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Language Ideology

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Ideology and Language

Language ideology emerged as a separate field of linguistic-anthropological study in the last decades of the 20th century, combining linguistic ethnography with insights from the social-scientific study of ideology. Though the field is still very much under construction, its influence on linguistic anthropology, linguistics, discourse analysis, and sociolinguistics is considerable (Woolard, 1998).

Yet few social-scientific terms have had such complex histories of interpretation as the term 'ideology.' Nested in scholarship as well as in politics, and within scholarship in such widely diverging traditions as history, philosophy, political economy, anthropology, and linguistics, ideology has built a track record of controversy, dispute, and conflict over its meaning. As a social-scientific concept, it has at least two ancestors.

One tradition of conceptualizing ideology grew out of Marxist theory and came to identify the mediating link between material and ideational aspects of reality. In *The German ideology,* Marx and Engels presented ideology as 'false consciousness': systemically distorted perceptions of reality, more specifically of one's class position. Gramsci's *Prison notebooks* inserted ideology in the concrete struggle for political dominance and identified 'hegemony' as dominance by a particular class-bound ideology in the cultural and ideational-political field. Revolution, according to Gramsci, needed to attain hegemony as well as power in order to be successful. Later theorists such as Althusser carried the analysis of ideology further into a general sociology of power. According to

Althusser, ideology was promulgated and sustained by "ideological state apparatuses": civil society institutions which 'normalized' the imaginary relationship between the subject and his/her position in the social world. To Habermas, ideology was lodged in communication distorted by power processes, and in Bourdieu's work, the conversion of hegemonic ideologies into 'normal' practices and ideas was labeled 'habitus.' In each of these developments, the Marxian conceptualization of ideology as tied to the interests of particular social groups and to processes of power and dominance was adopted and elaborated.

A second ancestor of ideology in the social sciences is the Durkheimian tradition of sociology as collective psychology. Durkheim's influence is noticeable in Marc Bloch's work on historical 'mentalities' as well as in a variety of anthropological approaches to 'world views' and 'belief systems' (as, for example, in Evans-Pritchard's work). A parallel development runs from German neo-Kantianism through Boas and Whorf. These ideational (cultural) complexes are, unlike in the Marxian tradition, neutrally defined: they are often presented as the deeper layers of culture and society, the unspoken assumptions that, as some kind of 'social cement,' turn groups of people into communities, societies, and cultures. This concept of ideology is often called the total concept, for it suggests the acceptance of ideational-cultural complexes by every member of the community. The Marxian and Durkheimian traditions of study are more or less each other's contemporaries, and both flourished in the 20th century.

Language has never been out of focus in the study of ideology, and important reflections on language and ideology emerge early in the Marx-inspired works of Bakhtin and Voloshinov, as well as somewhat later in the work of, for example, Roland

Barthes and Raymond Williams. For Bakhtin and Voloshinov, language embodies and articulates the experience of social struggle, transition, and contest, and consequently the linguistic sign is seen as deeply ideological. Language usage displays a variety of orientations to social interests, derived from particular positions in society ('voices'). And interaction involves different voices evaluatively responding to each other's statements ('dialogue'). Thus, human communication through language displays meaningful metalevel inscriptions, adding a layer of sociopolitical, ideological meaning to the event. The works of Bakhtin and Voloshinov became one building block for the contemporary study of language ideology.

Another building block was Peircian semiotics and its emphasis on the nonreferential aspects of meaning. Importantly, the sign in Peirce's semiotics stood in a close relationship to objects in the world, and Saussurean semiotics – restricted to referential relations between signs and signified – was extended to include signification. Peirce developed a typology of signs in which he distinguished between 'icons' (signs that resemble their object), 'indexes' (signs that bear an existential relationship with their object), and 'symbols' (signs that conventionally represent an object as a member of a class of like kinds). And such signs operate in an infinitely generative way, signs generating other signs through processes of implicature, entailment, and the like (Keane, 2003). In such a way, the iconic and indexical dimensions of signs become part of the context in and on which signs operate.

This complex body of theory is brought to bear on ethnography in the work of Michael Silverstein, providing the origin of language ideology as a separate field of study. Revisiting Whorf's work on linguistic categories, Silverstein claimed that the 'world views' identified by Whorf were in fact indexically organized language-ideological complexes, and that "the indexical plane of meaningfulness properly encompasses the folk realm of rhetoric (the system of language use), how language signals derive their socially understood effects in various socially constituted situations of discourse" (Silverstein, 1979: 205). Such folk realms, he further argued, displayed "the tendency to rationalize the pragmatic system of language, in native understanding, with an ideology of language that centers on reference-and-predication" – a referential ideology of language (1979: 208). Focusing on language ideologies would allow the analysis of language to be the analysis of culture (cf. Silverstein, 1976, 2004), for precisely the indexical level of language would anchor it firmly into culture. Furthermore, language and language use could be seen as reflecting on itself, for every act of communication (pragmatics) articulates a metapragmatics in which

the linguistic-ideological features operate. This metapragmatic, indexical layer of semiotic systems such as language is not neutral; it is evaluative, relational, socially positioned, invested with interests, and subject to contestation and dominance.

Whereas Silverstein's approach to language ideology is firmly embedded in the ethnographic tradition of linguistic anthropology, a more or less simultaneously developing tradition of studies focused on linguistic metatheory as ideology (Joseph and Taylor, 1990) and on popular and institutional language ideologies (Milroy and Milroy, 1985; Cameron, 1995). The sources of this other tradition are more diffuse, ranging from the history of science to variationist sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. In what follows, the focus will be on the ethnographic tradition, with an occasional foray into other bodies of work.

