Questioning Linguistics

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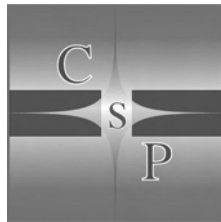
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CHAPTER ONE

QUESTIONING LINGUISTICS

AHMAR MAHBOOB & NAOMI KNIGHT

1. Questioning Linguistics

Human curiosity in languages dates back to the earliest records of civilization – e.g., Śākaṭāyana, working on Sanskrit around 8th century BCE argued that all nouns derive from verbs. In fact, linguists, even at that early time, presented opposing points of view and arguments about the nature of language abounded (see Matilal, 1990, for an in-depth discussion of early Indian linguists). This is not surprising because language, in many ways, is like the proverbial group of blind people trying to describe an elephant – each person describes the elephant based on the part of the anatomy that they touch: everyone has a piece, but no one has the full picture. Linguists, like this group of blind people, describe only aspects of language that they focus on and no comprehensive theory exists to tell us all.

The 20th century contributed greatly to our understanding of language and how it works within the human mind as well as in relation to the societies around us. As the last century unfolded, different schools of linguists emerged and positioned themselves as the ones that were best suited to describe language. The two major groups that have emerged from the twentieth century are the formal and functional schools (although other traditions also exist). These two schools are in themselves quite heterogeneous and linguists within them take a variety of positions. In addition to the linguists who work to describe language, there are associated fields and academic disciplines that use and apply this knowledge for diverse purposes and engage with them in different professional contexts. This book brings these different voices together into a single volume and allows readers to examine how linguists of diverse traditions study and use this expert knowledge of language. By doing so, the volume *Questioning Linguistics* invites us to reconsider the nature and

focus of the field of study and questions a number of current thoughts about language theory, application, and use.

The twelve original papers in this volume were selected from 37 papers presented at the First International Free Linguistics Conference (FreeLinguistics), 2007, held at the University of Sydney. FreeLinguistics is an initiative of the staff and students in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney to create a space where linguists of all traditions and views can come together to present and engage with other perspectives on language – and to do this without any conference registration fees. The goal of FreeLinguistics is to provide a venue where linguists with different foci can share their descriptions of the *language-elephant* and thus help to draw a more comprehensive picture of the animal. As such, FreeLinguistics and the papers presented at the conference question linguistics. The selection of papers from FreeLinguistics included in this volume, representing diverse theoretical positions in linguistics and informed by a variety of research approaches, raise new questions about the nature of language and linguistics and their role in a globalized world. As such they represent the flavour of FreeLinguistics and paint a broader picture of language – and show us that we still need more studies to be able to fully comprehend the nature of the phenomenon.

The volume, divided into two sections, first examines the goals of linguistic theory and the role of linguistics in our understanding of human society. The second section questions the current trends and practices in the application of linguistics in areas such as language teaching, language variation, and language attitudes. The following overview provides a richer description of each section and the papers that are included in them.

2. Issues and directions

As we begin questioning linguistics, one of our first goals is to outline the language-assumptions that we take as facts and then highlight alternative ways of understanding linguistics. This is the goal of the collection of papers in the first part of the volume: relevant issues surrounding languages and linguistics are tackled by the authors, who question how we variously define and engage with concepts in and of languagee. Each chapter sheds light on areas that have been taken for granted, relatively ignored, or perceived unidimensionally, and the authors provide new suggestions about the directions we might take as linguists and researchers in thinking about and analysing language and beyond.

The opening chapter of Part 1, "Language-free linguistics and linguistics-free languages" by Alastair Pennycook engages readers and questions the fundamental definitions of linguistics and of language itself with respect to the historical background of language description:

> The argument that linguistics might be better off if it were to get rid of the notion of languages as separate entities draws in part on Roy Harris' (1990) remark that "linguistics does not need to postulate the existence of languages as part of its theoretical apparatus" (p.45). On the one hand, then, this chapter explores the ways in which languages are inventions of the discipline that makes them. It asks how we might go about exploring language diversity without positing the existence of languages. It looks at the historical and contemporary interests behind the long construction of things called languages and asks in whose interests we continue to divide language into these named entities. The other side of the question–whether languages, or language studies, would be better off without linguistics–explores the ways in which the narrow purview of linguistics limits what we can say about language-related issues. Here Blommaert's (2005) observation that "linguists have no monopoly over theories of language, and as soon as one accepts that, far more candidates for critical potential offer themselves than SFL" (p.35) is a useful starting point. The point here is not to draw attention to the particular limitations of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) but to ask why it is that a certain form of linguistics has come to play such a dominant role in an enterprise such as critical discourse analysis (CDA), and how a wider vision of the operation of language might enable a more critical engagement with the social life of texts. (Pennycook)

In arguing that the definitions and divisions of languages have been made in the interests of dominant ideologies, and that linguistics as a discipline is also limited by the parameters set by linguists, Pennycook brings us to the point that is underlined by many authors in this volume: language is a phenomenon that all can study and question as it is the mode through which most make meanings in their everyday lives. It is then important to broaden our understandings and interpretations by going back to basics, as it were, and seeing "local language understandings" (Pennycook, this volume, p.21). These, Pennycook finds, are prevented by the abstraction and quantifying of 'languages', and overshadowed by the privileging of scientific linguistic knowledge in systems and rules. This notion of 'language' is a socio-cultural concept that in its naming created a "language-object", and instigated a quantification of languages into a hierarchy designed for colonial purposes. In calling into question these two constructions of language and linguistics, Pennycook makes explicit the underlying features of our systematisation of the phenomenon and

turns our focus inward to problematize the concepts that we count on to do so. Those parameters and boundaries that have grown out of the linguistic discipline, creating oppositions rather than complementarities, are shown to obscure the way that linguists pursue their endeavours towards language. Pennycook not only takes a bold step in the breaking of boundaries between linguistics fields, a fundamental notion behind the principles of a 'free linguistics', but attempts to forge a new consideration of language if by any other name.

