, other dimensions of social life – such as the expression of desire, sexual activity, typified emotions, rank and social position – are entailed, in part on the basis of local cultural images of masculinity and femininity (Cameron and Kulick, 2003).

By viewing language ideology as an inescapably perspectival lens on social interaction, linguistic anthropology engages in debate with neo-Marxist lineages of ideology-critique. Some studies in linguistic anthropology have marshaled evidence from language use to challenge social theorists' proposals about the workings of symbolic domination and cultural hegemony. Other work has reconsidered influential formulations about ideology by Bourdieu, Foucault, Althusser, Žižek and others to reveal their unexamined assumptions about language and semiosis. Social theorists of ideology often and unreflectively rely on implicit linguistic models that, because they seem commonsensical or self-evident, help to make their theories more persuasive. Most generally, ideologies that present themselves as concerning language can work as displacements or coded stories about political, religious or scientific systems; ideologies that seem to be about religion, political theory, human subjectivity or science are often implicit entailments of language ideologies, or the precipitates of widespread linguistic practices. The term 'displacement' can be further analyzed here as a form of voicing. However, to recast a language debate as a coded dispute about religion, aesthetics, morality or politics is not, in itself, an explanation. Rather, the goal of analysis in studies of language ideology is to show **how** such a displacement works in semiotic terms, how it is instantiated in practices, and how it legitimates, justifies or mediates action in quite other areas of social life. Conversely, a particular definition of language may itself be made more credible by its connection to other, non-linguistic, sociopolitical concerns and especially to their supporting institutions.

Ethnolinguistic nationalism provides a familiar example. Over several centuries, European philosophical

and political practice did the ideological work of making the connection between the cultural categories of 'language' and 'nation' appear a necessary, natural and self-evident one, united as much in everyday political practice as in scholarly arguments. This occurred in part through the establishment of a science of language that defined a bounded and unified object of study ('language') as a natural entity, out there to be discovered. The ideologically constructed unity of language-and-culture in a populace was seen as the ultimate source of political authority: those who spoke one language constituted a 'people' whose united voice would replace the authority of imperial rule. By this logic, any group claiming to speak the same language could use that fact as proof of its nationhood and thus justification for a state of its own. A somewhat different example of authority through language ideology is the political theory of the 'public sphere' as guarantor of democratic politics. According to European notions of a public sphere, as dissected by Habermas, the worth of a speaker's argument is judged not by speakers' social status. Ideally, democratic citizens make anonymous contributions to policy debate and to critiques of the state. It is the form and rationality of their contributions, not their identities, that is supposed to guarantee the fairness of a democratic polity. From the perspective of this theory of democracy, it is evident that a model of ideal linguistic interaction underpins the semblance of impartiality and hence the legitimacy of democratic process (Gal and Woolard, 2001).

It is not only politics that is legitimated by images of language and social life. Bauman's study of Quakers and Keane's more recent report on Christian missionizing both suggest that the relations envisioned between speakers and listeners within these religious communities implied forms of interiority and intentionality that became models for various forms of Christian belief. Other forms of belief are also underwritten by understandings about language in social life. For instance, Shapin's historical account of 17th century science shows that polite conversation among gentlemen was the model that, when transferred to gentlemanly interaction at the Royal Society, created the credibility and assumed replicability of early scientific experimentation. In these examples, linguistic ideologies underpin social institutions, providing the supposedly self-evident background that authorizes new social forms.

Language ideologies are cultural frames. As such they have their own histories, which are instantiated and circulated in specific institutions and genres of speech and writing such as the etiquette book, instruction in oratory or realist novel. Another such genre in the west is linguistic philosophy. Its analyses

are supposedly universal, yet very much rooted in the history of European cultural understandings about language. While the notion of ‘intentionality’ of the speaker is a key term in western philosophy of language, comparative study shows this to be but one historically specific version of an interiority-centered language ideology. As Duranti and Rosaldo have shown, in many social groups outside of Europe, inferences about speakers’ intentionality are not decisive or indispensable in the interpretation of speech acts. Bauman and Briggs’s study of the western philosophical tradition focuses mainly on Herder and Locke, tracing the historical conditions out of which emerged the regimentation of linguistic practices that would subsequently count as examples of ‘folklore’ on the one hand, and ‘objective speech’ on the other. Another such genre is linguistics analysis itself, especially as it has intersected with colonial projects. Historical studies show how language ideologies fit into fields of debate with which they are contemporaneous, and that concern other, diverse matters: the nature of human difference and inequality, competition among scholarly disciplines, or the competence and vision of a particular monarch’s ruling group.

