# Part I  Language: Some Basic Questions

# 1

# The Socially Charged Life of Language

> All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life . . .
>
> <div align="right">Bakhtin 1981:293</div>

Words *do* live socially charged lives, as Bakhtin observes in the epigraph that opens this chapter. Language is not a neutral medium for communication but rather a set of socially embedded practices. The reverse of Bakhtin's statement is also true: social interactions live linguistically charged lives. That is, every social interaction is mediated by language – whether spoken or written, verbal or nonverbal. Consider the following three examples.

## Example 1: Getting Stoned in San Francisco

During the 1995–1996 school year, a special anti-drug class was run as an elective in a large high school in the San Francisco Bay Area.[1] Students were trained as peer educators in preparation for visiting other classes to perform skits about the danger of drugs and tobacco. The class was unusually diverse, with boys as well as girls and with students from many different class ranks, ethnicities, and racial groups. On the day that the students were preparing to perform their skits in front of an audience for the first time, they asked the teacher, Priscilla, what they should say if someone in the audience
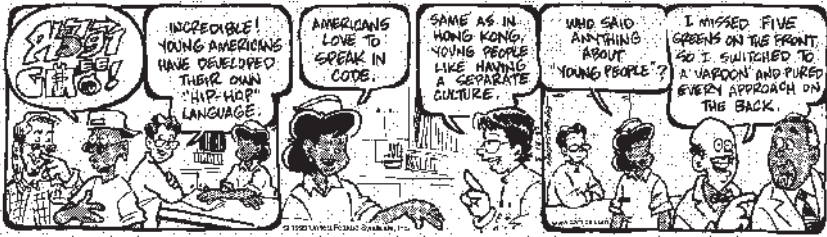
**Figure 1.1**  Cartoon demonstrating how certain styles of speech can both reflect and shape social identities.
*Source:* Jump Start © 1999 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

asked whether they themselves smoked marijuana. Priscilla recommended that they say they did not. Then the following exchange took place between Priscilla and the students:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Priscilla*: | Remember, you're role models. |
| *Al Capone*: | You want us to lie? |
| *Priscilla*: | Since you're not coming to school stoned – (*students laugh*) |
| *Calvin*: | (*mockingly*) Stoned? |
| *Priscilla*: | What do you say? |
| *Calvin*: | I say high. Bombed. Blitzed. |
| *Brand One*: | Weeded. |
| *Kerry*: | Justified. |
| *Brand One*: | That's kinda tight. |

*Example 2: Losing a Language in Papua New Guinea*
In 1987, the residents of the tiny village of Gapun in Papua New Guinea (a country north of Australia) were some of the last speakers of a language called Taiap, which at the time had at most 89 remaining speakers.[2] Adult villagers were almost all bilingual in Taiap and in Tok Pisin, one of the three national languages of Papua New Guinea, and all children were exposed to rich amounts of both Taiap and Tok Pisin in their early years. By 1987, however, no child under the age of ten actively spoke Taiap, and many under the age of eight did not even possess a good passive knowledge of the language. The usual theories about how and why so many of the world's languages are becoming extinct did not seem to apply to Taiap. Material and economic factors such as industrialization and urbanization were not sufficiently important in the remote village of

Gapun to explain the language shift away from Taiap. Why, then, was Taiap becoming extinct? According to linguistic anthropologist Don Kulick, the adults in Gapun claimed that the shift was occurring because of the actions of their (often preverbal) children. Kulick writes: "'We haven't done anything,' one village man explained when I asked him why village children don't speak the vernacular, 'We try to get them to speak it, we want them to. But they won't . . . They're *bikhed* [big-headed, strong-willed]'" (Kulick 1992:16).

*Example 3: The Pounded Rice Ritual in Nepal*
On a warm February afternoon in 1993, a wedding procession made its way down a steep hill in Junigau, Nepal. Several men carefully maneuvered the bride's sedan chair around the hairpin turns. At the foot of the hill, under a large banyan tree, the wedding party settled down to rest and to conduct the Pounded Rice Ritual.[3] The bride, Indrani Kumari, remained in her palanquin, while some members of the wedding party, including the groom, Khim Prasad, approached her. Taking out a leafplate full of pounded rice, a popular snack in Nepal, Indrani Kumari's bridal attendant placed it in her lap. Khim Prasad, coached by his senior male kin, tentatively began the ritual, holding out a handkerchief and asking his new wife to give him the pounded rice snack. He used the most polite, honorific form of "you" in Nepali (*tapāi*), and so his remark translated roughly as a polite request to someone of higher social status: "Please bring the pounded rice, Wife; our wedding party has gotten hungry."

But this first request was not very effective. Indrani Kumari and her bridal attendant poured just a few kernels of the pounded rice into the handkerchief Khim Prasad was holding. Upon further coaching from his elders, Khim Prasad asked a second time for the rice, this time in a more informal manner using "*timi*," a form of "you" in Nepali that is considered appropriate for close relatives and/or familiar equals. This time, Khim Prasad's request could be translated roughly as a matter-of-fact statement to someone of equal social status: "Bring the pounded rice, Wife; our wedding party has gotten hungry." But again, the bridal attendant and Indrani Kumari poured only a few kernels of pounded rice into Khim Prasad's waiting handkerchief. One last time Khim Prasad's senior male kin instructed him to ask for the rice, but this time he was told to use

**Figure 1.2**    Khim Prasad (left) during the Pounded Rice Ritual, with the bride, Indrani Kumari (seated at the right, completely covered by a shawl), and the bridal attendant (standing in the center).
*Source:* Laura M. Ahearn, *Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, and Social Change in Nepal.* Reproduced with permission from University of Michigan Press.

"*tã*," the lowest form of "you" in Nepali – a form most commonly used in Junigau to address young children, animals, and wives. Khim Prasad complied, but his words were halting and barely audible, indicating his deeply mixed feelings about using such a disrespectful term to address his new wife. This third request translated roughly as a peremptory command to someone of greatly inferior social status: "Bring the pounded rice, Wife! Our wedding party has gotten hungry!" Hearing this, Indrani Kumari and her attendant finally

proceeded obediently to dump all the remaining rice into the groom's handkerchief, after which he handed out portions of the snack to all members of the wedding party.

