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# LANGUAGE AND AFFECT

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## INTRODUCTION

In a seminal overview of semantics, Lyons (294) breaks down the notion of "linguistic meaning" into three components: *descriptive* meaning (frequently termed "referential," "propositional," "notional," or "denotative")—i.e. the mapping of linguistic signs onto the entities and processes they describe; *social* meaning, consisting of the social categories (gender, social class, ethnicity, situation, etc) represented in language; and *expressive* (or "affective" or "emotive") meaning, representing the speaker's or writer's feelings, moods, dispositions, and attitudes toward the propositional content of the message and the communicative context. Variants of this model have been proposed by such authors as Malinowski (296), Sapir (364), Jesperson (242), Bühler (81), Bally (19), Ullman (426), Firth (138), and members of the Prague School (155, 362, 433, 434), although details of conceptualization can diverge significantly from author to author. For example, what other writers call "affect" is subsumed in Halliday's functional model (182, 183) in part by the interpersonal (i.e. that through which "social groups are delimited, and the individual is identified and reinforced," 182:143) and in part by the textual (that which gives coherence to discourse). Similarly, affect straddles several categories in Jakobson's model of language functions (235; cf 91). In addition, not all writers agree that "meaning" and "semantic" are appropriate labels for affective components of language (e.g. 275, 445).

A strict distinction among referential, social, and affective meanings rests



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on several assumptions. First, meaning must be seen as a unidirectional mapping from a predefined reality onto arbitrary linguistic forms (cf 172, 188). Second, cognition and emotion (and associated notions, such as subjectivity-objectivity, rationality-irrationality, etc; cf 289) must be assumed to be dichotomous. Third, where such a distinction is strictly adhered to, meaning is also attributed to the language producer; thus affective meaning is seen as the encoding of the speaker's emotions, which the interlocutor decodes in verbal messages by giving precedence to intentionality (e.g. 175, 380, 405). A related assumption is that emotions are internal events, the property of the individual. Probably as a direct result of these various assumptions, models where the trichotomy is emphasized have commonly regarded affect as too slippery an area of language for "scientific" investigation. Apart from investigations of more obvious affect-encoding devices like onomatopoeias and diminutives, there has been little work in orthodox linguistics on affective dimensions of language. Mainstream linguists define referential meaning as their area of inquiry, and sociolinguists have made headway in understanding how language interlocks with various social processes (152). But affect has been consistently set aside as an essentially unexplorable aspect of linguistic behavior, a residual category to which aspects of language that cannot be handled conveniently with extant linguistic models were relegated to be forgotten.

Recent developments in the anthropological understanding both of emotional life (reviewed in 293) and of the relationship between language and sociocultural context (see 33, 67, 101, 152, 185, 231, 338, 372 for pertinent reviews) have caused many of the assumptions underlying structure-oriented linguistic positions on affect to be seen as problematic. Linguistic anthropologists have demonstrated that the relationship between linguistic signs and reality is not a one-way mapping but rather a complex constitutive linkage (65, 70, 178, 207, 208, 222, 223, 232, 233). Ethnographic work on emotions has shown that the opposition between cognition and emotion is a Western construct (5, 109, 243, 282, 287, 289, 290), thereby casting doubt on the validity of a referential-affective dichotomy. Similarly, attributing the ownership of meaning to the individual has proved considerably less useful in the analysis of the anthropological material than a "dialogic" position (207, 216) in which meaning is constructed in interactional processes (33, 117, 122, 212, 395).

Taking these findings as a point of departure, linguistic anthropologists have in recent years begun to pay closer attention to the role of affect in language. Guiding this trend are two traditions of inquiry: anthropologically informed work on language acquisition, where it has been found that, in many cultures, affect plays a central role in language socialization, and vice versa (72, 102, 103, 323, 324, 326, 328, 329, 369–371, 373; reviewed in 372); and

ethnographic research on poetics and performance (reviewed in 33), phenomena whose links to affect are numerous and complex. Armed with a culturally sensitive approach to the relationships among language, emotion, and their sociocultural context, scholars have redefined the problems posed by affect in language and pursued their inquiry into hitherto unexplored areas. This review evaluates progress made to date in understanding this research, with an eye on how it may complement and be complemented by cultural anthropological perspectives on emotional processes.