Within linguistic theory as well, especially functional approaches, research has extensively explored the parameters of choice as a matter of oppositions. However, as J.R. Martin explains in "Innocence: realisation, instantiation and individuation in a Botswanan town", one must shift focus to those neglected theoretical concepts involving complementarities in order to gain insight into the social meanings that have as yet not been exploited:

> In his No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series, Alexander McCall Smith presents four accounts of Mma Ramotswe's adopted daughter Motholeli's life - one biographical and three auto-biographical. In this chapter I explore some of the similarities and differences among these accounts from the perspective of systemic functional semiotic theory, focusing in particular on the complementary roles of three hierarchies: realisation, instantiation and individuation. I propose that our understanding of individuation needs to be elaborated to focus more clearly on identity and affiliation in relation to the rhetorical deployment of appraisal resources.

In systemic functional linguistics (SFL), Martin shifts from the traditional focus on the theoretical concepts of realisation and rank to the development of the clines of instantiation and individuation in order to exemplify the individual strategies of speakers and their employment of expectations and variations in meaning. While discourse participants may have differentiated repertoires, their complementary deployment of resources display features of ideological constraints and categorizations, while instantiating different forms of consciousness in their identification. Microlinguistic questions specific to the theory are made by Martin, who pursues the notion that all of the fundamental features of the theory have a role to play in interpreting a text, and he presents the possibility that with a shift in theoretical orientation may come changes to the existing theory. This also underlines the perspective that linguistic theories are shifting and dynamic concepts themselves, which should firstly be able to sustain the development of each of their parameters, as well as being adaptable to the imminent flux that this development may have on the system. Language theories such as SFL are not impenetrable and stable, but are constantly

changing, and as Pennycook has argued, we should not allow ourselves to be limited by our own parameters. This can be likened to the nature of language itself, a complex and shifting phenomenon that can be interpreted, described, and even created (as Alan Libert, this volume) shows, but cannot be contained within a set of scientifically determined concepts.

The concept of linguistics has also been put into question by recent studies in multimodality, as modes of meaning-making such as gesture, facial expression, and image as well as their relation to verbiage are interpreted in terms of their communicative work in social interactions. In "Reconciling the co-articulation of meaning between words and pictures: Exploring instantiation and commitment in image nuclear news stories", Helen Caple looks at the combination of text with images in image-nuclear news stories, illustrating that the authors play with this particular relation in order to engage with a specific ideologically constructed readership:

> Through the close analysis of a particular type of multimodal news story, this chapter investigates how intertextual references in newspaper headlines and press photographs contribute to the creation of solidarity between a newspaper and its readers. Using the concepts of instantiation and commitment from the systemic functional linguistic approach, I shall analyse how the "twoness" of meaning between headlines and photographs in image nuclear news stories combine to create an evaluative stance towards the news that is often playful. Such play on words and images also relies on the obliging reader's (Kitis & Milapides, 1996) ability to activate other discourses that form his/her background knowledge in order to peel back the layers of meaning in the text. It is my suggestion that through this deliberate manipulation of the discourse the newspaper is able to express cultural and social solidarity with its readers, as the newspaper is assuming that readers share its understanding of the intertextual references being made in these texts. This can be labelled a kind of insiderism (Chang, 2004), including some readers and excluding others. As such, play of this nature may offer the kind of intellectual challenge that keeps readers interested in the news and still buying the newspaper.

Through the use of two complementary modes of meaning, Caple finds that news authors are also able to manipulate expressions from within the linguistic framework by re-literalizing common idiomatic and intertextual expressions through what she describes as a "twoness of meaning" (p.57). While indicating that linguistics may involve more than verbiage in its full meaningful articulation, Caple shows that authors may use strategies of play with their various resources of communication in a culture to construe bonds with readers. Bringing other modalities besides speech into the

study of linguistics opens up the discipline to a development of a new theoretical toolbox for explaining the role and potential of these modalities, and in their relation to surrounding text, it is clear that a great deal of meaning can be extrapolated in relations of co-articulation. This has led Caple to pursue the highly implicit relations of humorous play and cultural bonding that must be attended to once alternative modes are part of the description, and the strategic use of language through humour puts pressure on the theoretical frameworks of linguistics (in Caple's study, that of SFL specifically) to incorporate tools for explaining and situating this phenomenon more fully. In particular, the implicit 'dual' meanings of humour cannot easily be reconciled to concepts such as the Instantiation cline, involving discrete choices instantiated from the system of meaning oppositions, and the position of images has yet to be established in a linguistic theory traditionally centred upon grammar. We must question how authors are able to so simply and strategically create invoked meanings that appeal specifically to the values that are shared with particular readers in the culture when these meanings are so difficult to interpret methodically in the current state of the theory. Perhaps we need to begin from the problematic texts in order to develop theories robust enough to handle these texts, or at least to shift our focus, as Martin (this volume) has argued, in order to attempt to capture these areas through the neglected features that are available. The approach that a linguist takes must then be determined based on the complexity of the phenomenon, and their own analytical purposes.

In the next chapter, Monika Bednarek, for example, argues for a 'three-pronged approach' including a large-scale quantitative analysis, a small-scale corpus analysis, and a qualitative case study in order to fully capture the linguistic meanings and make any generalizable conclusions:

> In this chapter I take a corpus linguistic perspective on the language of evaluation and emotion working with a 1.5 million word corpus of American TV dialogue (from the TV series *Gilmore Girls*), focusing in particular on the expression of evaluation and emotion in American pop culture. The data for this study consist of a 1.5 million word corpus of transcripts of the popular American TV series *Gilmore Girls* which are analysed with the help of Scott's (1998) Wordsmith tools. As will be shown, phrases like Oh my God and (what) the hell are used as "implicit cues" (Culpeper, 2001, p.172) to characterisation in TV dialogue, and work as conventionalised realisations of emotionality. The investigation of evaluation and emotion is embedded in the discussion of a three-pronged approach to the analysis of dialogue. More specifically, I argue for the necessity of combining a large-scale quantitative approach with a small-

scale corpus analysis to be complemented by qualitative case studies (in this paper with the help of Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal theory).