As different as these three examples are, they all describe situations in which neither a linguistic analysis alone nor a sociocultural analysis alone would come close to providing a satisfying explanation of the significance of the events. The purpose of this book is to show how the perspectives and tools of linguistic anthropology, when applied to events as wide-ranging as an anti-drug class in a San Francisco high school, language shift in Papua New Guinea, or a ritual in Nepal, can shed light on broader social and cultural issues as well as deepen our understanding of language – and ourselves. As we move through the chapters that follow, we will be addressing a number of questions, including:

- What can such situations tell us about the ways in which language both shapes and is shaped by cultural values and social power?
- How do dimensions of difference or inequality along lines such as gender, ethnicity, race, age, or wealth get created, reproduced, or challenged through language?
- How can language illuminate the ways in which we are all the same by virtue of being human as well as the ways in which we are incredibly diverse linguistically and culturally?
- How, if at all, do linguistic forms, such as the three different words in Nepali for "you" or the various slang words for "stoned," influence people's thought patterns or worldviews?
- How might people's ideas about language (for example, what "good" language is and who can speak it – in other words, their "language ideologies") affect their perceptions of others as well as themselves?
- How does the language used in public rituals and performances both differ from and resemble everyday, mundane conversations?
- What methods of data collection and analysis can we use to determine the significance of events such as those described above?

The starting point in the search for answers to all of these questions within linguistic anthropology is this fundamental principle: **language is inherently social**. It is not just a means through which we act upon

the social world; speaking *is itself* a form of social action, and language is a cultural resource available for people to use (Duranti 1997:2). We *do* things with words, as the philosopher J.L. Austin (1962) reminded us decades ago. Even when we speak or write to ourselves, our very choices of words, as well as our underlying intentions and desires, are influenced by the social contexts in which we have seen, heard, or experienced those words, intentions, and desires before. Linguistic anthropologists therefore maintain that the essence of language cannot be understood without reference to the particular social contexts in which it is used. But those contexts do not stand apart from linguistic practices or somehow "contain" them, as a soup bowl would contain soup.[4] Rather, social contexts and linguistic practices mutually constitute each other. For this reason, language should be studied, Alessandro Duranti writes, "not only as a mode of thinking but, above all, as a cultural practice, that is, as a form of action that both presupposes and at the same time brings about ways of being in the world" (1997:1).

This approach to language differs from the popular view of language as an empty vehicle that conveys pre-existing meanings about the world. Language, according to this view, which is held by many members of the general public as well as many linguists and other scholars, is largely a set of labels that can be placed on pre-existing concepts, objects, or relationships. In this mistaken way of thinking, language is defined as a conduit that merely conveys information without adding or changing anything of substance (Reddy 1979).

Within the field of linguistics, a similar approach to language is dominant: one in which language is reduced to a set of formal rules. Such reductionism extends back hundreds of years but was made the dominant approach of the field of linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure, a famous Swiss linguist who lived a century ago. De Saussure maintained that it was not only possible but *necessary* to decontextualize the study of language: "A science which studies linguistic structure is not only able to dispense with other elements of language, but is possible only if those other elements are kept separate" (Saussure 1986[1916]:14).[5] This perspective was reinforced by Noam Chomsky, an American linguist who revolutionized the field and has dominated it for the past 50 years. Chomsky and his followers are interested in discovering Universal Grammar (UG), which they define as: "The basic design underlying the grammars of all human languages; [it] also

refers to the circuitry in children's brains that allows them to learn the grammar of their parents' language" (Pinker 1994:483).

This is not to say that linguistic anthropologists are uninterested in grammar or believe that linguistic forms cannot be studied systematically – on the contrary, many build upon the "considerable progress in the understanding of formal properties of languages" made by scholars in the field of linguistics (Duranti 1997:7), but they ask very different kinds of questions that explore the intersections between grammar and social relations, politics, or emotion. Even linguistic anthropologists who value the work done by linguists believe that in order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of language, it must be studied in real-life contexts (cf. Hanks 1996). Grammar, according to linguistic anthropologists, is just one part of language's "socially charged life" (Bakhtin 1981:293).[6]

## So, What Do You Need to Know in Order to "Know" a Language?

In order to understand what it means to study language as a linguistic anthropologist would, it is helpful to ask what it means to "know" a language (Cipollone et al. 1998). Linguists generally use the Chomskyan distinction between "competence," the abstract and usually unconscious knowledge that one has about the rules of a language, and "performance," the putting into practice – sometimes imperfectly – of those rules. De Saussure made a similar distinction between *langue* (the language system in the abstract) and *parole* (everyday speech). This distinction is partly analogous to the way a person might have abstract knowledge about how to knit a sweater but in the actual knitting of it might drop a stitch here or there or perhaps make the arms a bit shorter than necessary. In both the Chomskyan and Saussurean approaches, it is the abstract knowledge of a language system (competence or *langue*) that is of primary, or even sole, interest for a science of language; performance or *parole* is irrelevant.

To take the knitting analogy further, if Chomsky were a knittist instead of a linguist, he would be interested only in the abstract rules of Knitting (capitalizing the word, as he does with Language) such as the following: *Row 20: P 1, (k 1, p 1) 11(13–15) times, k 5, T R 2, k 4, T R 2, k 1, p 12, k 1, T L 2, k 4, T L 2, k 5, p 1, (k 1, p 1) 11(13–15) times.*[7]

Chomsky the knittist would posit the existence of a Knitting Acquisition Device (KAD, rather than LAD, a Language Acquisition Device), a specialized module of the brain that allows people to acquire knitting skills. While he would acknowledge that people require exposure to knitting in their social environments in order to learn how to knit, he would be completely uninterested in the following:

- How or why people learn to knit in various cultures and communities.
- How knitting practices have changed over time.
- The gendered nature of knitting and other handicrafts in many societies (although knitting is often associated with girls and women in this society, for example, handicrafts such as weaving were until recently conventionally produced by lower-caste men in Nepal).
- The role of Madame Defarge in *A Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens, as she secretly encodes the names of counterrevolutionaries into her knitting.[8]
- The global political economy of the many different yarns people use to knit – anything from yak wool from Nepal to Icelandic wool to synthetic mohair.
- The many different kinds of products of economic, social, or emotional value that are made by knitters to be worn by themselves, given to loved ones, donated to charity, or sold to tourists.
- The ways in which knitting is viewed by different groups in the society – as a hip, in-group practice (as evidenced, perhaps, by the millions of users registered on Ravelry.com, an online community for those who knit or crochet), or as an old, fuddy-duddy practice engaged in mostly by grandmotherly types, or as a useful, money-making skill by yet others.
- How one's individual and social identities can be reflected in and shaped by whether, how, what, and with whom one knits.

While this analogy of language with knitting is not by any means a perfect one, it does nevertheless demonstrate how narrowly Chomsky and most other linguists view language. Other practices such as playing music, dancing, or painting would work equally well in the analogy I set up above because knitting and all these other practices are – like language – socially embedded and culturally influenced. Of course there are abstract cognitive and biological dimensions to anything that

we as humans do, including language, but to reduce language solely to these dimensions, as Chomsky and others do when they claim they are interested only in competence and not in performance, is to miss the richness and complexity of one of the most fundamental aspects of human existence.