Ideology and/in Analysis

One of the effects of addressing language ideology is the fact that it dislodges a range of established concepts and categories and thus offers infinite opportunities for revisiting existing scholarship. I will discuss the impact of language ideologies on the following topics of inquiry: (1) central linguistic notions such as 'language' and (2) 'text'; (3) central sociolinguistic concepts such as 'speech community,' with implications for the study of language policy and (4) language change; (5) the history of linguistics.

Language

There is a longstanding concern in ethnography to investigate specific varieties of language rather than language *per se*. The reason, equally old, is that a uniformizing, singularized notion of language obscures the crucial sociolinguistic differences that occur within that language, and "it is a fallacy to equate the resources of language with the resources of (all) users" (Hymes, 1996: 213). In fact, the existence of 'language' and 'languages' – objects that are countable and have a name, such as English, Zulu, or Japanese – is a powerful language-ideological effect, the result of long historical processes of construction and elaboration of a metaphysics of mind vs. world within which the Cartesian self as sign, with the world as its object, comes into view.

In order to understand such processes, we have to start from Silverstein's referential ideology of language. Given the widespread belief in denotation as the main function of language, language itself is conceptualized as a transparent, structured, and finite system of clear (denotational) and noncontextual forms which characterizes groups of people. This we

could call an 'artifactual' view of language, a view in which language is seen as a manipulable, bounded artifact consisting of (grammatical) 'structures' with a clear function, denotation. Such a view would be expressed, for instance, in utterances such as 'I need to work a bit on my French' or 'His German needs some polishing, it is a bit rusty,' in which 'a language (name)' is metaphorically seen as an object one can obtain, possess, manufacture, and improve upon. This view, as we shall see, is a key ingredient of modernity and thus a rather recent construct, but it has become the most widespread view of language both in popular and in scientific circles. Linguistics has contributed in no small degree to the cultural construction of language in general as a stable, contextless individual mental object, and language and educational policies as well as larger nation-building programs have been deeply influenced by this ideology.

The 'language' thus artifactually conceptualized as a denotational code characterizing groups of people always takes concrete shapes. It would be qualified as a 'standard' variety; it would be strongly tied to literacy and focused on common grammatical structure and lexicon; and it would be the object of normative control, of institutional regimentation and orientation towards centers of authority (Silverstein, 1996). The 'standard' is usually perceived as 'neutral' or 'unmarked,' i.e., something the qualities of which are perceived as natural, self-evident, 'normal.' Thus, 'standard' English would often be qualified as 'accentless' English – English which cannot be characterized as to class or regional belonging – whereas in fact, obviously, such a variety would be strongly accented and solidly indexical of social, educational, or even regional and generational backgrounds (Agha, 2003). Similarly, writing in the 'standard' orthography would be unmarked ('correct'), while writing in an erratic orthography would be 'wrong' and would trigger indexicalities of sloppiness, lack of education, and so forth. 'Standard' is a particular variety of language, a register perceived as 'neutral' because of elaborate sociohistorical processes of normalization and codification (Silverstein, 1996; Blommaert, 1999a; Kroskrity, 2000a; Gal and Woolard, 2001a; see also Bourdieu, 1991; Cameron, 1995). Such processes often involve the construction and reproduction of specific codes and genres for public purposes, creating a sense of authority emanating from a center, marking particular forms of speech as emblematic of group belonging and identity, and introducing a sociopolitical evaluative stratification in language usage, with 'better' and 'worse' forms of usage (Blommaert, 2004; cf. the essays in Kroskrity, 2000b and Gal and Woolard, 2001b). Members of that group are expected to perform these codes and

genres as part of their 'culture of language use,' indexing 'full' group membership and categorical belonging (Silverstein, 1996: 291).

Dislodging the notion of 'language' and identifying it as a complex of metapragmatic qualifications projected onto situated language usage has far-reaching critical import, for it shifts attention away from stable, contextless linguistic notions to deeply sociocultural, historically, and politically invested notions of language and language usage, emphasizing that the very existence of '(a) language' is a result of ideological construction and therefore involves power, authority, and control. There is no such thing as a 'neutral' real language; such a neutral notion is one metapragmatic categorization among many, though often the one that indexes power, authority, prestige, and status. Furthermore, one of the essential functions of language is ideological (metapragmatic and indexical) framing: providing contextual cues about who speaks, in what mode, on which topic, and under what circumstances. This ideological function is central to contextualization procedures (Gumperz, 2002), and it may account for much of what Hymes understood as "second linguistic relativity" (1996: 44–45): while linguistic forms may remain stable across contexts, situations, and groups of users, their indexical value may differ quite dramatically. What counts as 'good' language on one occasion may be 'bad' language on another. These insights, as we shall see, have effects on other well-established concepts.

Text

'Text,' oral (face-to-face) as well as written (circulated via inscribed artifacts), is one of the most central notions in the study of language and culture, as the product of language usage and as the central means of cultural transmission. And just like 'language,' it has often been pictured as a reified, referentially transparent, stable object, as something which provides a degree of authenticity in every stage of its existence. Within ethnography, concern for textual performance has a respectable age, and scholars have investigated the poetic patterning of oral texts – 'narrative' or 'folklore' – in attempts to uncover their deeper cultural organization and significance (Hymes, 1996).

Attention to language ideologies has had an impact on at least two aspects of the study of text. The first aspect is the ideological dimension of transmission of texts, and the second is the introduction of indexicality in the analysis of text.

The transmission of Texts   As noted above, texts are often seen as stable and capable of unproblematic

transmission. Transmission of texts is often seen as crucial to any understanding of culture – as 'tradition' – and is equally crucial as an ingredient of bureaucratic and institutional practice, in courts, schools, governance, and so forth. In such a transmission, the 'original context' of the text is taken to be carried over to the new occurrence of the text, and impressions of transcontextual stability are created. In discourse analysis, terms such as 'intertextuality' denote such forms of transmission, and they are often used to identify (explicitly) recognizable traces of chunks of discourse across loci of occurrence.