In studying the influence of pop culture dialogue on our everyday lives, and how our emotions are shaped by culture, Bednarek also makes a case for acceptable data sources in the linguistic tradition. If television programmes such as the *Gilmore Girls* are so accessible and widely observed by members of the culture, why should it not be a source for examination as it is likely to have an important influence on our linguistic systems? As Bednarek argues, "the very popularity of television and TV series entails a huge influence of this dialogue in our daily lives" (p.63). Perhaps privileging sources of data from the academic pool over those of the common, everyday spheres limit our local understandings of language in the same way as the privileging of scientific knowledge does in linguistics (Pennycook, this volume). Thus, when Bednarek asks, "Why TV dialogue?", she also problematizes the elitism of academic study in linguistic tradition, much as the conversation analysts (e.g. Sacks et al. 1974, Tannen 2005) have done in modern theory.

From the analysis of everyday language to the creation of artificial languages, Alan Libert transacts explicitly with the notion of freedom, arguing for variation in "Free Word Order in Artificial Languages":

> Language creators in theory have complete control over the form of their languages. Although most artificial languages are intentionally based on one or more natural languages, this is not true of all of them. In this chapter I shall examine the extent to which word order is free in artificial languages. We find that, although some such languages are freer than e.g. English or French, few are as free as the natural languages with the most freedom of order, such as Warlpiri. For example, although in Esperanto subjects, objects, and verbs can go in any order relative to one another, adpositions can only precede their complements, i.e. they are all prepositions. Indeed, there are some artificial languages which appear to be more rigid in word order than English. However, just as some artificial languages are not as free in word order as their designers or others suggest, at least some of those artificial languages that are said to have quite a fixed order appear to have exceptions. Aside from describing the range of freedom of order in artificial languages, I shall also attempt to explain restrictions that exist in artificial languages. An important point is the fact that to a large extent even those artificial languages which were not consciously based on natural languages still follow language universals.

By challenging the relative freedom of rules of word order in languages in relation to one another, Libert shows the rigidity that is apparent despite the claims of language creators. In doing so, he exhibits the tendencies

even of artificial languages, especially a priori and mixed languages, to follow certain universals. Clarity is also an issue once languages are brought into being, as they depend on designers with differing purposes, and are faced with some of the same constraints as natural languages of which they are unavoidably influenced. Thus, while claims have been made towards artificial languages in terms of their freedom of word order, Libert's chapter makes clear that languages, even when designed, are influenced by the surrounding systems of language from which they are developed, and by their designers. They then involve more restrictions, rigidity, and universality than may be proposed.

Hyeran Lee also questions the positioning of elements in descriptions of language systems, as she reformulates the interpretations of topicalisation, focalization and scrambling through an analysis of Complementizer Phrases in Korean in her chapter, "Syntactic Encoding of Topic and Focus in Korean":

> This chapter aims to examine topicalisation, focalization and scrambling in Korean to show how such interpretations are syntactically obtained. It is claimed that discourse information such as topic and focus is encoded in the syntactic positions at the left periphery in this language. Topic is based-generated while an abstract element is moved to the left periphery. Focus directly moves to the left periphery for the interpretation to be licensed. Scrambling is analysed as an operation with no semantic import and thus the scrambled element does not move across the phase boundary to the left periphery. The operation that has been called long-distance scrambling is reanalysed as a focalisation process.

Operations developed within languages are queried by Lee as once these elements are applied to different languages, their definitions will necessarily change. This is the case in Korean, in which the syntactic positioning of such elements as Topic and Focus need to be interpreted according to how they operate specifically for this language, and she argues that scrambling must also be reanalysed as a different process than traditionally defined. Lee suggests a new orientation to the structure of the Complementizer Phrase according to its use in Korean, and through this example, shows that while Libert has underlined the existence of language universals, there is still much variation that must be accounted for in every language. The operations that are put into use by language users are indicative in Lee's chapter of this potential.

Once a language is put in to use, we must then also consider how the users may use and adapt that language in various interactions. This consideration is made by Michele Zappavigna, Paul Dwyer and J.R. Martin in "Syndromes of meaning: Exploring patterned coupling in a

NSW Youth Justice Conference", as they theorize the delicate patterns of linguistic meanings used by mothers when in a situation that calls for strategic construal of emotion and responsibilities:

> This chapter explores patterning of evaluative meaning in a NSW Youth Justice Conference using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005). These conferences give young offenders the opportunity to meet with the victim of their crime and determine a punishment aimed at restoring the harm that they have done. We refer to patterns of meaning in these conferences as syndromes. Syndromes are formed through the coupling (Martin, 2000) of different meanings along what SFL terms the "cline of instantiation". The text analysed in this paper is a transcribed conference held due to acts of vandalism by two teenage boys. We focus on the talk of their mothers and what appears a syndrome of ambivalence about the extent to which the mothers construe themselves as responsible for their sons' behaviour.

As the authors describe the use of associated meanings in an SFL framework, the authors not only show how mothers construe a "syndrome of talk" about responsibility for their sons' actions, but they question how this type of meaning relation and patterning can be handled by the linguistic theory and what types of tools may be more or less suited to this strategic use of language. Zappavigna et al. deal with the problems of how to determine systemic probabilities once patterns are detected, and find that the model must be adapted in order to account for the multiple interactions of features that are co-instantiated, in SFL terms, through such elements as syndromes. While often resisted as a domain of linguistic study, visualisation is a concern in this chapter also, as once meanings are intricately and inextricably tied up in text, visualisations can help the researcher to properly explore this new complexity. The question of the nature and representation of linguistic evidence is pursued in this chapter, and linguistic theory challenged and adapted by the complexity of patterns becoming evident, it pushes linguists to endeavour to capture these meanings more systematically than has been done before.

3. Applications and Variation

Part II of this book includes chapters based around the application of linguistic theory to language, and possibilities for variation within and between languages and dialects. The research concerns two broadly generalisable areas: that of language teaching and learning, and that of variation in and across languages. In relation to language teaching, the approach that has been overwhelmingly adopted in multicultural contexts

is called into question and shown to be inefficient despite its widespread use. The learning of the English language by Thai and Japanese speakers is exhibited through an examination of modes and ontogenesis, while variation of features in Taiwan-Japanese are distinguished, and each of these studies exemplify the learning and use of languages through linguistics. Finally, the applicability of linguistics is shown to be widespread through its role in relation to work with Australian Aboriginal languages in the sociocultural context of Australia.