Linguistic anthropologists therefore reject the Chomskyan/Saussurean distinction between competence (*langue*) and performance (*parole*), though they do so in various ways. Some deny the existence of any distinction at all between competence and performance (*langue* and *parole*), while others give primacy to performance (*parole*). Still others expand the definition of competence to include the ability to use language skillfully and appropriately in particular social contexts (cf. Hymes 2001[1972]), and many view competence and performance (*langue* and *parole*) as equally important. What all linguistic anthropologists agree upon, however, is that to know a language, one must know far more than an abstract set of grammatical rules.

What else must one know in order to know a language, then, aside from grammatical rules? According to Cipollone et al. (1998:8–11), there are five basic components of a language that can be studied, and one must master all five of these areas in order to know a language:

- *Phonology*. The study of sound in language. In order to know a language, one must be able to recognize and produce the sounds (**phonemes**) that are meaningful in that language. In the case of sign languages, instead of sounds, one must be able to recognize and produce the appropriate gestures.
- *Morphology*. The study of the internal structure of words. In order to know a language, one must be able to use suffixes, prefixes, or infixes (depending on the language). In English, for example, one must know how to create plurals by placing an "s" on the end of most (but not all) words, and must know what adding "un-" to the beginning of a word does to its meaning. In many Native American languages, these sorts of affixes are placed inside a word to create infixes, while in Chinese languages, each **morpheme**, or unit of meaning, is a separate word, including morphemes indicating tense or plurality.
- *Syntax*. The study of the structure of sentences, including the construction of phrases, clauses, and the order of words. In order to know a language, one must be able to combine subjects, verbs, and objects in a grammatically correct way. This is the area of

language where Chomsky has had the most influence. Many
linguists study linguistic structure (syntax) in one form or another.

• *Semantics*. The study of meaning in language, including analysis of
  the meanings of words and sentences. In order to know a language,
  one must know how to construct and interpret meanings.
• *Pragmatics*. The study of language use, of actual utterances, of how
  meanings emerge in actual social contexts. This includes culturally
  and linguistically specific ways of structuring narratives, perform-
  ances, or everyday conversations. In order to know a language, one
  must be able to use language in socially and culturally appropriate
  ways.

Most linguists focus primarily or solely on one or more of the first three
components (phonology, morphology, or syntax), with syntax being
accorded primacy ever since Chomsky became dominant in the field.
In contrast, most linguistic anthropologists (as well as some scholars in
related fields such as sociolinguistics or discourse analysis) study the final
two components (semantics and pragmatics) in ways that integrate these
two components with the first three. Indeed, linguistic anthropologists
consider phonology, morphology, and syntax to be so fundamentally
affected by the social contexts in which these aspects of language are
acquired and used that to consider them in isolation from these contexts
is at best artificial and at worst inaccurate. For the linguistic anthropol-
ogist, every aspect of language is socially influenced and culturally
meaningful. To use language, therefore, is to engage in a form of social
action laden with cultural values.



**Figure 1.3**   "Zits" cartoon about the varying cultural meanings associated with
language use.
*Source:* Reproduced with kind permission of Dan Piraro and Bizarro.com.
Distributed by King Features Syndicate.

## Examples of Linguistic Diversity

In all five of these areas (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) there is far more linguistic diversity across the roughly 7,000 languages of the world than is generally appreciated. Nicholas Evans and Stephen Levinson (2009) argue in convincing detail that there are "vanishingly few," if any, true universals across all languages and that in fact diversity itself, present at every level of linguistic organization, may be the only universally shared aspect of all languages. A tiny taste of diversity in the area of grammatical categories will enable readers to appreciate more fully the many different ways that speakers of various languages express particular contrasts in their physical or social worlds in their grammar, while leaving other contrasts unspecified grammatically. Consider the case of pronouns in English, as presented in Table 1.1.

Notice that contemporary standard English pronouns do not have different forms for single and plural "you" (though many Southern US dialects do use "y'all" for the plural form), and there is no longer any way of marking status through formal honorific forms, as there used to be when there was a choice between "ye/you" (formal) and "thou/thee" (informal).[9] In contrast, pronouns in many European languages do provide these contrasts, as is evident, for example, in Spanish with "Usted" ("you" formal) and "tu" ("you" informal), in French with "vous" ("you" formal) and "tu" ("you" informal), and in German with "Sie" ("you" formal) and "du" ("you" informal). The dialect of Nepali spoken in the village of Junigau has three (and in some variants, four) status levels in both second- and third-person pronouns, as can be seen in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.1**   English pronouns in the nominative case.

|  | Singular | Plural |
|---|---|---|
| 1st Person | I | we |
| 2nd Person | you | you |
| 3rd Person | Animate masculine: he | they |
|  | Animate feminine: she |  |
|  | Inanimate: it |  |

**Table 1.2**    Nepali pronouns in the Junigau dialect.

|  | Singular | Plural |
|---|---|---|
| 1st Person | ma | hāmi(haru) |
| 2nd Person | high honorific: tapāī | high honorific: tapāiharu |
|  | middle level: timī | middle level: timiharu |
|  | lowest level: tā | lowest level: timiharu |
| 3rd Person | high honorific: wahā̃ | high honorific: wahā̃haru |
|  | middle level: u | middle level: uniharu |
|  | lowest level: tyo | lowest level: tiniharu |

In Junigau, people whom you address and people to whom you refer are obligatorily divided into those of higher status than you, those of roughly equal status, and those (like children, animals, and wives) who are of lower status. Unlike in English or in the dialect of Nepali spoken in Kathmandu (the capital of Nepal), in Junigau there is no gender differentiation in pronoun use. In Nepali as in English, however, there is only one form for the first-person singular and plural pronouns ("I" and "we" in English). In contrast, some languages, such as Tamil, Quechua, and Vietnamese, distinguish between two different forms of "we," depending on whether the addressee is included (as in "you and I, and perhaps others") or excluded (as in "s/he and I, but not you"). Other languages, such as Sanskrit, have different plural forms for just two people (called "dual") and for more than two people (called "plural"). Hebrew has two different pronouns for "you" – one for female audiences and one for male or mixed-gender audiences (cf. Sa'ar 2007). Comanche, a Native American language, distinguishes between visible/not visible and near/far when referring to an object with a third-person pronoun. This means that there are four different forms of "it" in Comanche (Cipollone et al. 1998:150–151). All of these forms constitute obligatory grammatical categories in these languages; one cannot opt out of them. It is absolutely necessary, for example, to designate the relative social status of an addressee when speaking Nepali, and to indicate whether an object is visible or not when speaking Comanche. Pronouns across the world's languages therefore require speakers to take note of very different aspects of the physical and social world around them.