A note on scope and another on terminology: First, space limitations preclude an overview of the important topic of nonverbal communication and its relationship to verbal categories. Although some aspects of nonverbal affect are touched on here, the vast literature on nonverbal aspects of affect (cf 125, 126 for recent surveys) generally stems from a tradition of inquiry very different from that represented here. Second, the term "affect" is here given a broad sense, subsuming other categories that are sometimes distinguished from affect. Psychological and folk models in the West distinguish among *feelings,* a broad category of person-centered psychophysiological sensations, *emotion,* a subset of particularly "visible" and "identifiable" feelings, and *affect,* the subjective states that observers ascribe to a person on the basis of the person's conduct (246). In addition, an individual's propensity to exhibit particular emotions is commonly viewed as a defining factor for *personality* (343), a premise that the (scant) literature on language and personality appears to take as a given (137, 147, 149, 364, 366). [Two related categories, *mood* (359) and *attitude* (85), also play an important, if equivocal, role in Western psychological discourse.] Most anthropologists view this categorization with at least some suspicion, in that it subsumes a Western ideology of self and person (4, 5, 11, 290, 293). The cross-cultural validity of the distinction between "feeling" and "emotion" is an empirical question (but see 2, 3), and while ethnographers rely in large part on concepts of emotion to arrive at a sense of how the person is defined in particular societies, cross-cultural variation in the definition of both "emotion" and "person" warrant care in assigning a precise universal correlation between them. Care must be taken not to adopt Western taxonomies of psychological processes as analytic tools in investigations of how language is interwoven with the psychological makeup of self and society, and adopting a broad (but malleable) definition of "affect" can be seen as a wise empirical stance.

## THE LOCUS OF AFFECT IN LANGUAGE

A multichannel phenomenon, affect floods linguistic form on many different levels of structure in many different ways. This section is a selective survey of findings on the question of where affect can be located in language behavior.

Illustrated here is the wide variety of affective devices available in the structure of different languages and speech communities, and the prevalence of affect in all aspects of linguistic structure. In essence, the task of writing a "grammar" of affect is equivalent to describing the structure and use of a language.

That affect is an important component of the lexicon is well documented (for a bibliography of relevant work, see 105). The affective meaning of lexical items, commonly referred to as their *connotation,* became the subject of work in psychology in the late 1950s with Osgood's attempt to find universal patterns of affective associations (332). While this line of work was quickly found to be fraught with problems (e.g. 355, 445), it opened a new vista on the notion of "lexical meaning," which has since been investigated by concentrating on narrower problems. The area of the lexicon in which affect is the most salient comprises emotion words (cf 293 for a review), but many other lexical fields have clear affective dimensions of meaning. A rich domain for the investigation of affect in the lexicon would include descriptors for groups and individuals and the various strategies that can be used in addressing or referring to participants in communicative events. For example, van Dijk (435) shows that Dutch speakers' descriptive and not necessarily derogatory terms for immigrants are carriers and reinforcers of ethnic prejudice (cf also 305). As Foucault (142) emphasizes, labels have powerful consequences. These consequences are evident in political rhetoric (cf papers in 50, 65, 70, 335 and review in 338), where in many cultures the "moralizing" function of persuasive language (82, 83) is brought out in particularly vivid ways. Affect also plays a role in the very definition of some lexical fields. Regardless of wine tasters' normative assertions, wine descriptors have such imprecise referential meanings that their use is more successfully captured in affective terms: Their primary function is to construct wine tasters' presentation of self and create phatic communion (277).

Address terms, kinship terms, and pronouns often have a clear affective dimension: from the complex address-form systems found in languages such as Javanese (130) to "inversions" of vocative kin terms (e.g. mothers in rural Italy affectionately addressing their offspring with *mamma;* cf 63). Pronominal paradigms offer rich opportunities for affect displays. T/V-pronoun systems consist of two or more alternative pronoun forms (most commonly in the second person), some of which are more "polite" than others (64, 78, 79, 131, 193). As Friedrich's (146) analysis of T/V choices in Russian novels shows, these paradigmatic alternatives are exploited for a complex web of social and affective purposes. In some languages (e.g. Samoan and Tongan) one finds a diminutive form of the first-person singular pronoun (324), historically derived from a plural form, that can be used to elicit empathy and mark self-deprecation. (There are also special articles with the same mean-

ing.) In languages that do not provide these paradigmatic resources, pronouns can be equally pregnant with affect. Witness the different dispositions associated with the "institutional" pronoun *we* and its alternatives in English (430). In languages that allow clauses to appear with no overt subject and/or direct object (reference being encoded in the verb morphology, or being recoverable extratextually), whether or not to name particular participants can provide ways of controlling the affective deployment of discourse (cf 226:377 for examples from Native North American narratives, and 119 on pronouns in Italian middle-class conversation). Where honorific forms and structures are particularly salient, as in Western Polynesia (121) and Java (130), such forms frequently become incorporated in the affect-display repertoire of speech-community members.