As soon as we adopt a more refined view of context in which indexicality is central, processes of textual transmission become significantly more complex. Let us recall that apart from denotational meanings, texts also carry indexical, metapragmatic values which provide their anchoring into contexts. Every text in context is thus metapragmatically organized in ways that suggest, in context, particular readings or understandings. When texts are transmitted, forms may remain stable – a characteristic called 'entextualization' (Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Silverstein and Urban, 1996b) – but the metapragmatic framing of the text may change. The process by means of which discourses are successively or simultaneously decontextualized and metapragmatically recontextualized depends on such entextualization, so that the forms become a new discourse associated with a new context and accompanied by a particular metadiscourse which provides a sort of 'preferred reading' for the discourse. This new discourse has become a 'text': discourse lifted out of its interactional setting and transmitted together with new suggestion of context (cf. Bauman and Briggs, 1990: 73). Silverstein and Urban (1996b: 1) specified:

> The text idea allows the analyst of culture to extract a portion of ongoing social action – discourse or some nondiscursive but nevertheless semiotic action – from its infinitely rich, exquisitely detailed context, and draw a boundary around it, inquiring into its structure and meaning. This textual fragment of culture can then be re-embedded by asking how it relates to its 'context,' where context is understood as nonreadable surround or background (or if the context is regarded as readable, by asking how the text relates to its 'co-text').

Entextualization is part of what Silverstein and Urban call the 'natural history of discourse.' 'Original' pieces of discourse – socially, culturally, and historically situated unique events – are lifted out of their original context and transmitted into another context, by quoting or echoing them, by writing them down, by inserting them into another discourse, by using them as examples or as data for scientific analysis.

Entextualization builds further on notions of the reflexive nature of language usage (see Lucy, 1993). Through this reflexive dimension, it amends overly linear or static views of context, adding an important praxis-related dimension to text–context relationships. While talking, participants themselves mark those parts of speech that are text and those that are "instructions about how that discourse is to be approached as a text, through replication or with some form of response" (Urban, 1996: 33), e.g., by means of self-corrections, hedges, hesitations, interjections, false starts, explicit qualifications such as 'what I really mean is...' or 'that's not the point.'

Entextualization also connects in relevant ways to another crucial concept: representation. Insofar as representation is always a semiotic act (discursive or nondiscursive, material), and to the degree that representation always involves the 'replication' of an object, a phenomenon, or an event into other modes of existence and other moments of happening, it is a form of entextualization. Hence, representation will also involve metadiscursive qualifications commenting on the ontology or the status of the representation by pointing at distances between the object and the representation, by suggesting that object and representation are identical, or by suggesting that the representation can be treated as identical to the object. We shall see below that this has implications for the history of linguistics.

The Analysis of Texts When indexicality is adopted as one of the primary features and functions of linguistic expression, the analysis of discourse involves far more than an attempt to connect form to content. One of the most important influences from the study of language ideology has been the recognition that formal, poetic patterning in text is indexical, i.e., meaningful in itself. This has an effect on what we understand by 'context' in discourse analysis: the notion of 'contextualization' comes to stand for the generative and dialogical production and interpretation of indexical aspects of language usage (Silverstein, 1992; Gumperz, 2002). Whenever people communicate, they produce forms that fit a particular genre, carry concomitant stylistic features, and thus produce metapragmatic messages about content, direction of interpretation, situatedness in a particular event, social identities, and relationships valid in the event. Utterances are therefore packed with indexical meanings: every utterance is genred, topically organized, linguistically coded, gendered, accented, stylized, and so forth. All of these features occur simultaneously and offer dense clusters of contextualization cues, deployed dialogically in the line-by-line

development of the event (Blommaert, 2005). This is the "dialectical plenitude of indexicality" (Silverstein, 2003: 227; cf. also Goffman's [1974] 'frames within frames').

Thus, in an analysis of marital quarrels and mediation among Zinacantàn Tzotzil speakers in Mexico, John Haviland (1996) showed how the mediator used particular ethnopoetic patterns (parallelisms, refrains, repetitions) in his speech as iconic of the restoration of harmony he was attempting to accomplish. The ethnopoetic patterning here instantiated a genre in which linguistic form iconicized the whole of the event and indexed the roles and relationships produced therein. Similarly, in the analysis of a narrative produced by a refugee from Sierra Leone, Maryns and Blommaert (2001) observed how delicate shifts in (linguistic) code went hand in hand with stylistic and genre shifts, and so indexed affective and epistemic orientations to the places in which particular episodes of the narrative were set. Bundles of formal features, in other words, appeared to organize shifts in orientation towards contextual 'centers' and thus provided new semiotic subject positions, much in the sense of Goffman's changes in footing or Bakhtin's multivocality. And Hanks (1996) showed how a Mayan prayer was indexically structured in such a way as to organize a complex and sequential pattern of participation frameworks. The different structural parts of the prayer oriented towards humans, spirits, space, biographies, and shared histories, and did so in a synthetic, 'polycentric' act of communication.

In all these cases, we see how genred linguistic-narrative form is a crucial contextualizing device and how genre goes hand in hand with identities, roles, topic organization, key, epistemic and affective modes, and so on. Genre, in all of these cases, turned out to be a complex of organized ("ordered," Silverstein, 2003) indexicalities triggering socioculturally presupposable framings for the narratives. Consequently, small, hardly noticeable genre shifts – e.g., from a 'serious' conversation into a 'joke' – indexically reorganize (or reframe) the whole social event, orienting it towards other sets of meanings and expectations of behavior.