Noun classes are also extremely variable across different languages. Most readers will probably be familiar with gender classifications

among nouns in European languages, such as masculine and feminine nouns in Spanish or French, and masculine, feminine, or neuter nouns in German. Less familiar to many English speakers, but nevertheless found in many of the world's languages, are categorizations of nouns that are more numerous, such as the four noun classes of Dyirbal, an endangered indigenous language of Australia, in which it is obligatory to choose the correct classifier from among the following before each noun (Lakoff 1987:93; Dixon 1982):

1  *Bayi:* (human) males; animals
2  *Balan:* (human) females; water; fire; fighting
3  *Balam:* nonflesh food
4  *Bala:* everything not in the other classes.

The Bantu languages of Africa have up to 22 different noun classes. Again, speakers are obliged to use the correct classifier as a prefix before each noun that they use. Consider the many noun classes in Swahili, as represented in Table 1.3.

**Table 1.3**    Noun classes in Swahili.

| Classes (with prefixes) | Typical meaning (though there are many exceptions) |
| --- | --- |
| *m-, mw-, mu-* | singular: persons |
| *wa-, w-* | plural: persons |
| *m-, mw-, mu-* | singular: plants |
| *mi-, my-* | plural: plants |
| *ki-, ch-* | singular: things |
| *vi-, vy-* | plural: things |
| *n-, ny-, m-, 0-* | singular: animals, things |
| *n-, ny-, m-, 0-* | plural: animals, things (can also be the plural of class 6) |
| *ji-, j-, 0-* | singular: fruits |
| *ma-, m-* | plural: fruits (can also be the plural of some other classes) |
| *u-, w-, uw-* | singular: no clear semantics |
| *ku-* | indefinite locative or directive meaning |
| *mu-, m-* | locative meaning: inside something |
| *pa-* | definite locative meaning: close to something |
| *ku-, kw-* | verbal nouns (gerunds) |

*Source:* Adapted from Wilson (1970:240) and from http://on.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noun_class, accessed 2 August 2007. 0 means no prefixes.

Other categories across various languages also differ dramatically from those of English. Verb tenses and aspects vary enormously, as do the number and type of case markings. In some languages it is obligatory to indicate whether an assertion is made as a result of direct or indirect knowledge – whether you know something from firsthand knowledge, in other words, or from hearsay. This form of grammatical marking is known as evidentiality. In Eastern Pomo, a Native American language spoken in California, for example, there are four suffixes from which speakers must choose when reporting an event, depending on whether the person (1) has direct (probably visual) knowledge; (2) has direct nonvisual sensory knowledge (such as feeling or hearing something); (3) is reporting what others say; or (4) is inferring from circumstantial evidence what must have happened. While it is certainly possible to indicate the source and reliability of the information one reports in English, in languages such as Eastern Pomo in which evidentiality is expressed obligatorily through grammatical categories speakers do not have a choice about doing so (Aikhenvald 2004).

Languages, in other words, are extremely variable and "force quite different sets of conceptual distinctions in almost every sentence: some languages express aspect, others don't; some have seven tenses, some have none; some force marking of visibility or honorific status of each noun phrase in a sentence, others don't; and so on and so forth" (Levinson 2003a:29). And yet, as Roman Jakobson noted, "Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey" (cited in Deutscher 2010:151).

We will examine in much greater detail linguistic diversity and its potential relationship to thought and culture in Chapter 5. For the purposes of this introductory chapter, it is helpful to note that just as there is enormous diversity found across the languages of the world there is a similar multiplicity of subjects chosen by linguistic anthropologists to research.

## Examples of Diversity in Research Topics in Linguistic Anthropology

While linguistic anthropologists hold in common the view that language is a form of social action, there is nevertheless great variety in topic choice and research methods within the field. Chapter 3 will

examine many of the research methods used by linguistic anthropol-
ogists, so what I present here are some examples of classic ethnographies
written by linguistic anthropologists and an explanation of how the
topics they chose for their research have contributed to our under-
standing of language as a form of social action. We will explore many
more examples of such research throughout the book. These studies
illustrate but by no means exhaust the wide-ranging diversity of
contemporary linguistic anthropology.

## Keith Basso

Keith Basso's (1996) ethnography, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and
Language Among the Western Apache*, explores "place-making" as a
linguistic and cultural activity. This book was written after Ronnie
Lupe, chairman of the White Mountain Apache tribe, asked Basso to
help make some maps: "Not whitemen's maps, we've got plenty of
them, but Apache maps with Apache places and names. We could use
them. Find out something about how we know our country. You
should have done this before" (Basso 1996:xv). When Basso took up
this suggestion and traveled with Apache horsemen to hundreds of
locations in the region, he began to notice how place names were used
in everyday Apache conversations in ways that were very new to him.
He also spoke with consultants, asking about the stories associated with
various places. Through entertaining vignettes and engrossing story-
telling, Basso explains how the richly descriptive Western Apache uses
of language and place names (such as "Whiteness Spreads Out
Descending to Water," "She Carries Her Brother on her Back,"
and "Shades of Shit") help reinforce important Apache cultural values.
For example, Western Apache speakers invoke these place names in
conversations to allude indirectly to cautionary tales from recent or
ancient history that may be relevant to the current speakers' dilemmas.
This practice, called "speaking with names," is a verbal routine that
"allows those who engage in it to register claims about their own moral
worth, about aspects of their social relationships with other people on
hand, and about a particular way of attending to the local landscape that
is avowed to produce a beneficial form of heightened self-awareness"
(Basso 1996:81). In this book, then, Basso shows how the physical
environment is filtered through language to solidify social relations and
strengthen Western Apache notions of wisdom and morality.

## Marjorie Harness Goodwin

In her book, *He-Said-She-Said: Talk As Social Organization Among Black Children*, Marjorie Harness Goodwin (1990) chooses a very different focus: that of a mixed-age and mixed-gender neighborhood group of peers in a Philadelphia neighborhood. By analyzing "situated activities" such as arguments, storytelling, and gossip, Goodwin shows how the children's relationships and values are reflected in and shaped by their conversations. Her meticulously transcribed conversations (over 200 hours of tape recordings) provide evidence for the complexity of children's social worlds. They also demonstrate the necessity of situating any analysis of language and gender (or any other social dimension of difference) in actual contexts, for when this sort of study is undertaken, Goodwin notes, stereotypes about so-called "female" speech patterns fall apart (Goodwin 1990:9). Boys and girls do not use language in two completely different ways, Goodwin discovered, but rather interact in same-sex and mixed-sex groups using complex, overlapping sets of linguistic practices. In studying phenomena such as gender differences, therefore, Goodwin argues, it is essential to look closely at actual conversations, for "talk itself is a form of social action, so that any rigorous account of human interaction must pay close attention to the detailed structure of talk that occurs within it" (Goodwin 1990:2).