Lexical processes like synecdoche and metonymy are frequently involved in the manipulation of affective meaning (148, 336). Other metaphorical processes have important affective dimensions, as even universalism-seeking research on metaphor recognizes (256, 257, 268:380–415, 269, 270). In many cultures, talk *about* emotional processes is replete with metaphors. For example, members of many speech communities have a propensity to use somatic metaphors (e.g. "my liver is angry" or "the heart is weak") when talking about emotions; the pattern is particularly prevalent in the Pacific (43, 272, 280, 281, 348, 352, 353, 402), but it is also witnessed in Elizabethan England (53). Many scholars, tacitly assuming a constitutive relationship between linguistic and cultural categories, point to these metaphorical patterns as evidence for a somatic conceptualization of emotion in these societies (but see 198 and 249 for words of caution). Of course, if these linguistic patterns are indeed symptoms of emotions being "felt" as bodily sensations, they are not metaphors at all in the conventional sense of the term (cf 24). In other cultural contexts, speakers talk about emotions as organically inseparable from the social acts they engender and situations in which they are found (196, 197, 251, 252, 276, 286, 288, 290, 312). In some cultural contexts, emotions are conceptualized as internal events; such is the case of contemporary middle-class American society (89, 112, 243, 437). Elsewhere, individuals "undergo" emotional sensations; in Samoan, for example, the experiencer of certain emotions is frequently encoded as a locative modifier of the emotion-denoting verb, rather than its grammatical subject (158, 326, 390; the same pattern is attested in Yiddish and Kaluli; cf 410). Clearly, preferred ways of talking about emotions and emotional life offer rich opportunities for exploration of the underlying categories and normative views associated with them.

Certain marginal areas of the vocabulary of many languages, such as ideophones (i.e. words, not necessarily onomatopoeic, whose phonological structure itself encodes meanings) and onomatopoeias (20, 38, 108, 141, 150,

260, 360, 361), exclamations, expletives, interjections, curses, insults, and imprecations (9, 10, 113, 164, 190, 201, 237, 298, 310, 425) are rich in affective meaning. Shona ideophones, for example, have been described as "dramatizations of actions or states" (260:20). Descriptive linguists chronically neglect these categories but nevertheless point to them whenever "affect" is invoked. The fact that they exhibit unusual formal features, such as deviant stress patterns and phonological segments not found elsewhere in the lexicon, is well documented, but the parameters of their use in context are not.

Related to ideophones is what is commonly referred to as *sound symbolism* (reviewed in 427; it is not clear that "symbolism" is the appropriate semiotic descriptor). Much work on this topic has been devoted, with debatable success (cf 426), to uncovering universal correlations between particular sounds and concepts (e.g. [i] and "smallness"). Although often left undiscussed, the semiotic association between form and meaning would fall under the rubric of affect. That certain sounds have affective meaning is well established for certain languages (cf references on ideophones above), but most clear cases are highly language specific. Cocopa narrators substituted certain consonants for others when impersonating or talking about mythical animals (273); comparable patterns are found in other languages of Native North America, although these devices mark emotional distance in other languages (225, 226).

Certain categories of meaning like evidentiality (i.e. encoded markers of the epistemological status of utterances), which may be conveyed through a variety of linguistic means (97), are often saturated with affective connotation (162, 189, 191). In some languages, evidentiality is grammaticalized: The Japanese sentence-final particle *no* indicates whether communicators speak as members of a group or as individuals (106, 107). Speakers of other languages have to rely on lexical strategies to convey evidential meaning. In English, adverbs like *obviously, plainly,* and *allegedly* (47), hedging (e.g. *perhaps, sort of, loosely speaking;* 247, 267, 375), intensity (e.g. *very, really;* 264), as well as discourse markers (e.g. *well, you know;* 333, 374, 375) encode affective stance. Diminutive and augmentative affixes in Indo-European and Amerindian languages indicate sympathy, endearment, emotional closeness, or antipathy, condescension, and emotional distance (e.g. 225, 407, 439). Reduplication (e.g. Italian *un borghese piccolo piccolo* "a small, small citizen"; 448), quantifiers (e.g. *most, many*), and comparative constructions (156) can be added to the list. Many categories commonly associated with inflectional morphology can also carry affective meaning; for example: mood (e.g. variations between conditionals and indicatives in Romance languages; 274), modality (e.g. the English auxiliaries *must* and *will,* whose affective meanings are historically derived from their deontic meanings; 421, 422; cf also 156), and case marking (e.g. agentive noun phrases marked for ergative, oblique, or genitive case in Samoan; 123).