Anne Burns investigates the suitability of a method of teaching that has been taken on without question by many language teachers and offers a more modern conceptualisation in "Demythologising CLT: Wanted – a reorientation for teachers in the 21st century":

> Communicative language teaching (CLT) has been the "default" approach to teaching English for nearly four decades. Despite criticisms that it is based on westernised, imperialist philosophies unsuited to the numerous intercultural and multicultural contexts in which it is applied, its influence continues to permeate policies and practices worldwide. Over the last decade it has been taken up relentlessly in syllabus documents in countries whose ministries of education seek language teaching "reform". The progressivist extremes advocated in strong forms of CLT, and frequently in "reformed" policy documents, have not manifestly resulted in widespread enhancement of English language teaching and consequently there continue to be calls for more teacher accountability, student testing, and measurable outcomes. A reorientation to effective language teaching is proposed.

The hidden ideologies and imperialist philosophies that background the inception of this teaching approach mirrors the arguments set forth by Pennycook (this volume) towards languages themselves, and are similarly problematized by Burns who underlines the importance of placing more consideration into the approaches we subscribe to. She argues that the vague, unspecific definitions and lack of practical teaching strategies offered by the CLT approach make it a weak tool for effective language teaching, while in application it affects the students' learning based on their own preparation and abilities rather than providing a structured scaffolding by the teacher. Burns questions the effectiveness of an approach that is so dependent on a consumerist learner-oriented functionality, and suggests a method by which teachers are able to work from a better understanding of the needs of the student to offer a comprehensive lesson structure based on the local dynamics of the classroom. This reorientation towards a teaching philosophy and methodological framework based on the interests of the student puts forth

an important notion of the study and teaching of languages: that one must always pay attention to the shifting dynamics not only of the language itself but of the language user. In order to be effective teachers and effective language researchers, we need to see language in action within the contexts in which we interact with it.

Montri Tangpijaikul also points out that the mode of linguistic exchange should be considered in language teaching, as is presented in his study on "Fine-tuning discourse in Thai EFL academic and electronic bulleting board writing":

> This chapter examines the use of online bulletin board writing as a means of exercising learners' use of expressions conveying epistemic modality and intensity. These linguistic features are important for the appropriate use of language, but ones which are underused by Japanese learners (Altman, 1982), Thai learners (Bhandhufalck, 1983), Chinese learners (Gibbon & Markwick-Smith, 1992), and lower level Finnish learners (Karkkainen, 1992). This is probably because learners lack the opportunity to express themselves in free interactions in English, a common problem for EFL learners. This study hypothesizes that Thai learners will exercise modality and intensity more in on-line bulletin board than in academic writing. Two parallel learners' corpora are used, which comprise online bulletin board writing (BB corpus) and offline academic writing (ACAD corpus), a total of 115,980 words. They are drawn from the written outputs of 39 Thai EFL learners at Kasetsart University, Thailand. Data are analyzed using a computer concordancing program "ConcGram Corcordancer". The analytical framework includes modal auxiliaries (e.g. will, would, may, might), epistemic stance adverbs (e.g. maybe, probably, actually, of course), adjectives (e.g. certain, possible), copular verbs other than "be" (e.g. tend, seem), intensifiers (e.g. rather, somewhat, quite, totally, absolutely), and comment clauses and phrases (e.g. I think, In my opinion). The findings show that Thai EFL learners are able to fine-tune their expressions with subtlety using these lexical and grammatical devices more in online bulletin board writing than in academic writing.

As in Burns' chapter, the success of language learners depends on their own possibilities for engaging with the English community outside of the classroom context, and this is something that creates difficulties for learners in relation to the socially relevant interpersonal use of such aspects as 'fine-tuning devices'. Tangpijaikul shows that the forums available to learners in the classroom may not be entirely sufficient, but argues that the mode of online bulletin boards offer a potential open opportunity for learners to utilize and improve upon their linguistic potential in English, and for teachers to provide an impetus by offering it

as an available mode of discourse. The interpersonal possibilities for learners can be improved within the classroom despite the difficulties of outside contexts for practice. By comparing the data of informal fine-tuning devices as used by Thai English learners in this online forum with their academic writing, the author exhibits how this modern and developing social tool can be used for educational purposes, while at the same time improving the students' abilities to engage interpersonally with the English public. It is then significant to attend to the interpersonal meanings that are expressed by language learners as their adoption and development of these skills create greater possibilities for inclusion in the culture, implicating greatly on inter and intra-cultural relations.

This development is tracked by Caroline Lipovsky and Ahmar Mahboob in their chapter, "The semantics of graduation: Examining ESL learners' use of graduation over time", as they examine the use of interpersonal meanings in a systemic functional framework:

> This paper examines ESL (English as a second language) learners' use of graduation over time. Essays were collected at two points in time from 19 young adult learners from Japan enrolled in an intensive (6 hrs/day) ESL programme in the United States. These essays were coded using the Appraisal Framework, specifically the system of Graduation (Martin & White 2005). Analysis of these data from beginner learners shows that students initially relied on isolated lexemes and repetition, rather than semantic infusion, for intensifying and quantifying. In the later set of essays, learners started incorporating infusion. They also used more comparatives and enhancement, and quantified through listing.

Language skills thus depend not only on the learning of grammar structures and vocabulary, but are importantly affected by the understanding and development of interpersonal evaluative meanings and their intensifications. While Tangpijaikul focuses upon modality and intensity in terms of the structures evident in students' texts, Lipovsky and Mahboob consider the functionality of intensifying features of Japanese ESL learners' discourse towards NESTs (Native English-Speaking Teachers) and NNESTs (Nonnative English-Speaking Teachers). By doing so, they exhibit the ontogenetic growth of the learners' abilities to intensify their attitudinal meanings in the English language, indicating that the appropriation of a system of intensification in language is important for second language users to be able to more fully express their opinions and beliefs about the social world including the things and people that matter within it. Not only are language learners developing their knowledge of the language, but they are becoming more able to enact relationships and express degrees of feeling in different ways to do so more strategically.

As an initial exploration into this area, the authors attend to the interests of the learners through their own individual development as evidence of learning not only the language, but language situated in the social context.