## Bonnie Urciuoli

The focus of Bonnie Urciuoli's (1996) ethnography, *Exposing Prejudice: Puerto Rican Experiences of Language, Race, and Class*, is "language prejudice" – the ways in which Puerto Ricans in New York City's Lower East Side experience, accept, or resist the judgments that they and others make about what constitutes "good" and "bad" language, whether Spanish, English, or a mixture. There is a "political economy" of language, Urciuoli argues, the workings of which she explains as follows: "[T]he ways in which people formulate, value, and use words, sounds, phrases, and codes are constituted through power relations: bureaucratic, economic, racial, and any combination thereof" (1996:4). The boundaries between Spanish and English can be clearly demarcated or fuzzy, depending on the context. When the socioeconomic class of the speakers is similar, as when Lower East Side Puerto Rican men are playing basketball with their English-speaking African

American neighbors, shifting between Spanish and English ("code-switching") occurs more fluidly and comfortably, for example, though the ways in which this happens differs according to gender, Urciuoli finds. In contrast, when there is a stark difference in socioeconomic class, race, or ethnicity between speakers, Urciuoli notes, the boundaries between Spanish and English are strictly enforced, so little if any code-switching occurs, for example, in interactions between Puerto Ricans and white social workers, even when those social workers may speak some Spanish. Language use is therefore an important part of unequal social and economic relations, Urciuoli maintains, as it both reflects and sometimes reinforces differences in status.

## Alessandro Duranti

Alessandro Duranti (1994) explores language use in a very different part of the world. His ethnography, *From Grammar to Politics: Linguistic Anthropology in a Western Samoan Village*, analyzes political rhetoric in the local village council (*fono*) and shows how speechmakers' seemingly apolitical, technical choices of grammatical markers can have important political ramifications. Duranti argues persuasively that a close look at the micro level of grammar – at one tiny Samoan grammatical particle in particular – offers important insights into how "the choice of specific linguistic framings for people's actions, beliefs, and feelings does not simply reflect existing power relations, it also constitutes them" (1994:139). In other words, how people describe their actions, beliefs, and feelings – how they frame them linguistically – both influences and is influenced by the power dynamics of the community. Just as the title of Duranti's book indicates, a grammatical analysis, when situated in actual social contexts, can lead to a better understanding of both grammar and politics.

## Kathryn A. Woolard

Kathryn A. Woolard's book, *Singular and Plural: Ideologies of Linguistic Authority in 21st Century Catalonia* (2016), also investigates the intersections between language and politics. In particular, Woolard builds on decades of her own research to ask how a language acquires authority in the eyes of the public. In *Singular and Plural*, Woolard demonstrates that ideologies of authenticity (in the case of minority

languages such as Catalan) and anonymity (in the case of dominant languages such as Spanish in Spain) provide common routes to linguistic authority. Both authenticity and anonymity are underpinned by an ideology of "sociolinguistic naturalism," which views languages as inherently linked to identities and visions of truth. Woolard argues, however, that Catalan speakers are gradually moving toward innovative linguistic practices that challenge these naturalist ideologies (2016:300). The book therefore provides a case study of changes in Catalan linguistic practices, identities, and ideologies over time and a more general theoretical framework for analyzing language ideologies that can be used in other contexts.

### James M. Wilce

James M. Wilce's (1998) ethnography, *Eloquence in Trouble: The Poetics and Politics of Complaint in Rural Bangladesh*, looks closely at "troubles talk," or complaints, including the special genre of laments (improvised crying songs) in Bangladesh. The "eloquence in trouble" of Wilce's title has two meanings: Bangladeshis who resort to laments to describe their suffering are often quite eloquent; and these sorts of laments are becoming less and less common, and therefore represent a genre in trouble – that is, in danger of disappearing. Wilce's interest in medical and psychological anthropology leads him to pay special attention to the laments of people others label "crazy." In so doing, Wilce demonstrates how laments are more than just lengthy, monologic complaints; instead, they are aesthetic performances and social interactions during which labels can be both attached and resisted by the performer and the audience members, and realities can be "officialized" (1998:201). A focus on linguistic practices such as laments sheds light not only on the experiences of particular individuals' sufferings, Wilce argues, but also on broader cultural ideas about appropriate and inappropriate ways to speak and act, especially for Bangladeshi women.

What these six very different ethnographies have in common is their insistence that (1) language must not be studied in isolation from social practices or cultural meanings, and (2) questions about social relations and cultural meanings can best be answered by paying close attention to language. The remainder of this book presents a detailed case for each of these two assertions.

# Key Terms in Linguistic Anthropology

In order to provide readers with some tools they can use to approach linguistic anthropology, I have chosen four key terms that provide insight into the socially embedded nature of language and the linguistically mediated nature of social life: *multifunctionality*, *language ideologies*, *practice*, and *indexicality*. These terms draw upon an array of theoretical approaches from within the field of linguistic anthropology and beyond. As a rule in this book I try to avoid jargon, but linguistic anthropology is no different from other fields such as chemistry or art in having developed a set of specialized terms in order to refer efficiently and accurately to important concepts.

The terms that I have chosen here are "key" in two ways: first, they are central to the main areas of research in the discipline, and second, they can provide readers with important keys to understanding the social nature of language because they come from the social and linguistic theories that have had the greatest influence on current scholarship in the field. Like the terms that are defined in Duranti's (2001) edited volume, *Key Terms in Linguistic Anthropology*, the four terms defined below identify some of the features that unify the discipline and will therefore provide common points of reference as we consider specific topics and areas of study within the field.

## Multifunctionality

In the mainstream view of language that is very common in the United States, language is thought to be a way to report events or to label objects or concepts. (Views of the main purpose of language can be quite different elsewhere in the world, as Michelle Rosaldo [Rosaldo, 1982] demonstrated.) Language is much more than reporting or labeling, however – people accomplish many things with words. Linguistic anthropologists use the term "multi-functional" to refer to all the different kinds of work that language does. One of the first scholars to analyze the various functions of language was Roman Jakobson, a Russian linguist who helped form what became known as the "Prague School" of linguistic theory. Jakobson (1960) identifies six "constitutive factors" in any speech event, and then attaches a corresponding function to each of these constitutive factors. All functions are always present in each speech
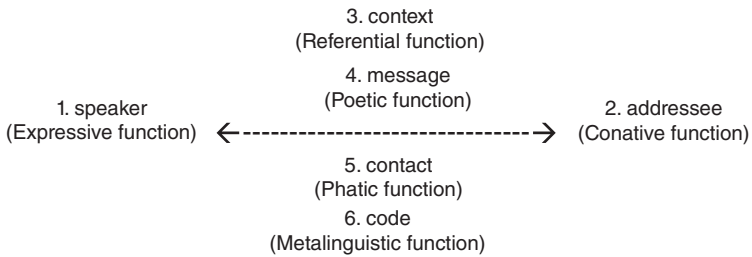
3. context
(Referential function)

4. message
(Poetic function)

1. speaker
(Expressive function)    ←-------------------------------→    2. addressee
(Conative function)

5. contact
(Phatic function)

6. code
(Metalinguistic function)

**Figure 1.4**   Jakobson's model of the multifunctionality of language.
*Source:* Thomas A. Sebeok, *Style in Language*, pp. 150, 154, 350–377, © 1960 Massachusetts Institute of Technology, by permission of The MIT Press.

event, Jakobson argues, but in certain cases, one function may predominate over the others. Figure 1.4 is a slightly modified version of Jakobson's own model (1960:150, 154).