#### **Differentiation: Registers, Communities, Variation and Change**

Speech community, linguistic repertoire, variation, register and style are among the foundational concepts of linguistic anthropology. Adopted from earlier frameworks of research, they were redefined by the work of the 1960s. In the last twenty years they have been transformed once again in light of the notions of indexicality and metapragmatics/ideology. In any social group, images linking typical persons to typical activities and typical linguistic practices draw on culturally salient and elaborated principles of differentiation (e.g. presupposed notions of caste or occupation, folk theories of gender and personhood) that are often perceived by participants as necessary and inherent distinctions. These ideological principles – axes of differentiation – mediate between social and linguistic characteristics and orient the practices and relations of interactants. Speech communities and language communities are emergent effects built out of such axes of differentiation.

Linguistic variation often appears to speakers (and to analysts) as a reflection or diagram of social differentiation. A famous example is the finding by Labov and his students that phonological variables correlate with situational style and the socioeconomic status of speakers. The analytical task is to specify the ideological – or more precisely the semiotic – processes by which these correlations arise and

become significant. Why and how do particular chunks of linguistic material coalesce into recognizable and nameable ways of speaking (registers) that gain significance as signs of particular populations, activities, settings, and are heard as appropriate to certain events. Furthermore, how is it that in any interaction, the expected correlations can be subverted or transposed, thereby signaling quite unexpected messages?

The extension of a Peircean theory of signs has been productive in approaching these issues. Linguistic features that form co-occurring clusters or registers are indexical of (point to) categories of speakers who regularly use them, or to situations and activity types in which the features regularly occur. But not all real-world co-occurrences form indexical signals. The co-occurrences must be noticed and formulated within some cultural or ideological system. To make such linkages and render them meaningful for speakers often requires extensive discursive efforts and the effects of media circulation. Another means of establishing meaningful indexicalities is through ritual and institutionalization. When both the ways of speaking and the people or activities are typified, schematized and conceptually linked, the result is a system of registers that evokes a system of stereotypes. Formulations of referents in minute-to-minute interaction rely on these associations. Registers often include not only linguistic material but also other signaling systems such as clothing, demeanor and gesture. Linguistic-forms-in-use that are thus ideologized as distinctive and implicating distinctive kinds of people can always be resignified, further ideologized (or misrecognized) as emblematic of other social, political, or moral characteristics in what Silverstein has dubbed multiple orders of indexicality.

Another of Peirce’s sign relations – iconicity – is key in differentiation, according to Irvine and Gal (2000). Peirce distinguished between indexes that point to their objects and icons that share the qualities of their objects, for some interpretant (e.g. a theory or ideology). In sociolinguistic differentiation, there is always a *set* of contrasting indexes pointing to contrasting objects in a relation that Peirce would call diagrammatic iconicity. Furthermore, the indexical links between linguistic signs and speakers, characteristics or events are understood not simply as a co-occurrence but a sharing of quality. When an index is thus perceived as an icon, the resulting sign is a Peircean ‘rheme.’ Essentialization is in part constructed semiotically, through the perception that the sign and the object are iconically linked. A system of such contrasts, salient at one level or scale can be projected, in a fractally recursive manner, onto other scales of social and linguistic relation, either broader or

narrower. This allows for the proliferation of the same or similar difference at greater and smaller scales. Social or linguistic aspects of the sociolinguistic scene that do not fit such systems of stereotypes are semiotically erased. That is, they are ignored, backgrounded and sometimes physically eliminated.