Not only the social, but the historical context influences the development and use of a language by its users, and should also influence the researcher's interpretation as it has in Masumi Kai's "Analysis of Japanese Spoken by Elderly Taiwanese: word usage, particle usages, and predicate forms":

> Taiwan was a Japanese colony for 50 years, up to 1945. Japanese language was taught in school and it was used as the official language during this period. It has been over 60 years since Chang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party took over Taiwan and Mandarin Chinese became the official language of the island. However, there are still many elderly Taiwanese people who speak Japanese. This chapter analyzes the Japanese of four such people. The data shows that the Japanese spoken in Taiwan has deviations and features which are not seen in modern standard Japanese. The frequencies of deviations in the data vary depending on the subject's educational background. The subject who received a higher education spoke Japanese in almost the same manner as a modern Japanese speaker. Only a few deviations were noticeable. However, the subjects who studied Japanese only until middle school showed several types of deviations. This chapter discusses two deviations among them: word usage and particle usage, as well as features of the predicate form. The most frequently occurring deviations were word usage. As for particle usage, which is said to be difficult for non-native Japanese speakers to acquire, the subjects did not show many deviations. One of the remarkable features was the lack of sentence ending morphemes. This caused the conversation to be fragmented and not well connected.

Kai shows how the historical changes in Taiwan, as well as the relative educational backgrounds of the Japanese speakers has had a substantial impact upon their language use. While some deviations are related to the speaker's concurrent use of the Taiwanese language of Min-nan, Kai argues that the degree of deviation depends on the subject's educational background, and the features that set the uses apart from Japanese are brought together into a dialect named Taiwan-Japanese. In this chapter, the role of language in a changing political and social context, as well as its variation in a national population is presented, causing us to question our detection of those languages and dialects that have been uplifted.

The final chapter in this section/volume raises one of the most common questions that is asked of linguists: "What's the use of linguistics?" In his response to this question, Michael Walsh breaks down the borders

between theory and application, and essentially softens the borders not only between Part I and Part II of this volume, but between those within the linguistic sphere:

> This is a personal response to a question often posed by students: "What's the use of linguistics?" Obviously my reaction to such a question will be a reflection of my own background and interests and should not be taken as purporting to be the definitive answer to a question that can be addressed in many other ways. As my background is mainly concerned with the study of Australian Aboriginal[1] languages my responses will mainly relate to uses for linguistics within that arena. I will confine myself to three issues: saving language; linguistic disadvantage before the law, and, language and the land.

While the issue itself is one that has been taken on through various examples by the preceding authors, Walsh attends to the usefulness of linguistics with three important and highly applicable subject areas of concern to many linguists today within Australia and abroad. Essentially he asks how linguistics can be useful in relation to Australian Aboriginal communities. Linguistics is shown to be applied in a revitalization of those languages that are on the brink of extinction in an effort not only to preserve the language itself as the main concern of the linguist, but more imperatively to improve the conditions of the Aboriginal communities that use it as a means of identification. It is shown that once a language is lost, so too is the identity of the language users, and this has a detrimental effect on the survival of the community. Linguistics then provides a means for aiding in the link between language and identity, and Walsh underlines the significance of this connection. He also shows how tradition and modern systems can clash without proper translation of language and of culture, as in the legal system, Aboriginal witnesses are often misinterpreted due to differences in traditional sociolinguistic practices towards the management of knowledge and reliance on particular modes and techniques of language interaction. Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal practices can be usefully bridged by linguists with a background knowledge of both relevant languages and cultures so that legality and fairness are upheld. Customs and traditions must also be acknowledged and respected when language is considered in relation to the land, as in Aboriginal languages, land and language are interdependent. Walsh makes suggestions about what can be done by linguists to create a more relationally equal and culturally sensitive context for these interacting communities, providing a strong argument for not only the usefulness of linguistics, but for a careful deployment of its resources through many languages.

4. Beyond this volume

The papers in this volume come together to lead us into reconsidering our understanding of what languages are and ways in which to study them. As such they represent a range of approaches within the field, although not all. They all contribute to our ability to paint a picture of the *language-elephant*, but the picture is far from complete. It is our belief, and the purpose of this book and FreeLinguistics, that a deeper understanding of languages is only possible if we look beyond the disciplinary boundaries and engage with different traditions, understandings, and approaches to linguistics. We hope that this volume helps us along that way.

Notes

1. Walsh notes: I deliberately avoid the usage 'Australian Indigenous Languages', which is inclusive of the languages of the Torres Strait Islands, because I have virtually no expertise in those languages and my remarks in this paper are entirely directed towards Australian Aboriginal languages.

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CHAPTER TWO

LANGUAGE-FREE LINGUISTICS
AND LINGUISTICS-FREE LANGUAGES

ALASTAIR PENNYCOOK

1. The languages that linguistics produced

In order to understand some of the background to the development of theories of languages, we need to turn first to an historical understanding of the interwoven projects of colonialism and language study. Linguists, as Errington (2008) explains "can be regarded as a small, rather special group of colonial agents who adapted European letters to alien ways of talking and, by that means, devised necessary conduits for communication across lines of colonial power" (p.4). As a result, the description of languages was intimately linked to the wider colonial emphasis on human hierarchies, so that "the intellectual work of writing speech was never entirely distinct from the "ideological" work of devising images of people in zones of colonial contact. It means also that language difference figured in the creation of human hierarchies, such that colonial subjects could be recognized as human, yet deficiently so" (p.5). Language descriptions cannot be abstracted from the colonial imperatives to control, subdue, and order.

The description of languages, therefore, has to be seen not so much as a scientific division of a language spectrum along natural lines but rather a colonial project in the defining and dividing of colonized people. As Irvine and Gal (2000) describe the process of "linguistic description" of Senegalese languages by 19th century European linguists, "The ways these languages were identified, delimited, and mapped, the ways their relationships were interpreted, and even the ways they were described in grammars and dictionaries were all heavily influenced by an ideology of racial and national essences" (p.47). Grierson's massive linguistic *Survey of India*, completed in 1928, provides interesting examples of how the

process of sorting languages and dialects occurred. Dialects tended to be considered spoken forms, while languages were accorded their special status according to other criteria such as regional similarities, family trees, or literary forms. One of the problems with this, however, was that while people had terms for their dialects - or at least terms for other people's dialects (their own being considered the way one speaks) - they did not have terms for these larger constructions, "languages". As Grierson (1907) explained:

> Few natives at the present day are able to comprehend the idea connoted by the words of a language. Dialects they know and understand. They separate them and distinguish them with a meticulous, hair-splitting subtlety, which to us seems unnecessary and absurd, but their minds are not trained to grasp the conception so familiar to us, of a general term embracing a number of interconnected dialects (p.350).