There are several implications to this, of which we can only briefly mention a handful here:

1. One implication has to do with the link between communicative-linguistic repertoires and communicative practice. It is clear that both need to be seen in close connection to one another, for certain forms of communicative practice involve the selection of specific linguistic resources from a repertoire (as, for example, the use of a regional accent when quoting someone in a bit of gossip). Thus, the range of stylistic means of speakers may be closely related to their repertoire range, and important forms of inequality may occur in this respect. This is where the study of language ideologies enters the realm of sociolinguistics.

2. Second, there are implications for conceptualizations of form–function relations. Going back to Jakobsonian poetics, we know that contrasts and equivalences, big and small, are crucial indexically. Small formal shifts, sometimes hardly salient linguistically, can have big ideological effects. The phenomenon now often called code-switching can be seen in a new light when we adopt indexicality as a feature of analysis. Often, the shift in (denotational – 'language') code occurs alongside generic and stylistic shifts, and such packages provide complex and layered indexicalities (cf. Rampton, 1995). The actual communicative deployment of code-switching and other forms of contrast and equivalence in linguistic form can be looked at anew.

3. Related to that, discourse analysis can also take a fresh look at poetic patterning in speech, for apart from formal metric organization, talk can also display an indexical rhythm and meter, as Silverstein (2004) demonstrated. Given the 'packaging' of indexicality in formal and structural bundles of features, one may take indexicality as the point of departure rather than as the outcome of formal patterning. This area of investigation awaits focused attention.

Speech community

Apart from the linguistic concepts discussed above, language ideology also dislodges some crucial sociolinguistic concepts. The concept of 'speech community' is one such; its problematic attributions of boundedness, uniformity, and homogeneity have long since been noted. Sociolinguists have long explored the occurrence and distribution of 'languages' (in the artifactual sense outlined above) in societies, and such 'languages' were often accompanied by 'speech communities' in a one-to-one relationship; more sophisticated approaches focused on the occurrence of multiple 'languages' within one 'speech community' or different 'speech communities' sharing one 'language.'

From a language-ideological perspective, two different but related phenomena are at issue. One is the allegiance of groups of people to a denotational code, an artifactual 'language' with a name. The second one is the practical alignment people display towards particular indexical complexes within a stratified system of valuation. The first kind of group would be

called 'language community,' the second one 'speech community' (Silverstein, 1998). There is an obvious relation between both, the first form of groupness being a particular (genred) instance of the second.

To start with the first kind of groupness: this is the kind of allegiance that organizes self-categorizing perceptions and statements of the kind 'I speak X' or 'I am a native speaker of X.' What happens here is an orientation to an artifactual, denotational form of language, usually called by its name (Dutch, English) and imagined as the kind of stable, immanent, clear, and bounded object referred to above. The norm for such a language is codified, and distinctions can be made as to degrees of 'correctness' or knowledge of the ('standard') language thus defined. One 'possesses' this language, and one identifies with an imagined bounded, homogeneous community of 'native speakers' of the language. Thus results an image of singular ethnolinguistic identities – 'I am a speaker of X' – as well as images of static, timeless social formations unified by the language they speak.

The second kind of groupness is more volatile. 'Speech communities' are groups of speakers displaying joint orientations towards complexes of socioculturally presupposable indexicalities which can be used to construct identities and communities. Whereas 'language communities' are ideological constructs, speech communities would be practical constructs, the result of structured social-semiotic practices which, of course, in themselves are based on language ideologies. The existence and actual range of such speech communities depend on the sharedness of indexical values. Consequently, speech communities are shot through with almost every imaginable social variable which can be semiotically indexed. Gender, class, regional background, and spatial trajectories such as migration, ethnicity, levels of education, professions, hobbies, individual biographies, generations, etc. can all be reflected in recognizable semiotic practices and lead to self- or other categorization in particular communities in ways reminiscent of Bourdieu's 'distinction' (1984). Multiple belonging is the rule, and shifts in discourse may signal shifts in orientation towards, or inclusion of, other community-identifying indexicalities.

The language community can be seen as a particular instantiation of 'speech community': a shared orientation towards centered indexicalities, targeting the artifactual language and its explicit norms, often institutionally supported and enforced by the state or other authority-bearing actors. As a point of orientation in discourse, the language community often comes as one layer over other speech community indexicalities. Whenever I teach, for instance, I will talk in Dutch, thus orienting towards a

state-organized "regime of language" (Kroskrity, 2000a) which institutionally compels me to use Dutch as the medium of instruction. But the particular register and jargon I use orient towards another community: that of transnational academia in the field of language studies, and my own spoken variety of Dutch will betray my regional, gender, professional, class, and generation belongings as well. Thus we see how through the dense packaging of indexicalities multiple belongings to speech communities crystallize in everyday forms of language usage, making identity issues more a matter of particular combinations of indexical orientations than of categorical identification (Blommaert, 2005: ch. 8).

Silverstein (1998) sketches a series of important implications of these insights. One implication is that debates over 'minority languages' must be seen in a new light, realizing that terms such as 'language loss,' 'language attrition,' or 'language death' may hide a complex reality of shifting orientations of groups towards other indexical centers and thus creating new speech communities (cf. below). The same counts for code-switching, pidginization, and creolization, where the gradual coming into being of a new language community can be seen through the specter of speech communities which serve as the "context of emergence, sustenance and transformation" in the process (Silverstein, 1998: 407). In other words, we stand to gain a far more precise picture of the dynamics of 'enregistering' linguistic codes, varieties, and styles in social processes of identification.