The main point to emphasize in this approach to language is that what many people consider to be the main purpose of language – to communicate information – is only one of six separate functions in Jakobson's model. He calls this function the "referential" function, and while it is sometimes important in a linguistic interaction, there are many times when other functions predominate. Consider the following hypothetical example:

> Your best friend hears that you have just received upsetting news, so she immediately sends you a text that says: "So sorry that I can't even find the words to tell you. ☹" While the text message conveys some information, and therefore has a **referential** function, according to Jakobson's model, the message would probably best be interpreted as being predominantly oriented toward the speaker's emotions (**expressive** function) as well as toward the addressee (**conative** function). The alliteration and the multimodality of the emoticon are examples of the **poetic** function that Jakobson believed was present even in the most mundane of interactions. By reaching out to you in order to reinforce the channel that connects you socially, your friend also activated the **phatic** function of language. And the "language about language" aspect of the message could be said be an example of Jakobson's **meta‑linguistic** function (what linguistic anthropologists call metapragmatic discourse [Silverstein 1993; cf. Agha 2007; Lucy 1993]).

So, as this example demonstrates, even the simplest spoken and written linguistic interactions are multifunctional. Language accomplishes
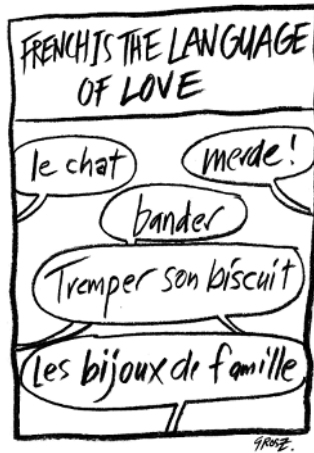
FRENCH IS THE LANGUAGE
OF LOVE

le chat        merde!

bander

Tremper son biscuit

Les bijoux de famille

GROSZ.

**Figure 1.5**    Cartoon playing off the language ideology that considers French a romantic language.
*Source:* Grosz (2002). Reproduced with permission from CartoonStock. www.CartoonStock.com.

much more than simply referring to or labeling items or events. Through language, people convey nuanced emotions, display or hide judgmental attitudes about others, reinforce or sever social bonds, and talk about language itself. It is to this latter function of language that we now turn.

## Language ideologies

Language ideologies[10] are the attitudes, opinions, beliefs, or theories that we all have about language. We may or may not be conscious of them, and they may or may not square with scholars' views about language (which are also, of course, language ideologies). Language ideologies can be about language in general (e.g., "Language is what separates humans from other species"), particular languages (e.g., "French is such a romantic language!"), particular linguistic structures (e.g., "Spanish is complicated as it has two forms of the verb 'to be'"), language use (e.g., "Never end a sentence with a preposition") – or about the people who employ specific languages or usages (e.g., "People who say 'ain't' are ignorant," or, "People who live in the United States should speak English," or, "Women are more talkative

than men"). Scholars working within this fast-growing, exciting area of language ideology study, for example, how socially and politically influenced attitudes toward an endangered language can affect the likelihood of its survival (e.g., Jaffe 1999; Kulick 1998; Shaul 2014), or how teenagers and adults embrace or reject ways of speaking that link them with various racial, ethnic, or gendered identities (e.g., Briggs 1998; Bucholtz 2001; Cameron 1997; Cavanaugh 2012; Cutler 2003; Gaudio 2001; Kroskrity 2000a).

In almost all cases, language ideologies turn out to be about much more than just language. As Judith Irvine notes, language ideologies are "the cultural (or subcultural) system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (1989:255). Language ideology as a concept therefore allows scholars to connect micro- with macro-level social interactions and to analyze questions of cultural identity, morality, power, inequality, and social stereotypes. Paul Kroskrity (2000b:8–23) lists four features that characterize language ideologies.

1   Language ideologies almost always serve the interests of a specific social or cultural group. In other words, in the uneven social terrain that exists in all communities, language ideologies come to express the judgments and stereotypes of particular segments of each community. There are benefits to be had from certain language variants being deemed "standard" while others are labeled "substandard dialects" or "slang." Such labels and judgments are social rather than linguistic in nature, for every single person has an accent, and all dialects are rule-governed.

2   Language ideologies in any given society are best conceived of as multiple because all societies consist of many different divisions and subgroupings. There will therefore be many different ideas about language in any single community. Moreover, people can belong to many different social groups simultaneously and may therefore hold multiple (sometimes contradictory) language ideologies.

3   People may be more or less aware of their own or others' language ideologies. Certain types of ideas about language use or linguistic structures tend to be more accessible to people, while others are less so (Silverstein 1979, 2001). At times, language ideologies become the subject of public debate, as happened during the 1996–1997 Ebonics controversy, and these occurrences can be very

illuminating to study. Just as interesting and potentially even more powerfully influential, however, are the language ideologies that people do not realize that they hold.

4   People's language ideologies mediate between social structures and forms of talk. This bridging of micro-level speech and macro-level social structures is one of the most important contributions a study of language ideologies can make.

In many respects, therefore, attention to language ideologies can help scholars in linguistic and cultural anthropology (and beyond) understand how both language and culture shape and are shaped by human actions. To understand this recursive relationship further, we turn now to the concept of practice.[11]

## Practice

Consider Marx's famous words in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte": "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx 1978[1852]:595). In place of the word "history" in this remark, one could easily substitute "language," "society," or "culture," and the statement would remain equally insightful. At the core of what is known as "practice theory" is this seeming paradox: that language, culture, and society all apparently have a pre-existing reality but at the same time are very much the products of individual humans' words and actions.[12] To summarize the essence of practice theory, oftentimes simply by acting as if society's institutions and norms existed we thereby bring those institutions and norms into being.