Many syntactic features are exploited for affective purposes. Various ways of constructing negative clauses in many languages allow language users to exploit logical presupposition and give certain elements the status of shared knowledge for affective purposes (218). The transitivity valency of clauses may be manipulated to place in the foreground certain events and participants, and subtly to assign blame and identify the consequences of actions (217). Active-passive alternatives in many languages (e.g. *the opposition accused the government* vs *the government was accused by the opposition;* 49, 144, 259, 349, 423) align speaker, hearer, and events along different axes of identification, which some linguists call "empathy" (261, 262). In some languages, such as Japanese (219, 420), a separate passive construction is reserved for events perceived as having an adverse effect on the grammatical patient. In Tuvaluan, a Polynesian language, a similar effect is obtained by adding an ergatively marked argument to an intransitive verb (39). Nominalization (e.g. *picketing curtailed coal production;* 259) and other structure-altering processes also affect point of view. Depersonalization and affective distance can be communicated in impersonal constructions (e.g. *it will be shown that this hypothesis is incorrect*), agentless passives, or pronoun deletion in many languages. Such structures as inversion (e.g. *and down he went into the ditch*), left-dislocation (e.g. *that man, I can't stand him;* 124), topicalization, focusing (230), clefting of various types (e.g. *What I really feel like is a cup of tea;* 345), and word-order variations in languages with relatively free word order are commonly assigned an "information packaging" function in descriptive linguistics (93, 140, 184), but they also carry affective meaning. In at least two languages, English (135) and Tuvaluan (41), raising rules (e.g. *John seems to have left* vs *It seems that John has left*) allow the speaker to subtly focus the responsibility (and often blame) for events onto particular participants. (The affective dimensions of other complex-sentence constructions are discussed in 56.) By increasing and decreasing the textual distance between selected elements of the discourse, these devices contribute to textuality (i.e. "the quality of coherence or connectivity that characterizes text"; 185:96); but they also juxtapose certain elements, thus creating complex affective relationships between them (115). They provide language users with the tools for creating particular affective worlds in narratives and other expositions.

The complex systems of acoustic phenomena that we perceive as intonation reign as a prime, and notoriously multifunctional, locus of affect (13, 55, 57, 58, 265, 266). Experimental evidence (e.g. 278, 318, 368) indicates that language users have difficulties assigning or agreeing on affective interpretation to decontextualized utterances solely on the basis of intonational cues; linguists do not fare much better. Other affect-encoding suprasegmental phenomena include tone raising in some West African languages (35), whose sole purpose is to mark high affect of various kinds; segment gemination;

aspiration (367); voice quality (230); volume (233); speed (45); and pitch (304). Nonphonemic vowel nasalization in Yokuts, a language of California, serves a variety of affective functions (319:238).

There are important affective dimensions to discourse strategies, to the organization of information, and, generally, to "ways of speaking" (224, 386). Quotes, recreations of one's own and others' speech, and other types of replaying activities (163:530) are affectively charged, in that they interweave the voices of different social entities and the replayer's moral agenda (18, 440). They may mark the speaker's or writer's emotional involvement in the text, enhance the heteroglossic nature of discourse, and subtly leak the reporter's stance on the replayed situation (20–22, 32, 169, 295, 369, 415, 416, 431). Replaying may also have the opposite effect, that of creating distance between the reporter and the quoted message, as when the Shuar engage in ceremonial dialogs, a genre associated with a tradition from which they have become alienated (161), or when American life-story narrators present themselves in a negative light in past events (283). A striking case of exploitation of different voices in discourse is the hiring of a griot in rural Wolof society to praise or insult someone, which allows the hirer's affect to remain decorously flat (230, 233). On the Polynesian atoll of Nukulaelae, the authors of gossip narratives employ various devices to delay the identification of "victims" in their narratives with various advantageous consequences, among which figure the multiplication of opportunities for the introduction of different descriptors with negative connotation and the reinforcement of collusion between participants (44; on collusion and affect, see also 163, 168, 170, 302). In multilingual communities, code switching offers fertile ground for affect work. Switches from one language to the other exploit the affective connotation of each language, particularly where a marked prestige differential exists between varieties (51, 151, 180, 192, 200). Even the direction of the switch can act as an affective key: A switch from Spanish to English displays a sterner, angrier attitude than the opposite switch when a Mexican-American mother talks to a child (180:92).

At the convergence of affective and poetic dimensions of language (33), genres, speech-act types, and performance styles can be affectively charged. Poetic devices like parallelisms of various types (e.g. 236, 429) illustrate this. Proverbs among older Spanish speakers in the American Southwest serve a complex array of functions, ranging from a validation of the speaker's credibility to a negotiation of the social relationship between participants (71, 73). Mexican-Americans in Texas express complex feelings toward their own ethnic identity, and their resentment of the encroachment of values from the dominant culture, in satirical stories that ridicule and stereotype the Anglo-American (337). Satires of the affective style of members of a dominant group, best documented by Basso for the Western Apache (25), are common protest mechanisms among socially disadvantaged groups (12). More or less

ritualized insults, boasts, and other genres of (often competitive) verbal play, of the type that young Black Americans (30, 171, 255, 263, 279, 309), Turkish boys (118), and members of many other groups engage in (1, 69, 154; reviewed in 67), have complex affective functions. Such genres may be bracketed by various affective signals. Western Apache spoofs of the "White-man" are loud and exuberant, in contrast to everyday interactions (25), and Black American "marking" is frequently accompanied by switches from Black English to standard English (308). In many cultures, poetic genres are associated with emotionality: North Yemeni performers, for example, view their highly controlled and formalized poetic duels as the most appropriate locus of affect, one where emotions like anger may be displayed for creative, rather than destructive, purposes (92). Poetry may be laminated into another event: Witness Tzotzil speakers "breaking out" into couplets to express anger or respect (191). In both performance and more mundane contexts, claims to the floor and challenges to these claims in competitive verbal performance (169, 171, 392) establish certain social structures among speaker, audience, and narrated events but also establish complex affective relationships among these various elements.