Grierson makes several important moves here. He positions himself as able to perceive the reality of languages while local knowledge is dismissed as on the one hand an irrelevantly hair-splitting obsession with difference and on the other an inability to grasp the broader concept of languages. Having thus opened up a position in favour of a European understanding of superordinate languages, he is then able to explain why "nearly all the language-names have had to be invented by Europeans. Some of them, such as Bengali, Assamese, and the like, are founded on words which have received English citizenship, and are not real Indian words at all, while others, like "Hindostani", "Bihari", and so forth, are based on already existing Indian names of countries and nationalities" (p.350). While it is interesting at one level to observe simply that the names for these new entities were invented, the point of greater significance is that these were not just new names for extant objects (languages pre-existed the naming), but rather the invention and naming of new objects. The naming performatively called the languages into being. This invention of Indian languages has to be seen in the context of the larger colonial archive of knowledge. The British, as Lelyveld (1993) points out, "developed from their study of Indian languages not only practical advantage but an ideology of languages as separate, autonomous objects in the world, things that could be classified, arranged, and deployed as media of exchange" (p.194). This whole project was of course a cornerstone of the Orientalist construction of the colonial subject. Orientalism, suggests Ludden (1993), "began with the acquisition of the languages needed to gain reliable information about India. Indian languages became a foundation for scientific knowledge of Indian

tradition built from data transmitted to Europeans by native experts"
(p.261).

At the heart of the problem here is the underlying ideology of
countability and singularity, reinforced by assumptions of a singular
essentialized language-object situated and physically located in concepts
of space founded on a notion of territorialization. The idea of linguistic
enumerability and singularity is based on the dual notions of both
languages and speakers of those languages being amenable to counting. It
has been widely attested that there is a massive disparity between the
number of languages that linguists believe exist and the number of
languages people report themselves as speaking. Ethnologue, the Christian
language preservation society, for example, notes that if we take an
"approach to listing and counting languages as though they were discrete,
countable units", there are around 7000 languages in the world; yet there
are some 40,000 or so names for different languages in use, and "the
definition of language one chooses depends on the purpose one has in
identifying a language" (Ethnologue, 2005).

Remarkably, however, some linguists are prepared to overlook these
problems and assert with confidence that "Once political considerations
are firmly discarded, it is generally not a difficult matter to decide whether
one is dealing with one language or more than one in a given situation"
(Dixon, 1997, p.7). Other linguists, while on the one hand noting that
political considerations cannot and should not be discarded, are
nevertheless content to deal in terms of enumerative strategies which on
the one hand reduce significant sociolinguistic concerns to the level of
arithmetic, and on the other overlook both the problematic history of the
construction of such languages and the contemporary interests behind their
enumeration: "Over 95% of the world's spoken languages have fewer than
one million native users, some 5000 have less than 100000 speakers and
more than 3000 languages have fewer than 10000 speakers. A quarter of
the world's spoken languages have fewer than 1000 users, and at least
some 500 languages had in 1999 under a hundred speakers" (Skutnabb-
Kangas, 2003, p.32). Mühlhäusler (2000) describes this as a continuation
of the tradition of segregational linguistics, which insists that "languages
can be distinguished and named" (p.358). To abstract languages, to count
them as discrete objects, and to count the speakers of such languages, is to
reproduce a very particular linguistic ideology.

2. The Linguistics that languages produced

From the perspective of linguistic anthropology, with a particular interest in the notion of language ideologies, or regimes of language (Kroskrity, 2000), the question becomes one of asking how it is that languages are understood locally. As Woolard (2004) notes, such work has shown that "linguistic ideologies are never just about language, but rather also concern such fundamental social notions as community, nation, and humanity itself" (p.58). For linguistic anthropologists, the problem was that the "surgical removal of language from context produced an amputated "language" that was the preferred object of the language sciences for most of the twentieth century" (Kroskrity, 2000, p.5). By studying language ideologies as contextual sets of belief about languages, or as Irvine (1989) puts it, "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests," (p.255) this line of work has shown the significance of local knowledge about language. At the very least, this sheds light on Mühlhäusler's (2000) point that the notion of a "language" "is a recent culture-specific notion associated with the rise of European nation states and the Enlightenment. The notion of "a language" makes little sense in most traditional societies" (p.358).

Discussing language use in Papua New Guinea, Romaine (1994) asks how we come to terms with the problem that speakers may claim to speak a different language when linguistically it may appear identical. She goes on to point out that the "very concept of discrete languages is probably a European cultural artifact fostered by procedures such as literacy and standardization. Any attempt to count distinct languages will be an artifact of classificatory procedures rather than a reflection of communicative practices" (p.12). Branson and Miller (2000) argue that we "must not only revel in linguistic difference but cope with that difference analytically. Let us recognize the culturally specific nature of our own schemes and search for new modes of analysis that do not fit other languages into a mould but celebrate and build on their epistemological differences" (p.32). The point here, then, is that while pluralist (socio)linguistics and applied linguistics focus on linguistic differences, they fail to address the metadiscursive concern of how we understand linguistic difference, failing thereby to engage with the ways in which languages and differences have been constructed. We have become blind to the linguistic metalanguages that have arisen as a result of language descriptions, and as a result we are unable to see that local language understandings matter.

As Heryanto (2007) suggests in his discussion of the imposition of Bahasa Indonesia:

> It took European colonialism to introduce the idea of 'language' before the old word *bahasa* came to articulate this newly-acquired concept. The adoption of a pre-existing word in East Asia to articulate a new concept from modern Western Europe helped make the concept appear universal. Language was –as it is today– believed to be a universal property of human species, in all its variations, existing in a separate sphere from, but universally referring to, more or less one and the same objective world (p.43).