The basic idea underlying practice theory is that structures (both linguistic and social) at the same time constrain *and* give rise to human actions, which in turn create, recreate, or reconfigure those same structures – and so on, with structures and actions successively giving rise to one another. This kind of human action – that which is embedded within social and linguistic structures, that which both reflects and shapes such structures – is known as "practice" or "agency." Many practice theorists define practice further as being imbued with dimensions of inequality. Sherry Ortner, for example, considers any form of human action or interaction to be practice "insofar as the analyst

recognized it as reverberating with features of inequality, domination, and the like in its particular historical and cultural setting" (1989:11–12; see also Ortner 1984). "Practice," Ortner goes on to assert, "emerges from structure, it reproduces structure, and it has the capacity to transform structure" (Ortner 1989:12).

Practice theorists are interested in questions of social reproduction and social transformation – why, in other words, things sometimes change and sometimes remain the same. One concept practice theorists have used to explain this process is Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, which he uses to refer to a set of predispositions that produce practices and representations conditioned by the structures from which they emerge. These practices and their outcomes – whether people intend them to do so or not – then reproduce or transform the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977:78). *Habitus* can be a very illuminating concept, for it can be used to describe how people socialized in a certain way will often share many perspectives and values, as well as styles of eating, talking, or behaving. To simplify, *habitus* refers to how we are predisposed (though *not* required) to think and act in certain ways because of how we have been socialized. And usually, once we act upon these predispositions, we end up reproducing the very conditions and social structures that shaped our thoughts and actions to start with. Not always, however. Because of the tensions and contradictions inherent in the *habitus*, actors are neither free agents nor completely socially determined products. Instead, Ortner (1989:198) suggests that they are "loosely structured." The central question for practice theorists, then, is determining how such loosely structured actors manage at times to transform the systems that produce them.

Such loose structuring can occur linguistically as well as socio-culturally. Many linguistic anthropologists therefore find it useful to draw upon practice theory explicitly or implicitly in their work. Speakers of a given language are constrained to some degree by the grammatical structures of their particular language, but they are still capable of producing an infinite number of grammatically well-formed utterances within those constraints. Moreover, languages, like cultures, change over time through drift and contact despite their supposedly self-reproducing structures. It is therefore helpful to look closely at language (both its grammatical structures and its patterns of use) in order to gain a more thorough understanding of how people reproduce and transform both language and culture.

Social systems – languages, *habitus*, structures, cultures, etc. – are created and recreated, reinforced, reshaped, and reconfigured by the actions and words of particular individuals, groups, and institutions acting in socioculturally conditioned ways. In other words, languages and cultures emerge dialogically in a continuous manner through the social and linguistic interactions of individuals "always already situated in a social, political, and historical moment" (Mannheim and Tedlock 1995:9). Neither structure nor practice, therefore, should be seen as analytically prior to the other. Instead, each should be seen as being embedded in the other. Social and linguistic structures emerge from the everyday actions of real people, and vice versa.

The concept of emergence as it is used here originated in biology, and it goes beyond the simple everyday sense in which one thing gives rise to another. In addition to this sense, emergence as it is used in linguistic anthropology (as well as other fields) also refers to instances when the whole is more than the sum of the parts. Ernst Mayr, the famous biologist, writes of inorganic as well as organic systems that they "almost always have the peculiarity that the characteristics of the whole cannot (not even in theory) be deduced from the most complete knowledge of the components, taken separately or in other partial combinations. This appearance of new characteristics in wholes has been designated as *emergence*" (1982:63, emphasis in the original). Mayr is quick to point out that there is nothing mystical about such a view of emergence; in fact, the characteristics (for example, its liquidity) of a system as "simple" as water cannot, according to Mayr, be deduced from a study of its hydrogen and oxygen atoms. Language as a whole cannot be understood merely from a study of its grammatical features. Likewise, language, culture, and social structures emerge from social practice on the part of individuals but cannot be understood with reference only to those individuals.

Nevertheless, emergence does not imply absolute, unconstrained unpredictability. On the contrary, Mannheim and Tedlock (1995:18) emphasize that cultures have their own organizing principles that emerge through the linguistic and social interactions of individuals who themselves embody and enact social structures and cultural patterns, just as practice theorists maintain. Take, for example, the actions of individuals who are protesting something in their society by engaging in street demonstrations. Their underlying assumptions, methods, and principles are very likely to have been deeply influenced

by the very norms that they are protesting, even if the individuals work extremely hard to counter such influences. What emerges from such formal protests, as well as from informal, everyday activities, is shaped and constrained by these influences – but not totally determined. Understanding the constrained yet at least partially indeterminate outcomes of human actions can help explain how social and linguistic structures that usually reproduce themselves nevertheless always change over time. Whether reproduction or transformation results, all languages and cultures can be said to be emergent from social and linguistic practice.

## Indexicality

Identifying the precise ways in which language and social relations intersect is one of the most pressing issues in linguistic anthropology. A key concept that assists scholars in pinpointing these intersections is "indexicality" (Hanks 1999), which, as it is used here, stems from Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics (Peirce 1955; cf. Mertz 2007b). Semiotics, the study of signs, can seem somewhat complex but it is well worth going over some of the essentials in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the term "indexicality." Semiotics starts with the definition of the linguistic sign. Perhaps the best-known definition is de Saussure's: a sign is the link between a concept (the "signified") and a sound pattern (the "signifier") (Saussure 1986:66). Thus, in de Saussure's famous example, the word "tree" is a sign because it links the mental concept of a tree with the pattern of sounds that comprises the word. For Peirce, however, semiosis, or meaning-making through signs, involves a concept of the linguistic sign that is quite different from de Saussure's, for it is a process that "involves three components: *signs* (whatever stands for something else), *objects* (whatever a sign stands for), and *interpretants* (whatever a sign creates insofar as it stands for an object)" (Kockelman 2007:376; see Figure 1.6). In other words, meaning-making involves a *sign* such as the word "tree," the *object* that is represented, such as the actual tree – so far, these two aspects could be said to be fairly similar to de Saussure's "signifier" and "signified" – but then there is in Peirce's model the extremely important *interpretant* – the effect or outcome of the semiotic relationship between the *sign* and the *object*, such as a feeling of appreciation for the beauty of a tree or the act of running away from smoke for fear of a fire. Peirce's tripartite signs do not reside solely in one
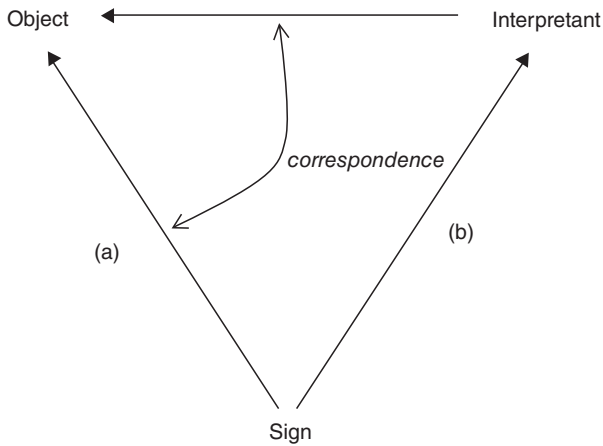
**Figure 1.6**    Semiosis as a relation between relations.
*Source:* Kockelman (2007:377). Reproduced by permission of Paul Kockelman.
*Current Anthropology*, a journal published by University of Chicago Press.

person's head, therefore, as de Saussure's signs do, but extend out into the physical and social world.