Affective meaning can also be conveyed by such communicative activities as laughing and weeping. In many societies, laughter, whose co-occurrence with verbal interaction is carefully timed, serves as a distancing mechanism between its producer (whether speaker or recipient) and co-occurring events; the distance is often expressed in an emotional reaction such as embarrassment in middle-class Britain and the United States (194, 238–241) or shame on the Melanesian atoll of Nissan (317). Among Italian-Americans, laughter serves as an emotion-management strategy to deflect ethnic prejudices (114:164). Weeping in Mexicano (Nahuatl) narratives is a carefully controlled index which, used at crucial moments in the thematic deployment of the discourse, defines both the narrator's affective state and her relationship with her audience (209). Thus the micro-organization of talk and nontalk can in itself serve as a vehicle for affect. Likewise silence (7, 23, 26, 31, 417), withdrawal (37), inarticulateness and dysfluency (7, 210, 233, 301), the unstated (208, 424), and the understated (44, 45, 438) signify a broad range of affective experiences in many societies and contexts. For the Western Apache, for whom an expressive utterance consists of as much meaning packed into as little form as possible (27), silence may communicate a strong emotional experience (23, 26). In Shakespearean representations of Elizabethan culture, silence is also associated with a broad range of sensations, including such antonymic pairs as alienation and intimacy, joy and grief (52). Again, the multifunctionality is extensive.

The affective functions of many nonverbal devices demonstrate how affective meaning is constructed interactionally (44, 120, 166, 357). For example, in many cultures, the success of singing performances depends on the au-

dience's affective response; such is the case for song performances among the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, which can move listeners to tears (136), and among the Gê-speaking Suyá, which move some to tears and others to euphoria (382). Even in contexts where audiences are allowed no or very few claims to the floor, their affective response can have a major impact on the deployment of discourse. A case in point is applause in political speech-making in postindustrial societies, which requires close coordination between the speaker and the audience and can influence the deployment of the co-occurring discourse (14, 15, 203, 204). Furthermore, an affective display can be a group affair. In poetic duels at Yemeni wedding celebrations, performers frequently present their spontaneous compositions as responses to strong emotions, which are as likely to be seated in the group as they are in the individual (92).

This brief survey has shown that affective meaning may be conveyed through a broad range of linguistic and communicative devices. However, there are significant differences among various manifestations of affect. In probably all speech communities, emotions can be described (e.g. *I hate him*), although such overt avowals in the first person are likely to be associated with rather marked situations. More commonly, emotions are alluded to, and the decoding task is a process of "reading off" complex covert messages (284). But nondescriptive affective signs are not uniformly covert or "transparent" (398). Interjections, for example, convey affective messages more overtly than, say, intonation. Interjections can stand as independent linguistic units and hence are potentially more on-record than intonation, which is not segmentable. At the same time, more transparent means of encoding affect are also frequently less efficient. For example, the perceived primary purpose of the syntactic structure of a sentence is to communicate referential meaning: which referential entity is the agent, which is the patient, etc. If an affective component is superposed on this referential function, it will be processed by the recipient at the same time as the referential component, and will come "for free." In contrast, an affective interjection does not play a significant referential role, and thus will be perceived solely as an affect-encoding device. In the first example, affect is likely to be processed less consciously than in the second example, and often lies outside of participants' limits of awareness (397–399, 432); language users are sometimes unconscious of using even very "noticeable" affect-carrying linguistic devices, like discourse markers (444). Not surprisingly, affect is most commonly expressed covertly in natural discourse.

## THE SEMIOTIC STATUS OF AFFECTIVE MEANING

As illustrated in the previous section, descriptive linguistics has not been very successful in assigning exact affective meanings to linguistic structures. Most

characterizations make do with general notions like emotional intensity (e.g. involvement vs detachment) or directionality (e.g. focus of empathy), or with labels like "positive" and "negative" affect. The difficulties with transcending this level of generality are frequently explained as resulting from the extreme multifunctionality of many affect-encoding linguistic categories. A particular intonation contour, for example, can have different meaning in different contexts, some referential, others affective; even the more "solidly" affective areas of language, like adjectives denoting emotions, seem to have an uncanny propensity for developing a wide range of meanings through metaphorical extension (6). This section takes these difficulties as a point of departure for an inquiry into the semiotic status of affect in language.