When a system of such indexical signals is the basis of social interaction, then participants can have fairly strong expectations about communication. Even if the participants do not share what is usually called a single language, they recognize the kinds of speech that signals different sorts of people and activities, and a speech community can be said to exist. Note the similarity to the Prague School's notion of *Sprechbund*. Since precolonial times, networks of exchange, commerce, travel and exploration have been creating speech communities that are diverse in social function, stability and extent. It is important to make an analytical distinction. Speech communities consist of people who can interpret each others pragmatic, indexical signals to varying degrees. Language communities are groups of people bearing loyalty to norms of denotational system. Usually the denotational form receives a name – English, Swahili, Taiap – and is imagined as bounded and separate from other comparable units. Language communities emerge as cultural system in the context of heterogeneous speech communities when difference in denotational practice is ideologized as significant. Thus contact and interaction – not isolation – produce distinct language communities.

Language communities, although always characterized by loyalty to code, are nevertheless culturally distinct. Sometimes a single person's speech is recognized as exemplary and aesthetically pleasing. In other cases the form of speech used in a certain setting or event (kiva, longhouse, oratory) is considered the model worthy of emulation. More common in the world today is the language community that is linked to a state system and oriented not to beauty but to standardized forms of correctness, monitored by language academies, school systems and grammar books. Named languages do not simply exist in the world. Through institutions they are constantly being made and reconstructed, their boundaries policed and defended. In the process of consolidation, standard languages often become gate-keeping devices in national labor markets, providing speakers who control them with increased access to jobs and other resources (Bourdieu, 1981). But the value of standard languages does not derive from such direct market activity; rather their market value depends on semiotic processes of differentiation.

Speakers who are incorporated into colonial empires through bureaucracy, trade, or conquest,

but do not speak the language of the state, come to see their own linguistic practices through the eyes of the powerful center. Therefore, they come to see themselves relationally, as peripheral. For such populations, the switch in perspective produces novel self-understandings as 'minority' 'local' or 'indigenous.' In states organized as democratic and multicultural, legitimating one's indigeneity or minority standing requires at least partial adoption of the state's standardizing ideology. Whatever their own ideologies about linguistic practice, such populations must often produce a denotational code different enough from others to count as a 'language' of their own. For many decades, such 'local' languages were the special province of anthropological linguists, whose descriptions deliberately erased – as inauthentic – the contact languages and multilingualism that tied indigenous speakers to their neighbors and colonial rulers. Part of the problem is that Euro-American linguists' notion of language as morpho-syntax-with-sound pattern is often at odds with local definitions that focus on lexical co-locations, place names, prosodical features and textual organization. These differences acquire increased significance when indigenous languages are considered endangered. The question of what merits documentation becomes a highly consequential matter, argued by scholars, by courts, and among members of the language community. As Hill and others have shown, whatever counts as linguistic knowledge in indigenous communities often endows its owner with authority and access to local resources. The position of Euro-American linguists as experts and arbiters in these matters is rife with moral contradictions that have been a focus of professional writing in recent years.

The exploration of metapragmatics and language ideology has produced new approaches to language change. Change is often the unintended consequence of people attending to linguistic structures through the prism of their own language ideologies, limited as these are by cognitive constraints on awareness and sociopolitical framings of what is significant. Increasing linguistic differentiation occurs through patterns of schismogenesis among interacting speakers, or conversely through simultaneous use of genetically different denotational codes in codeswitching (Heller, 1988). Codeswitching itself become the focus of loyalty, thereby producing a new language community. Other processes of differentiation result in language obsolescence, or contrariwise in language revival and the creation of 'heritage' languages for diasporic populations (Dorian, 1989). Also common is the commodification of language or linguistic practice for touristic purposes and the concomitant 'ethnicization' of local denotational codes when they

co-exist with a standardized state language. In this process there are often structural changes in the local language that mark it as iconic of the group with which it is identified. Ideologies of 'modernity/tradition' 'male/female,' 'purity/dirt,' and presuppositions about typified emotional states, notions of self, and quite local political issues, all can mediate between the socioeconomic situations of speakers and the forms of language change they experience (Gal and Irvine, 1995). Ideological framings of difference penetrate significantly into grammar.