This introduced concept, Heryanto suggests, did not accord with local understandings of language since "at least in the two most widely spoken and influential languages in Indonesia, Malay and Javanese, there was no word for "language". More importantly, there was neither a way nor a need to express its idea until the latter part of the 19th century" (p.43). This newly introduced concept of language entered "a world with no language", in the process replacing vernacular views of language and how it worked. Samarin (1996) makes a similar point when he suggests that Africa was "a continent without languages." This is not of course to suggest that Africans or Indonesians did not use language, but rather that languages as they came to be invented were not part of the linguascape:

> Africans used language in a linguistic sense to communicate with each other, and we have learned that these are beautifully complex and awesomely elegant means of verbal expression, not the primitive jabberings that they were first taken to be. But they were not languages in the socio-cultural sense. There is little in our knowledge of Africa to suggest ethnolinguistic self consciousness. Thus we can say before literacy there were no languages. (Samarin, 1996, p.390)

In speaking of "language free communities" or a "continent without languages" the point, to be sure, is not that these contexts involved any less language use, but rather that these language users did not speak "languages".

This construction of language, either as an autonomous object or a linguistic system, has been challenged from several directions that suggest that linguistics has profoundly misconstrued language through its myths about autonomy, systematicity and the rule-bound nature of language, privileging supposedly expert, scientific linguistic knowledge over everyday understandings of language. Toolan (2003) rejects as a "powerful and misleading myth, any assumption that a language is

essentially an autonomous system which humans can harness to meet their communicational needs" (p. 123). Harris (1990) asks whether "The concept of a language, as defined by orthodox modern linguistics, corresponds to any determinate or determinable object of analysis at all, whether social or individual, whether institutional or psychological. If there is no such object, it would be difficult to evade the conclusion that modern linguistics has been based upon a myth" (p.45). From this perspective, then, it becomes clear that the European projects of colonial linguistics produced not only languages that did not fit local language use but also a body of knowledge about language that could not adapt to the locality of language.

In order to construct itself as a scientific discipline, linguistics had to make an extensive series of exclusions, relegating people, history, society, culture and politics to a role external to languages. Nakata (2007) argues:

> If the history of a language and its users is not factored into the theory as a primary standpoint…then any knowledge generated about that language is flawed. This is not to reject entirely what linguists have done, or are currently doing. It is to make the point that the grammarians' concentration on formal aspects of a language fundamentally separates the language from the people; it falsely separates the act of speaking from what is being spoken. Studies of this kind are content to describe and conclude with grammatical summations as if languages were floating in a vacuum, "ready-made" within a system of phonetic, grammatical and lexical forms and divorced from the social context in which the speech is being uttered (p.37).

On the one hand, then, we have "the historical complicities between linguistics and colonialism (both "internal" and "external") which still pervade its "neutral" systems of classification and nomenclature" and on the other hand, the problem of "the conceptual framework of linguistics as a *science* which still remains in place even with the subdisciplines of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics" (Parakrama, 1995, p.3).

3. Rethinking language and language education

Why does this matter? It matters a great deal since the ways in which languages are described, legislated for and against, policed, and taught have major effects on many people. This is by no means a matter only for linguists to care about since those of us who work in areas such as applied or socio-linguistics often still employ precisely those terms and concepts that derive form this crooked history. When Heryanto (2007) speaks of

"language-free communities", when Branson and Miller (2007) show how the move to constitute sign languages as "real languages" was also an act of epistemic violence, when, from an integrational linguistic perspective, Harris (1990) tells us that linguistics does not need to posit the existence of languages as separate and autonomous objects, and when linguistic anthropology draws our attention to the imperative of understanding local ideologies of language, we have clearly embarked on a different trajectory from much of applied and unapplied linguistics, with their belief in the existence and describability of discrete languages, their positing of languages as systems that exist outside and beyond communicative acts, their location of language within the heads of people, and their use of disembodied texts to represent language use.

As Sinfree Makoni and I have argued (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007), current approaches to diversity, multilingualism and so forth, all too often start with the enumerative strategy of counting languages and romanticizing a plurality based on these putative language counts. While opening up questions of diversity with one hand, at the same time such strategies are also reproducing the tropes of colonial invention, overlooking the contested history of language inventions, and ignoring the collateral damage that their embedded notions of language may be perpetrating. By rendering diversity a quantitative question of language enumeration, such approaches continue to employ the census strategies of colonialism while missing the qualitative question of where diversity lies. In our view there is a disconcerting similarity between monolingualism and additive bilingualism in so far as both are founded on notions of language as "objects". By talking of monolingualism, we are referring to a single entity, while in additive bilingualism and multilingualism the number of "language-things" has increased. Yet the underlying concept remains unchanged because additive bilingualism and multilingualism are at best a pluralisation of monolingualism (Makoni 2003). In the context of South African language policy Makoni (1998) argues that "emerging discourses about multilingualism derive their strength through a deliberate refusal to recollect that in the past multilingualism has always been used to facilitate the exploitation of Africans" (p.244-5)..

Instead of the often static notions of language implied by concepts of multilingualism, we need to start to move towards concepts such as Jacquemet's (2005) "transidiomatic practices": "the communicative practices of transnational groups that interact using different languages and communicative codes simultaneously present in a range of communicative channels, both local and distant." Transidiomatic practices, Jacquemet explains, "are the results of the co-presence of multilingual talk

(exercised by de/reterritorialized speakers) and electronic media, in contexts heavily structured by social indexicalities and semiotic codes. Anyone present in transnational environments, whose talk is mediated by deterritorialized technologies, and who interacts with both present and distant people, will find herself producing transidiomatic practices" (p.265). Such practices, however, are not only the product of contemporary linguistic contexts mediated by deterritorialized technologies, as they are the common ways in which languages have been and still are used throughout the world.

These questions therefore go much further than challenging narrow linguistic and applied linguistic orthodoxies. The old issues of description versus prescription, linguistics applied versus applied linguistics simply fade from view as irrelevant. For some this might still imply little more than a turn towards sociolinguistics or pragmatics. Yet many of the assumptions of more socially oriented approaches to language study also need to come under critical scrutiny. The givens of sociolinguistics, such as bilingualism and multilingualism, notions such as language rights, or the idea of language pragmatics, are also questionable from this perspective since they are in a sense the by-products of the invented languages and metadiscursive regimes that linguistics has produced: If languages hadn't been invented as isolated, enumerable objects separated from their environment in the first place, we wouldn't need these add-on frameworks, and thus to talk of sociolinguistics or pragmatics is to uphold metalinguistic inventions.