As noted earlier, some aspects of communication are privileged as loci of affective meaning. For example, intonation is universally utilized as a primary affective key; multiple second-person pronoun forms often differ from one another in terms of affect; and, in many languages, many address terms have affective connotations. It is notable that these features of language are also privileged loci for indexicality, both referential and nonreferential (130, 234, 396). This predilection for indexical vehicles is no coincidence: Most linguistic affect is itself a metamessage (28). Thus the bewildering multifunctionality of many affective signs can be explained in terms of their semiotic nature. In contrast to the arbitrary and self-contained symbols that post-Saussurean linguists have come to expect in language, indexical vehicles only have meaning when embedded in a context (339). An affective sign may index several affective experiences ambiguously, or different categories in different situations. For language users, the multifunctionality of affective devices is often a communicative resource, rather than a problem. Because they may signal more than one referent, and often more than just affect, affect-laden structures are particularly useful when ambiguity is a useful or necessary communicative strategy (116); indeterminacy itself becomes a communicative resource. An approach to language as an object divorceable from its context is ill-equipped for an investigation of affective dimensions of language (178).

Affective indexes and indexical symbols (or shifters) are related to affectivity in culturally mediated ways. They conjure not a universal set of emotional categories, as tacitly assumed in descriptive linguistics, but rather culturally constructed categories. Indeed, certain indexes presuppose different facets of affectivity in different cultures. For example, dysfluency and stuttering are associated with low-affect interactive styles among the Wolof (233), but with displays of high affect among the Barundi (7), although in each case these features must probably co-occur with other linguistic indexes for the desired results to obtain. Clearly, cross-cultural variability in the relationship between particular affective keys and emotion categories is likely to be extensive. An understanding of affect in language cannot proceed without a concurrent

investigation of the nature of these categories and of their place in social life.

Frequently recognized as an empirical problem is the question of multiple keys. Since affect can be displayed at many different levels of linguistic structure, individuals can give out contradictory signals on different levels, as Bateson (29) documented in his pioneering work on double-binding and schizophrenia. *I love you* can be uttered with an aggressive tone of voice (and angry face) that contradicts the literal meaning of the sentence. Such disjunctions are exploited (probably universally) in sarcasm and irony (12, 28, 163, 315), which themselves have affective functions in interaction (356). Different affective indexes can also key contradictory meanings (e.g. "excited" intonation co-occurring with "uninvolved" syntax). Conflicts between keys can be syntagmatic (e.g. across utterances or turns at speaking) or paradigmatic (e.g. intonation "contradicting" propositional content; 131, 230, 329). Researchers from various traditions of inquiry (e.g. 206, 221, 294, 363) have suggested that whenever keys contradict one another, such keys as intonation and facial expressions (i.e. the more nonreferential indexical signs) override other signs.

The problem of channel disjunction can be more broadly contextualized in what Irvine calls the "sincerity problem" (230): How do members of different social groups distinguish "true" from "deceitful" affective displays ("exuded expressions" from "guided doings," to use Goffman's terminology; 163)? The distinction between "true" and "feigned" displays of emotion requires that at least two assumptions be made: that emotions as individual experiences be differentiated from emotions as interactional constructs; and that the attribution of intentionality be central to the interpretation of human behavior. Neither of these assumptions is cross-culturally universal. While an "inside-outside" contrast seems to underlie ethnotheories of emotion in many cultures (230), the contrast is not necessarily seen as an important ingredient of explanations for emotionality (e.g. 250, 390). Similarly, there are cultures (e.g. Samoa; 122, 390) in which a person's intentions are not a relevant issue in accounting for social action, including emotion displays. Rather, moral assessments are made on the basis of the goodness of fit between social context and action. Further, as Urban (432) shows for ritualized wailing in South America, the relationship between "real" emotions and affective displays is a cultural construct; as long as members of a culture "agree" to match particular emotion labels to particular displays, and as long as this agreement remains tacit, the display is sincere. On the basis of these observations, the original question can be more fruitfully restated as follows: To what extent is the distinction between "true" and "deceitful" affect relevant to members of particular groups? How members of cultures for which the answer to this question is a negative one account for "mixed" affective displays of the type exhibited in irony remains to be investigated.

## LANGUAGE, AFFECT, AND SOCIAL SITUATION

A tripartite distinction among referential, social, and affective meaning was noted above. While the discussion up to this point has touched on the problems and prospects of the referential-affective contrast, little has been said about the social-affective contrast, to which the rest of this review is devoted. As current anthropological research on emotionality has shown convincingly, emotions and social life are intricately interwoven, which immediately sheds some doubt on the validity of a sharp dividing line between the social and the affective. In this and in subsequent sections, it will be shown that linguistic affect mediates the constitutive relationships among such concepts as situationality, gender, class, ethnicity, and language. While an absolute dichotomy between affective and social meanings is not useful, one must nevertheless recognize that not all social meaning is affective. The linguistic representation of power relations, for example, does not always have affective dimensions.