There are other implications as well, and I will mention two important ones. First, taking language ideologies as our point of departure, we can have a new look at language policy. As mentioned above, the artifactual, denotational image of language is the one most often used in institutionalized environments; it is important to realize that this view in itself is the product of language-ideological processes, and that analyses of language policy, consequently, should aim at understanding such processes long before their implementation stage. It is the construction of the ideological image of '(a) language' itself, with the gradual emergence of 'standard' indexical categories for that 'language,' which is the key moment in language policy (cf. the essays in Blommaert, 1999a and Gal and Woolard, 2001a). Analyses based on 'languages' risk accepting the presuppositions of the policy, even when they are criticizing the implementation of the policy. This is particularly important in the context of globalization and the kind of urban multilingualism that results from it. Language policies aimed at 'integrating' new immigrant minorities are most often based on homogeneistic images of language in society, and it is precisely the indexical value of differences

between 'languages belonging here' and 'foreign languages' that provides the dynamic of disqualification and discrimination in education and bureaucracy.

A second, related, implication has to do with ethnolinguistic identity. Identifying people in terms of ethnolinguistic identity – 'I am a speaker of X' – is one of the most common components of lay, bureaucratic, and professional discourses on language in society. Yet, as we have seen, the one-to-one connection between individual speaker, language, and community is untenable. Instead, what counts as 'language' in particular environments, measured and valued against established or emergent regimes of language and in view of categorizablility within the imaginable speech communities, is the issue to be addressed when one intends to understand the relationship between language and identity. This has considerable practical and critical import, because linguistic inequality starts as soon as someone's repertoire is disqualified as 'nonlanguage' or denied the status of 'full languageness,' for instance because of the absence or partial presence of literacy skills or command of the 'standard' or prestige variety of the (artifactually conceptualized) language (cf. Heller, 1999; Jaffe, 1999; also Bourdieu, 1991). Thus, far from ethnolinguistic identity as a 'natural' attribute of humans, what we see is a dynamic of ethnolinguistic categorization, deeply embedded in macrosocial power relations and connected to issues of citizenship, belonging, and enfranchisement.

Language Change

The preceding remarks obviously have a bearing on language change. Silverstein (1979) demonstrated how certain forms of language structure may change due to ideological motivations, i.e., driven by folk understandings of language structure and language use, so that "grammatical change is of a piece with functional-structural [i.e., indexical] change" (Silverstein, 1979: 233). Using examples from English speech acts, Javanese linguistic etiquette, and continental European T/V pronominal systems, he observed how these grammatical patterns developed in the direction of a more strictly denotational system; this, in turn, changed the indexicalities of the grammatical patterns. The move towards a more denotationally transparent system, argued Silverstein, was an effect of the referential ideology of language – people believing that accurate denotation is the primary function of language, and using language accordingly (see also Errington, 1988, 1998 on Javanese).

The ideological drive behind language change was further theorized and elaborated by Irvine and Gal (2000). Focusing on the (mis)recognition of linguistic differences, Irvine and Gal identified three ideological-semiotic effects of processes by means of which language change proceeds: 'iconization,' 'fractal recursivity,' and 'erasure.' Iconization is the process by means of which linguistic features are sensed to be images of the social realities they represent. Thus, language is modeled in such a way that it is seen as iconically representing reality; that is, its indexical signs are understood to correspond to whatever they stand for. Fractal recursivity is the projection of a difference that occurs at one level or in one domain onto another level or into another domain, and erasure is the process by means of which some features of reality are made invisible. Processes of language change driven by language-ideological motivations, they argued, display these processes, either in isolation or in combination with one another.

Irvine and Gal discussed the colonial description of Senegalese languages as an example of the interaction between the three processes. Languages were isolated and projected onto monolingual ethnolinguistic groups and in the process, a geolingual image of language, people, and territory was produced – a case of iconization, graphically represented in ethnolinguistic maps of Senegal. In the process, the multilingualism that characterized many Senegalese communities was made invisible, as it was seen as an effect of earlier historical stages of conquest and colonization – a case of erasure and of fractal recursivity, for this image of multilingualism as an effect of colonialism was a projection of the European colonial impact on Senegal onto precolonial Senegalese society. The general colonial-linguistic enterprise could be seen as a case of iconicization as well: the image of Africans as 'simple' people was mirrored in suggestively 'simple' and straightforward descriptions of the sociolinguistic image of their languages.

A similar case of ideologically driven language change is that of Swahili in the former Belgian Congo. Fabian (1986) described how Swahili was introduced in the Katanga region by the Belgian colonial authorities. Two varieties were introduced: a pidginized variety used in contacts between African workers and Belgian colonial entrepreneurs and administrators, and a 'standard,' sophisticated variety offered only to a small African elite-to-be in advanced education, and tightly controlled by Belgian scholars. Note that, in Irvine and Gal's terms, these two varieties iconicized the segment of the population to which they were offered: the 'simple' pidginized variety was offered to the 'simple' workers, the sophisticated one to the 'sophisticated' elite-to-be. The result on the (socio)linguistic environment was twofold: (1) the introduction of Swahili in a region where it was previously not used, reshuffling the sociolinguistic repertoires of speakers, and (2) the development of

a local variety of Swahili bearing the traces of the pidginized colonial variety, so-called Shaba Swahili. Later, this local variety of Swahili became one of the (semi-)official languages of the independent Congo, and it is now a marker of regional identity and local nationalism – a case of fractal recursivity in which the 'naturalization' of Swahili under colonial rule was adopted by the postcolonial officials and speakers.