There are three ways in which a sign can be related to its object, according to Peirce, and it is the second of these ways that leads us to the important concept of indexicality. These three types of signs – icon, index, and symbol – are defined as follows (Peirce 1955:102–115):[13]

- *Icon*. A sign that refers to its object by means of similarity. Examples include photographs, diagrams, or sketches. Onomatopoeic words (e.g., "choo choo train," "meow") have an iconic dimension because of the similarity in sound to that which they represent.
- *Index*. A sign that refers to its object "because it is in dynamical (including spatial) connection both with the individual object, on the one hand, and with the senses or memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign, on the other hand" (Peirce 1955:107). In other words, just as an index finger points to an object, an indexical sign "points to" its object through some connection or contiguity, that is, a co-occurrence in the same context. Examples of indexical signs include the classic one of smoke, which indexes fire; a rolling gait, which indexes the profession of sailor; and a clock, which indexes the time of day. Other indexical signs include pronouns and words such as "here" or "now" because they are connected to

(indeed, cannot be understood without knowledge of) particular elements of the context. More will be said about this property of indexicality below.

- *Symbol*. A sign that refers to its object by virtue of convention or habit. Most words fall primarily into this category (though words can have iconic, indexical, and/or symbolic aspects simultaneously). The word "bird," for example, does not represent its object by virtue of similarity or any sort of "dynamical connection"; it is simply conventional in English to call most flying animals with wings "birds." Some signs combine iconic or indexical features with conventional ones. For example, it is conventional in English to use the word "chickadee" to label a small black, white, and grey bird – but this symbol also has an iconic aspect to it because the name of the bird resembles the bird's call, which sounds like "chick-a-dee-dee-dee."

While all three of these types of linguistic signs have been employed by linguistic anthropologists in their analyses, Peirce's concept of the indexical sign has drawn a great deal of attention in recent decades because of its potential for showing how and where linguistic forms "point to" aspects of social or cultural contexts. Certain categories of words have been closely studied because they are completely context-dependent in that they inherently refer to particular moments in time or places in space ("here," "then," "now," "there") or social actors ("you," "I," "that person," "such individuals"). In order to understand to whom "you" refers, for example, one must know the specific context of the conversation or text in question. And these sorts of references can shift; the person referred to as "you" can easily become "I" (or vice versa), and in reported speech a statement such as, "I'm already here," can be reported using different words and verb tenses – for example, "You said that you were already there."[14]

In addition to indexicals that refer to specific times, places, individuals, objects, or concepts, there are also more general ways in which language can be indexical. In other words, as Jakobson has already informed us, language can "point to" something social or contextual without functioning in a referential way. Aspects of language use such as regional or ethnic "accents" or "dialects," for instance, "point to" the speaker's origins and are therefore examples of nonreferential or "pure" indexicality (Silverstein 1976:29). Ways of speaking that come to be associated over time with particular social groups can be called "registers" –

examples include "motherese," "geek talk," and "teacher's voice" – and therefore when a way of speaking becomes associated with a specific group, the process is known as enregisterment (Agha 2004, 2007). This process is constantly occurring, and we are all participating in it.

Some indexicals have both referential and nonreferential functions. The Nepali pronouns and verb forms used in the Pounded Rice Ritual described at the outset of this chapter, for example, index not just the particular addressee (the bride) but also her social position as it plummets from the relatively high status of daughter to the lowly status of daughter-in-law. Silverstein maintains that such indexes can call into being the very social relations that they are indexing (1976:34). In this sense, they are performative, as we shall discuss in greater depth in a later chapter. Similarly, the various words the San Francisco high school students used for "stoned" index their youth status and most likely membership in various social groups as well. Indexicality is also an important concept for understanding the disappearance of the language of Taiap in Papua New Guinea, as it indexed certain social identities the villagers had come to devalue. Much more will be said about these sorts of situations, as well as many others, throughout the rest of the book. For our purposes here, it is important to realize the centrality of the concept of indexicality. Duranti writes,

> To say that words are indexically related to some "object" or aspect of the world out there means to recognize that words carry with them a power that goes beyond the description and identification of people, objects, properties, and events. It means to work at identifying how language becomes a tool through which our social and cultural world is constantly described, evaluated, and reproduced. (1997:19)

The concept of indexicality is powerful but also extremely nuanced and culturally and linguistically specific (Hanks 1999:125). Acknowledging the socioculturally embedded nature of language is therefore the first step toward being able to shed further light on how indexicality works. Here are just a few examples of the subtle ways in which language can index social relations, identities, or values, "pointing to" such important aspects of the sociocultural world and even creating, reinforcing, or challenging those very relations, identities, or values:

- A college student mimics the voice of a character on a television comedy show, thereby indirectly referencing not only that character

and that show but also indicating that she is the sort of cool, hip, in-group sort of person who watches such a show.

- Labeling someone as an "enemy combatant," a "freedom fighter," a "terrorist," or an "insurgent" can index the speaker's political views about the conflict in question and can also sometimes establish, strengthen, or transform legal, military, or political understandings, thereby having real effects in the social world.
- Code-switching between two languages, dialects, or social registers can index different processes involved in a person's ethnic, racial, gender, and/or socioeconomic identity formation and can have different social or even moral connotations, depending on the situation.

As Silverstein notes: "Some of us have long since concluded that such phenomena are indexical all the way down" (2006:276).

## The Inseparability of Language, Culture, and Social Relations

The rest of this book will provide concrete examples of how these four concepts – multifunctionality, language ideologies, practice, and indexicality – are being applied in the field of linguistic anthropology. In the process, the following chapters will also attempt to reach two specific kinds of readers of this book: those who believe that language should be studied in a technical way, isolated from any actual instance of its use, and those who believe that social relations and cultural values should be studied without a close analysis of linguistic practices. To these readers, and indeed to all other readers as well, I hope to demonstrate in the following pages that language, culture, and social relations are so thoroughly intertwined that they must be studied in connection with one another. The field of linguistic anthropology provides some of the necessary tools for arriving at a deeper under-standing of such linguistic, cultural, and social phenomena.