The ways members of all cultures manage affect, linguistic or extralinguistic, can vary greatly from one context to another. Not only do different social contexts call for different emotion displays, but the "same" emotion can be displayed variously across different contexts. Middle-class American norms prescribe that grief be displayed through weeping in certain public contexts, such as funerals (particularly by women), although such displays are "optional" in more private contexts. Among the Ilongot, public oratorical debates require active participants to "slow down" their emotions and control outbursts of affective displays (352:177–220). In contrast, Black American Baptist services involve dramatic affective displays (303). In fact, members of many societies identify situations *in terms of* the amount and kind of affect that can appropriately be displayed (40, 229, 233). But affect is never absent from an interactional context, even though certain situations may be described as if it were. In contexts where communicative norms call for "flat" affect, for depersonalization (391), or for a change in footing from author to animator (163, 165), utterances are permeated with "the emotionally distinctive aura of affectlessness" (164:813). Such is the case of Javanese *krama* ("polite") speech levels (129, 130), in which indexicality is structurally muted; such is also the case in Western academic writing. In British academic writing, for example, lexical and grammatical markers of stance are relatively infrequent (47), a symptom of the devaluation of the writer's visibility in that context. Facelessness is frequently "normalized," explained as having a "natural" affinity with the context (379): For example, organized skepticism, universalism, and disinterestedness are believed to reign in Western academic discourse (159, 313, 346, 358), and muted affect is but another symptom of this belief. Of course, academic discourse is still infused with affect, perhaps less overtly than other discourses; linguistic devices are available to travesty

affect as "reason" or to subtly shift the major burden of an affective response onto the audience (17). Academics' folk beliefs about the affectlessness of their discourse are deeply embedded in social hegemonies; whether or not one is able to participate successfully in conventionalized academic discourse is a criterion for access to institutional power (132, 258, 346, 449) and to symbolic capital (61, 62).

Many cultures bracket certain situations as contexts in which emotionality and affect are to be acted out or thematized. For example, affect is a key topic of discussion in the therapeutic encounters of postindustrial societies. The therapist focuses the patient's attention on affective dimensions of the encounter itself or of narratives provided by the patient; emotion-labelling, emotion-term glossing, and negotiations of the meaning of emotion terms (usually under the covert control of the therapist; 111) are common activities in Western therapy (80, 90, 128, 277, 265, 342, 418, 450) and comparable events in preindustrial societies (e.g. 66 and papers in 443). An ethnographer of communication would first pose the following questions: How do members of the group frame events in which emotions can be talked about? What role do these events play in the social life of the community, and what triggers them? Investigations of the emic definition of such contexts have provided important insights into the role of emotion in the social life of many groups (443). There are thus complex patterns of relative "distancing" across context. In some situations, such as Western-style therapy, affect is the focus of talk; in others, participants are expected to display excited interest in the situation, but cannot give prominence to personal emotions (e.g. 133, 134).

Particular attention has been paid in the ethnographic literature to contexts where "ritualized" emotion displays, such as wailing and weeping, are called for. Wailing and weeping, genres that are usually gendered and that typically consist of vowel sounds intoned with restricted pitch variation, are viewed in many cultures as maximally iconic expressions of grief (136, 173, 386, 428) and sometimes of joy, as among the Shavante and Tapirapé of Brazil (173, 441). Urban's (432) comparative analysis shows that ritual wailing in South America may have various forms and semiotic functions: When it accompanies bereavement, its form is iconic of the feelings it expresses; in greeting ceremonials, it takes on a more stylized and controlled form, serves as an index of "meta-affect," and marks a desire for sociability.

The relationship between modality (i.e. speaking vs writing) and affect remains largely unexplored, although the sociolinguistic literature on orality and literacy frequently alludes to affective categories. For example, it is commonly assumed that spoken language is universally more "involved," "emotional," and better suited for emotion representation (as opposed to presentation) than written language. Textual evidence commonly advanced in support of this is the greater incidence in spoken language of such features as

pronouns and questions, markers of personal involvement (46, 94–96, 411, 413; reviewed in 98). The assumption is made that the participants in a spoken (particularly face-to-face) interaction are more prone to becoming "emotional" than readers and writers. However, most of these claims have been supported with data from contemporary mainstream Western contexts, where writing is viewed as being less "subjective," less "emotional," and generally more "reliable" than speaking (195, 285, 350, 408, 409). The literacy practices associated with academia and other loci of cultural reproduction are particularly prone to such characterizations (75, 159), as noted above. That these views merely constitute the ideological construction of Western, school-oriented, middle-class-dominated literacy is suggested by the cross-cultural evidence. For example, on Nukulaelae atoll (Central Pacific), participants in literate activities are expected to display affect (42, 43), this characteristic constituting the context of literacy practices in Nukulaelae society. Even in Western settings, writers of such products as direct-sale letters exploit affective strategies for audience manipulation (145); yet these contexts are no less written-like than other practices involving writing (cf 314 for comparable remarks on professional letters exchanged by scientists). Thus affect defines modality of communication as yet another manifestation of symbolic capital, and does not correlate in any simple manner with mode of interaction.