What these examples show is the sensitivity of language to wider historical and political-ideological forces. In Silverstein's T/V examples, the gradual rise of macrosocial ideologies of equality was a factor in linguistic development; in the cases discussed by Irvine and Gal and Fabian, colonialism was the wider context within which the construction of new artifactual languages and sociolinguistic images proceeded. They also have a wider critical and metatheoretical effect, because they allow us to revisit established traditions in pragmatics, such as politeness research or speech act theory. What such traditions accomplish is often a *post hoc* and decontextualized theorization of the dominant ideological grids that organize language usage without, however, defining these phenomena as ideological or embedded in communicative practice. Thus, often, either transcendental ('cultural') images of 'norms' are invoked, or ideological and situated processes are presented as simple reflexes of top-down power relations (Agha, 2003). We will return to this below.

The History of Linguistics

The ideological layer in language is a historical layer in which meaning is accomplished by attributing shared and ordered indexicalities to linguistic forms. This counts for folk ideologies of language as well as for specialized professional ones, and the history of the study of language is a history of the formation of ideologies of language as 'discourses of truth' in Foucault's sense: constellations of particular discourses and registers, institutional structures, and professional practices. Foucault himself offered a classic analysis of the emergence of the now dominant view of language as a separate domain of action and knowledge and a neutral, transparent tool for conveying knowledge – the artifactual view we described above (Foucault, 1973). Foucault argued that in the 16th and 17th centuries, a major shift occurred in Western thinking on language, away from a view of language as intrinsically connected to (and embodying) objects and truth. This view was replaced by a new '*épistème*' in which a neutral, instrumental, and autonomous concept of language was seen as the force that enabled the production of modern, rational knowledge.

Bauman and Briggs (2003) further developed and nuanced this thesis. Objecting to Foucault's unified conception of language in the Classical period, they emphasized conflict and hybridity as central to the imagination of language in modernity, thus creating a powerful means of creating social inequality. In Bauman and Briggs's analysis, claims to use of autonomous language become an instrument for claiming modern identities for some by excluding others: the 'folk,' those who speak 'dialects' and perform 'traditions,' the ancestors, the cultural Others. The construction of modern language ideologies has exclusionary, stratifying effects in society. Bauman and Briggs's point of departure is the work of Bacon and Locke, in which elite language is wrested from society and becomes the purified isolated, autonomous object of rationality in modernity, and opposed to 'hybrids' – mixtures of language and society – left to be spoken by the nonelite. Locke adds to this a view of governmentality: "linguistic surveillance becomes a key dimension of [Locke's] pedagogical program" (Bauman and Briggs, 2003: 43), and "tying purification to governmentality rendered language a perfect vehicle for constructing and naturalizing social inequality" (2003: 59).

Bacon and Locke thus provided the language-ideological bedrock of modernity. On that bedrock, several other views were developed, in which the rational and autonomous view of language is contrasted with and used to define modernity's Others: the people of the past, the country folk, people who live in oral cultures and perform 'tradition.' Such views of linguistic Othering were developed by antiquarians such as Aubrey, Bourne, and Brand, whose work tied common people firmly to the past by locating them in a (hybrid) linguistic space of (oral) folklore and tradition. Philologists such as Blackwell, Wood, and Lowth introduced relativism by seeing 'premodern' language as indicative of epochal change. Thus, both contemporary Others and historical Others could be opposed to modern, rational man. Blair's Ossian added a political and universalist-developmental dimension to this set of ideas, showing the path to Herder, who defined poetic (hybrid) form as the essence of national culture. In what at first glance looks as a role reversal, Herder saw poetry (i.e., folklore and tradition) as the 'purest' and most 'natural' expression of the sprit of a *Volk*. In the work of the Brothers Grimm, the rational, autonomous (Lockean) language ideology was used to identify, locate, and appraise folklore. This now more or less finished complex of ideologies was continued, elaborated, and extended in the work of two important early Americanists, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft and Franz Boas, and is thus enshrined in the emergence of American anthropology.

Bauman and Briggs sketched lines of ancestry for modern scientific philological and linguistic concepts

of language, but obviously, the story should not end there. The concrete discursive mechanisms by means of which modern linguistics dissects and produces this view of language through an empirical engagement with linguistic data remain poorly documented (but see e.g., Silverstein, 1996, 2001; essays in Joseph and Taylor, 1990).

A number of studies address linguistics in the historical regime of 'discovery' and colonialism (see Fabian, 1986; Irvine and Gal, 2000 above). This historical era offers rich materials for investigating the connection between the practical work of linguistic scholarship and the larger sociopolitical and cultural-historical schemes in which it could fit (Calvet, 1974; Errington, 2001). In the context of colonial exploration and governance, the colonial subjects' languages were powerful emblems of their inferiority, and their description and categorization consequently displayed all sorts of projections of established Western language ideologies. Rafael's (1993) study of Tagalog under early Spanish rule provided evidence of this dynamics of disqualification, specifically through the projection of Spanish ideologies of literacy onto Tagalog writing, in which we already see articulations of artifactual views of language. Irvine (2001) described how gender and family ideologies were used in the classification of African languages in the 19th century, languages being represented through metaphors of kinship and gender ('daughters,' 'mothers,' etc.), with racial overtones and with hierarchical stratigraphy as a result. Meeuwis (1999) provided an analysis of the way in which Belgian missionaries describing Congolese languages used an 'ideology of the natural' – a view in which languages needed to be established in, kept in, or restored to a 'natural' (God-given) state. This natural state, unsurprisingly, was the one then current in European state nationalisms: the Herderian 'one language–one culture–one territory' complex which defined people as intrinsically monolingual, their language as a '(pure) standard' and their territory as bounded and sociolinguistically homogeneous. These ideological templates provided much of the sociolinguistic imagination of colonial territories, and they were perpetuated in postcolonial language policies and theories of language planning (Blommaert, 1996; Errington, 2001).