A semiotic analysis of differentiation has implications for the study of processes beyond linguistic practices. The tendency for nationalisms to recursively evoke internal divisions of the populace into foreign-natives vs. native-natives is well explained by the semiotics of differentiation. In colonial and imperial circumstances, details of cultural practices have been interpreted as evidence of the relative 'humaneness' of conquered populations in contrast to conquerors. Projections of this kind are not presupposing indexes of existing features, but creative (performative) acts that bring into interactional relevance the very iconic similarities they seem to be merely describing. In yet another form of differentiation, speakers adopt the Goffmanian 'figures' of others. That is, they take on, for varying periods of time, the registers, objects and activities seen as iconic of others in acts of Bakhtinian mimicry, quotation, parody and/or admiring emulation. By attending to the semiotics of differentiation linguists study the dynamics of heteroglossic social orders.

### Language and Thought

Whether and how grammatical categories influence habitual thought and 'perceptions of reality' are among the oldest concerns of anthropological linguistics/linguistic anthropology. They were first raised for European science by colonial exploration and contact with languages whose grammatical structures seemed exotic in relation to the patterns familiar from study of geographically more proximate populations. In one way or another such differences worried Boas, Sapir, and Whorf, and well before them inspired Humboldt, Herder and Condillac. The issue has continued to draw scholarly interest throughout the 20th century.

If one were to consider the social power to be gained from the ability to define social 'reality' – as in Gramsci's cultural hegemony, Foucault's discourse, Bourdieu's doxa – then this set of questions would parallel those raised in the rest of linguistic anthropology. Characteristically, however, studies of linguistic relativity have taken a narrower view of linguistic

practices, and have considered neither power nor a socially located and mediating ideology. Positing a more direct relation between language and thought, they have studied psychological and cognitive processes in themselves. There is currently a reversal in this trend, however, bringing studies of linguistic relativity closer to the issues of identity formation, politics, conflict and social differentiation that characterize the rest of linguistic anthropology. Recent work suggests that issues of translation, register and interaction will become as important in studies of linguistic relativity as they are increasingly becoming in other areas of linguistic anthropology. Two reviews provide excellent guides to the state of research and its disputed history: Hill and Mannheim (1992) and Gumperz and Levinson (1996). It will suffice here to note some areas of consensus among scholars, before taking up three contested issues to give a sense of the debates and the way terms such as language and thought have been redefined.

These matters are agreed: First, linguistic relativity (or the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis) is not a hypothesis to be 'tested' but an axiom or starting point for research. Grammatical categories, to the extent that they are obligatory or habitual and relatively inaccessible to speakers' consciousness form a privileged location for reproducing cultural and social categories because they constrain the ontology taken for granted by speakers. There is no assumption about the coherence of entire 'world views' in this as in any other corners of anthropology. Second, although evidence of universals in human cognition has been thought to undermine a search for language-specific cognitive phenomena, all researchers acknowledge both. The interesting questions concern the relative strength, nature, sequence and role of universals vs. cultural-linguistic specificities and what those specificities might be. Third, it follows that Whorfian effects exist. This is hardly surprising given the discussions above about creative indexicality and projections. Finally, research priorities have shifted during the 20th century. Due in part to the Chomskyan 'rationalist' program in linguistics, the cognitive turn in psychology, and the empirical results of Berlin and Kay's (1969) research on color terminology, universals took center stage in the 1970s. Currently, there is a renewed interest in Whorfian effects from a number of different perspectives.

Turning now to contested issues, the first concerns the category 'grammar.' Whorf proposed that languages differ in the grammatical **analogies** they make. By handling substantively different lexicon within the same grammatical frame, they invite speakers to treat the otherwise different items in a similar way. Thus, English treats days, years and months not as cyclical

events but with the same grammatical devices as ordinary object nouns. English speakers expect – by unconscious analogy – to count time in the same way as they count tables. They ask about the substance out of which days are made, on the analogy of wood as the substance out of which tables are made. Hence the objectification of time as a substance. Such analogies are unquestioned background assumptions. They become apparent to analysts if one analogy system is compared to another that provides different hidden parallels. Careful methodology is fundamental here: when two systems are compared, neither can be taken as the standard or metalanguage for the other.