For one thing, this perspective suggests, following Halliday (2002), that we need to take *semiodiversity* as seriously as *glossodiversity*, the possibility of a multiplicity of meanings within a language as seriously as a multiplicity of languages (Pennycook, 2004). This argument is important for several reasons: It urges us to question the epistemologies or linguistic ideologies on which support for diversity may be based. Thus a rights-based approach to support for linguistic diversity and opposition to the English-Only movement in the US, as Sonntag (2003) points out, "has not fundamentally altered the American projection of its vision of global English… because a rights-based approach to promoting linguistic diversity reinforces the dominant liberal democratic project rather than dismantling it" (p.25). If oppositional strategies are conducted from within the same framework as that which they oppose, they run the danger of reproducing those same positions. A focus on semiodiversity rather than glossodiversity, then, can help us get beyond a view of diversity based only on language counts, and instead can engage with semiotic diversity.

This view has many implications for applied linguistic domains such as language testing (for a critical exploration, see Shohamy, 2001; 2006): Why is it, we might ask, that a language test such as the TOEFL (Test of English as a foreign language) remains so desperately monolingual? At first glance, this question may seem bizarre: It is a test of English, after all. Yet the linguistics of communicative activity developed by Thorne and Lantolf (2007), which opens up ways for us to see how languages may be mediational tools to develop each other, as well as the broader questioning of language inventions discussed above, suggests that a multilingual TOEFL may be a far more appropriate test (to the extent that testing can be appropriate) than a monolingual one. The point here is not of course that TOEFL should be offered in separate but discrete languages (Test of French, German, Japanese, Tsonga or Tagalog as foreign languages) but rather that to test language users in one narrow element of their linguistic repertoire while admitting of no leakage across the tight linguistic boundaries echoes a history of strange linguistic inventions. When we talk of "washback" in testing, it is more common to think of this in terms of the curricular effects of evaluation, but more broadly we might consider washback in terms of the "collateral damage" for language users, policy makers, citizens and educators of the strange notion that languages exist in separation from the world and each other and can be tested in isolation.

Language education suffers similarly from such peculiar linguistic inventions. For a start, the enumerative strategies based on the notions of *second* language acquisition, or English as a *second* language become highly questionable. From the point of view outlined here, there is no good reason to separate and count languages in this way. The question to ask is what would language education look like if we no longer posited the existence of separate languages. As Busch and Schick (2007) show, it is quite possible to develop educational materials that challenge these language separations. While bilingual education has often successfully challenged its monolingual nemesis, it has also frequently operated with a vision of bilingualism that is little more than a pluralisation of monolingualisms, that is to say, it takes as a given the epistemology of the "bi", the separability and duality of two languages. "What would language education look like," however, asks García (2007), "if we no longer posited the existence of separate languages? How would we teach bilingually in ways that reflect people's use of language and not simply people as language users?"(p.xiii). As she goes on to argue, "Translation of instructional material, offering the tests in the child's language, bilingual teachers, bilingual pedagogy is not enough, for it is based on an invention and it rarely reflects the ways in which children communicate"

(p.xiv). Once again an answer might lie in starting to understand language and language education in terms of majority world local knowledge, in starting to relocate language learning from an additional to a transidiomatic practice.

Further questions need to be addressed to other domains of linguistics and applied linguistics. What does translation start to look like if we start to rethink languages? The position I have been developing suggests that this boundary we set up between languages, making translation an issue when we speak "different languages" but not when we speak the "same language" is yet again a distinction that is hard to maintain. This does not dissolve translation into a meaningless activity; rather it suggests that all communication involves translation. The twin effects of metadiscursive regimes that divided languages into separable entities and pedagogical dictates that eschewed translation have had sadly detrimental effects on language education. As Kramsch (2006) suggests, language competence should be measured not as the capacity to perform in one language in a specific domain, but rather as "the ability to translate, transpose and critically reflect on social, cultural and historical meanings conveyed by the grammar and lexicon" (p.103). The role of the language teacher from this perspective, therefore, is "to diversify meanings, point to the meanings not chosen, and bring to light other possible meanings that have been forgotten by history or covered up by politics." If English language teaching can escape its narrow vision of itself as a monolingual enterprise, it might finally be able to take up a more dynamic role in the world as a form of translingual activism (Pennycook, 2008).

Language policy, meanwhile, becomes a very different project from its current orientation towards choosing between languages to be used in particular domains, or debating whether one language threatens another. If language policy could focus on translingual language practices rather than language entities, far more progress might be made in domains such as language education. An understanding of English as a global language not so much in terms of an entity that has spread but in terms of local language practices offers important insights into the ways in which English is locally mobilized (Pennycook, 2007a; 2007b). Areas such as critical discourse analysis, as Blommaert (2005) suggests, would be less reliant on particular versions of linguistics, and instead would have to incorporate ethnographic perspectives in order to account for texts in context. Applied linguistics more generally needs to address the question of what it might look like if we took seriously the implications of no longer positing the existence of separate languages, of acknowledging that if a science of language is an impossibility, so too is an applied science of language. But

as a domain of work more readily able to lead the way towards understanding the transidiomatic practices of speakers, applied linguistics may be able to help linguistics get over its unfortunate longterm obsession with the impossible study of languages.

So, in trying to envision a language-free linguistics and linguistics-free languages, let us be aware of the (post)colonial legacies of what we do; let us consider more seriously the collateral damage and epistemic violence wrought by language descriptions. Let us not get trapped in linguistics-internal debates: Most schools of linguistics have far more in common than they admit. Let us acknowledge that language cannot be dealt with separately from speakers, histories, cultures, contexts, ideologies. And let us draw on linguistic anthropology, language ecology, emergent grammar, cultural studies, radical postcolonial creolistics, poststructuralism, whatever sheds light on language. Language questions are too important to be left to linguistics, and as applied linguists, we need to encourage movement towards a new era of language studies that can start to break with its colonial past.

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