The role of linguistics in nationalism has also been rather well documented. The reasons are similar to the ones given for the study of colonialism: the historical era of nation-state building projects offers a fertile basis for investigating the links that exist between particular types of linguistics and larger political-ideological projects. Theorists of nationalism such as Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner had already emphasized the importance of print capitalism as an instrument in such projects, but it is clear that more fundamental language-ideological processes were at work as well. Woolard (2004) found traces of early 'modern' imaginings of language as the cement of the nation in 16th-century Spanish treatises, and we have already seen how early Spanish colonizers projected an artifactual view of language onto Tagalog writing (Rafael, 1993). Bauman and Briggs (2003) emphasized the importance of linguistic works such as those of Herder and Grimm in the inception of new European nation-states, but again on a language-ideological basis acquired earlier in the works of Bacon and Locke. A vast area of research awaits attention here.

The role of linguists and other expert actors in 20th-century processes of nation building has drawn substantial attention (see the essays in Blommaert, 1999a; Parlenko and Blackledge, 2002). Bonfiglio (2002) provided a detailed analysis of how Midwestern accents became seen as 'standard' in the early 20th-century United States through the works of important codifiers of American English. Kuzar (2001) discussed the way in which Israeli linguists got inserted in different versions of Zionism, and how their positions in the specter of Zionism correlated their theoretical and methodological preferences; Jaffe (1999) gave detailed attention to the influence of linguists, writers, and translators in the construction of Corsican as a 'minority language.' And Blommaert (1999b) gave an account of the alignment of Tanzanian writers and linguists with the dominant socialist state ideology, leading to a local, strongly politicized form of linguistics and sociolinguistics.

Cultural Variability in Language Ideologies

The study of language ideology grew out of linguistic anthropology and shares the basic preoccupation in this tradition of investigating the nexus of language and culture. It does so by introducing another level of cultural structuring in language: the language-ideological, indexical metalinguistic level. This level drives the development of linguistic structure – the patterns of language change discussed earlier – and it organizes the social, political, and historical framing of language and language use. Consequently, it is a level of significant cultural variability, and some work has started addressing the different organizations of the indexical levels in languages. The outcomes of such work have often included a critique of existing

theory. I shall briefly review some examples of topics and work.

Particular attention has been given to a number of topics. There has been important innovative work on the conceptualization of space among Guugu Yimithirr (Guguyimidjir) and Tzotzil speakers, in which local ideologies of space and of the relationship between gesture and language appear to be influential (Haviland, 1993, 1998). Honorific structures and pronouns have been a topic of inquiry, both as a typical cultural-linguistic category of linguistic occurrences and as forms that display a high sensitivity towards social processes of stratification and categorization. Silverstein (e.g., 1979, 2003) gave frequent examples of pronouns and honorific language use; Errington (1988) was a major study of linguistic etiquette in Javanese; and Irvine (1998) compared honorifics in various African languages. All these authors concluded that linguistic ideologies – perceptions of referential adequacy and conventions of identification – are a factor in explaining the gradual shifts in the systems of honorifics. Such analyses lead to a powerful critique of, for example, politeness theory (as in Errington, 1998). Closely related to this are studies of ritual or ceremonial speech. Here, the performative nature of ritual is at issue, and authors investigate the connections between linguistic form (often formalized, genred speech), occasion, participants, and language ideologies. Hanks (1996) investigated the complex interplay of roles and addressees in Maya shaman prayers; Kroskrity (1998) described how the Kiva speech of the Arizona Tewa involved important language-ideological and identity features; Bauman (1996) inquired into the intricate dynamics of entextualization in Mexican religious ritual festival performances; and Robbins (2001) compared Melanesian and Western Christian ritual discourses in an attempt to arrive at a language-ideological model of ritual. More generally, the emergence and development of genres has also attracted some attention. Kulick (1992) gave detailed evidence of the way in which various genres contribute to the construction of identities in Papua New Guinea; Hill (1998) provided a vivid account of the discourse of nostalgia among Náhuatl speakers; Philips (2000) showed how courtroom discourse in Tonga iconically projects events onto society and the nation-state. Mertz (1998) discussed academic teaching in U.S. law schools as a form of metapragmatic regimentation; Spitulnik (1998a) and Urla (2001) both discussed radio broadcasting, Spitulnik in relation to the complexities of linguistic pluralism in Zambia, Urla in relation to the construction of a counterhegemonic Basque public sphere in Spain. All these authors addressed the way in which specific linguistic forms are deployed in

order to attain the ideological effects, and code-switching often emerges as a powerful emblematic feature.

Another topic that has attracted attention is the dynamics of normativity in language. Silverstein's powerful paper (1996) focused on the rise of 'monoglot standard' in the United States; Agha (2003) addressed the development of Received Pronunciation in U.K. English. Errington (1998, 2000) offered perceptive remarks on the tension between the state language and local languages in Indonesia; Blommaert (1999b) described the convergence between state ideology and language practices in Tanzania; Swigart (2000) and Spitulnik (1998b) demonstrated how urban linguistic 'hybrids' such as Urban Wolof (Senegal) and Town Bemba (Zambia) are involved in processes of indexical reorienting towards a more central position in the local speech economies.

All the studies mentioned here contribute to the description of different kinds of relativity – indexical-functional relativity – and provide building blocks for comparative research in this expanding field. Meanwhile, several scholars have addressed phenomena occurring when different contextualization traditions meet, in intercultural communication and translation or in debates over linguistic rights and marginalization. A recent collection of papers in *American Anthropologist* (Mascia-Lees and Lees, 2003) brought the question of language rights into focus and argued convincingly that language rights take on a different shape when looked upon from the point of view of language ideologies (cf. also Silverstein, 1998). Haviland (2003) confronted the linguistic ideologies inscribed in U.S. courtroom practices with the complex process of indexical 'translation' that needs to be undertaken in order to adequately reconstruct the story of Mexican defendants; similar issues of indexical recentering were addressed by Blommaert (2001) in relation to the stories of African asylum seekers in Belgium.