Some theorists suggest that the privileging of morphosyntax and its effect on semantic categories is misplaced, in a world of multilingualism. Friedrich proposed instead that the tropic or ‘poetic’ aspects of language, inflected by ethnopoetics, will differ most across cultures. (This echoes cognitive linguists’ claims that habitual metaphors structure thought.) Similarly, if the poetic form of narration changes during language shift, there is a loss of a distinct cultural pattern for organizing experience. Others counter that narrative organization signals merely a difference in the way that experience is packaged for the purpose of talk, and is not necessarily reflective of cognition. This formulation runs into trouble, however, if people must use obligatory linguistic categories to encode experience in order to plan for future recountings.

A second set of arguments starts from experimental or cognitive psychology and the presumptive priority of universal cognitive processes. For some, linguistic relativity is not an issue because they assume language and cognition to be isomorphic, with thought as ‘inner speech.’ Linguistic relativity is also irrelevant for domains assumed to be unmediated by language: physical, musical or craft skills that are thought to be coded in somatic schema. Theories about universals of thought derive also from the Kantian tradition that takes categories of time, space and cause as the fundamental grounds of human reasoning. For many domains, there are also likely to be universal constraints imposed by the nature of the domain itself, and the specialized anatomical and neurophysiological adaptations of humans to a concrete world: wavelength for color; gravity in the case of space. Even in the realm of language there might be universals of structure or lexical organization. What does linguistic specificity add to such universals? Levinson suggests that in the case of space and possibly many other domains, linguistic relativity is still powerfully involved. Universals substantially *underdetermine*

the possibilities of conceptual solutions to describing spatial arrangements.

A third controversy takes up Hymes’s early suggestion that there is a linguistic relativity of language use as much as of linguistic structure. Populations differ in the genres and events they recognize. Interpretations that participants derive from utterances are always dependent on sociocultural context. Thus, the fit between language and thought is mediated by habitual practice; social interaction and cultural beliefs (ideologies) about the everyday world. For instance, deictics of space are found in all languages. Nevertheless, as Hanks argues, they encode culturally specific information, and they map social and experiential fields, not objective spaces. Thus, cultural schema of several kinds mediate between the use of a deictic term and its proper interpretation. Furthermore, these frames and schema are not always equally available to all speakers in a community. A linguistic division of labor is often evident, as is the consequent necessity to negotiate meanings between interactants. Clearly, this brings to the study of linguistic relativity questions of indexicality, entextualization and ideology. For the study of linguistic relativity the implications are significant: There might be as much variation between speakers in their access to alternate perspectives and theories as there is across ‘cultures.’ Furthermore, distinguishing between ‘language’ ‘culture’ and ‘thought’ is at best a rough methodological tactic. The object of investigation for linguistic anthropology, in current practice, is exactly ‘culture’ as a process that is simultaneously semiotic, interactional and linguistic.

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## Linguistic Decolonization

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Linguistic decolonization describes both the actions taken in postcolonial contexts to undo the social, political, and cultural effects of the dominance of colonial languages and a philosophical challenge to the Western language ideologies that underpinned the colonial project and that have persisted in the postcolonial period. A wide view of 'colonization' includes not only the classic cases of Western expansionism but also 'internal colonialism' involving indigenous and minority populations within the nation-state (see **Minorities and Language**). We can speak of linguistic decolonization in a multitude of contexts, ranging from new state formation in Africa and Asia and the former republics of the Soviet Union

to indigenous language planning in the Pacific, North and South America, to minority language movements in Western Europe. Given this vast scope, no pretense will be made here to cover all possible contexts and the vast literature in language planning and postcolonial studies; rather the aim is to outline some of the common features and challenges of documented processes of linguistic decolonization and what they have to say about language ideologies and policies in general (see **Linguistic Rights**).

Linguistic decolonization always takes place within a nationalist project: either as an element of new nation-building, or as an effort to legitimate languages and identities that were unrecognized or actively suppressed under colonialism. Linguistic decolonization projects have thus been preoccupied with redressing linguistic inequality and cultural oppression in the public sphere, particularly in education and in official/governmental life, by replacing