Conceptions of language, coherence, and 'truth' appear to depend heavily on ideologically regimented forms of language use. The forms of regimentation used by, for example, bureaucracy can differ strongly from those used by lay people, even when in established parlance they share a language and live in the same country. This often has important effects of inequality, as Briggs's (1997) analysis of a Venezuelan court case illustrates. Evidently, wherever plurilingual regimes occur, linguistic resources from groups of people can be appropriated and deployed in processes of 'othering.' This happens with languages (Hill, 2001) as well as with accents and speech styles (Rampton, 2003). In the context of globalization processes resulting in heightened perceptual salience

for emblems of identity, such phenomena of indexical recentering within a stratified (unequal) regime may become the key object of theoretical and applied analysis.

Language Ideologies, Norms, and Social Dynamics

The ideological layer of language is a historical layer, as mentioned above, and the historicity of this layer provides for relatively stable trajectories and patterns of indexicality. This fundamental insight allows us to take a different look at 'norms' – an often invoked but rarely theorized linguistic and sociolinguistic notion, often presented as part of 'common knowledge,' 'competence,' or 'intuition,' and generally suggested to be a social convention that comes down on language structure and use.

One of the important contributions of the study of language ideologies is the insight that language always comes with an ideological load which provides comprehensibility through the dynamic of presupposability and inference of indexical meaning, but which also provides a sociopolitical layer of valuation on the utterances produced. Language use, in other words, is intrinsically normative, not in the sense that it always follows established rules, but in the sense that every act of communication will be subject to assessment on grounds of (often implicit) shared complexes of indexicalities – the complexes of indexicalities that provide the basis for speech communities. Norms are patterns of metapragmatic valuation that develop over time in the form of 'enregisterment,' the development of specific forms of language use that carry socially recognizable values and that invite and require continuous interactional re-enactment (Silverstein, 2003).

One way of conceptualizing these patterns of metapragmatic valuation is to start from the nonarbitrary, ordered nature of indexicality. Metapragmatic valuation has a systemic dimension, and by analogy with Foucault's 'orders of discourse' we could speak of 'orders of indexicalities': systemically reproduced indexicalities typically associated with particular genred shapes of language ('enregistered' forms of language use) (Silverstein, 1998, 2003, 2004; Agha, 2003; cf. also Briggs and Bauman, 1992). Whenever people communicate, they display orientations towards such orders of indexicalities, situating their (enregistered) language use in relation to 'norms,' and situating these norms in relation to other norms. Thus, there is always identity work involved, and the orientations towards orders of indexicality are the grassroots displays of 'groupness.' To give an example: young people communicate through orientations

to peer group norms; in that way they reproduce the peer group and situate it *vis-à-vis* other peer groups and society at large, thus making the group recognizable both from the inside and from the outside – the particular peer group norms have a specific place in the orders of indexicality to which members orient (Rampton, 1995, 2003).

The systemically reproduced indexicalities are often tied to specific actors, which we can call 'centering institutions' (Silverstein, 1998: 404), often also 'central' actors reproducing the 'doxa' in a particular group. The centering function is **attributive**: it generates indexicalities to which others orient in order to be 'social,' i.e., to produce meanings that 'belong' somewhere and thus to produce categorizable identities. These attributions are emblematic: they revolve around the potential to articulate the perceived 'central values' of a group or system (the 'good' group member, the 'ideal' father/mother/child, 'God,' 'the country/nation,' 'the law,' the 'good' student, the 'ideal' intellectual, the 'real' man/woman…). And this centering almost always involves either perceptions or real processes of homogenization through contrast with other orders of indexicality: orienting towards such a center involves the real or perceived reduction of difference (adopting the enregistered form of language use) and thus the creation of recognizably 'normative' meaning. Centering is thus the semiotic shaping of specific contexts through the creation of contrasts with other contexts. It is the process that generates speech communities.

Centering actors occur at all levels of social life, ranging from the family, through small peer groups, more or less stable communities (e.g. university students, factory workers, members of a church), the state, and transnational communities, all the way to the world system. They are a central feature of what Anderson (1983) called 'imagined communities': though imagined, they trigger specific, enregistered forms of semiotic behaviors and generate groups. But it is worth underscoring that the social environment of almost any individual would by definition be **polycentric**, with a wide range of overlapping and crisscrossing centers to which orientations need to be made, and evidently with multiple 'belongings' for individuals (often understood as 'mixed' or 'hybrid' identities). Furthermore, such environments would be polycentric and **stratified**, in the sense that not every center has equal range, scope, and depth. Small peer groups are not equal to a church community or to the state, and while some centers are normative because of consent (e.g., peer groups), others generate normativity primarily through coercion (e.g., the labor environment or the state in various respects). Consequently, orders of indexicality are

obviously stratified and not all 'loads' have equal value.

Orders of indexicality provide us with a conceptual tool for capturing the moment-by-moment perceptions of stability in language use; they do not, however, suggest total stability or homogeneity because they are subject to permanent re-enactment in situated communicative practices. Agha (2003: 246) argues that, at the lowest level of social practice, norms get transferred through 'speech chains': concrete networks in which people switch communicative roles – from speaker to hearer and vice versa – and so produce a dynamics of communicability and presupposability of norms. Speech chains could be seen as emergent speech networks which display orientations to specific orders of indexicality, and whose communicative practice is the locus of language-ideological innovation. In this way, macrosocial processes can be brought down to the lowest microsociological level of practice.

See also: Anthropological Linguistics: Overview; Linguistic Anthropology.

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