An interesting case of emergent tensions among affect displays, their folk accounts, and normative control surrounds electronic communication in post-industrial societies. Since its appearance in the early 1980s, e-mail has had to develop new norms of social and linguistic interaction, based on a complex combination of norms from kindred spoken and written interactional contexts. At the same time, attempts to exert normative control have emerged in the process of the medium's being integrated into preexisting sociopolitical dynamics, in the form of etiquette memos circulated by computer centers and electronic bulletin boards. Affect has figured prominently in these various developments. E-messages indeed have a more "emotional" texture than other types of discourse (253), as witnessed by the prevalence of *emoticons* [overt affective keys—e.g. ":-)" to mark irony or "upbeat" emotions, ":-&" for "tongue-tied", and *flames* (verbal attacks on public electronic forums).] Folk models explain these features as a "natural" adaptation to the technological characteristics of the medium, and normative discourse targets them as disruptive of academic social order.

Affect thus permeates all utterances across all contexts because the voices of social beings, and hence their affect, can never be extinguished from the discourse (18, 391, 431, 440). To use Bakhtin's apt phrase, utterances are "ideologically saturated" (18:271). However, this ideology may take on different guises across communicative contexts, and these guises may in turn

help define the social and structural features of each communicative context, its location in the group's repertoire of contexts, and its role in the group's social and political structure.

## LANGUAGE, AFFECT, AND GENDER

That emotions and their management play a pivotal role in the cultural construction of gender identity is amply documented in work on gender in anthropology and neighboring disciplines (99, 100, 211, 227, 245, 291, 292, 330, 331, 351, 404). Not surprisingly, affect also holds an important, if unacknowledged, position in research on gender and culture. In many autochthonous discourses, women and men are said to differ in the frequency, the intensity, and the type of affect they express in interaction. For example, among the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, female children are expected to be affectively steadier than male children, who are seen as less predictable (371). Anger-like emotions are normatively associated with men in Samoan and Ilongot societies (158, 352) but with women among the Fiji Indians (68).

Investigations of gender and language focused on Western settings generally agree to recognize gendering in emotional performance, although there is little consensus on the characteristics of this gendering. In postindustrial settings, women are often characterized as more emotionally extravagant, communicatively indirect, and solidarity seeking than men (76, 77, 104, 271, 300, 344, 403, 419; reviewed in 299, 340, 387). Linguistic evidence provided in support of these views includes women's exploitation of a wider pitch range than men, their frequent use of tag questions and hedges [assumed to convey attitudinal insecurity (271, 394, 244)], and their frequent use of affect-enhancing linguistic indexes such as intensifying adverbs and modals (76, 77). Women are also perceived as willing consumers of heavily affective discourse—an expectation that certain genres, like the romance, exploit (347). Hochschild (211) sees women's affect-laden communicative style in middle-class America as intimately linked to their limited access to power and economic resources. Socialized to engage in more "emotion management" than men, women are thus predisposed for low-status service employment in which positive affective displays are privileged; these displays exclude them from the competition for more powerful and gainful roles. But other work has found problems with the association of women and highly affective styles. For middle-class Western groups, the evidence is at best equivocal. For example, tag questions have many meanings, which depend on linguistic and extralinguistic factors such as social dialects and power differentials (8, 86, 87, 214, 322). Even the presence of significant pitch differences between women and men is controversial (202).

The relationship between gender and affect has also been shown to take on

very different characteristics across social classes and cultures (299, 341, 387). For example, in some societies, women are expected to be silent, taciturn, or affectively flat in unmarked contexts, while men are voluble and display much affect (e.g. 205, 248, 334). In many societies, women can only express affect (and sometimes have a public voice at all) in specially bracketed situations or through the use of particular genres (2, 3). Thus "veiled" and "ambiguous" genres such as chanting, weeping, or speaking in tongues, the performances of which often involve altered states of consciousness (157), are frequently, but not always, gender polarized (88, 89, 110, 136, 173, 254, 387). One characteristic does seem to apply cross-culturally: the low social evaluation of such genres on the part of either men or the entire group (153). Yet some scholars (e.g. 2, 3, 59, 153, 169, 171, 186, 347) have shown that women in many societies use, with varying degrees of success, socially devalued discourse as tools of resistance, protest, and defiance.

A reconciliation of these contradictory findings surfaces when they are placed in a semiotic perspective. Cross-culturally, most observable differences in the linguistic behavior of gender groups are indexical of personas, contexts, roles, and other social categories commonly associated with gender categories (107, 186, 299, 325, 327, 387). In most cultures, women and men habitually find themselves in different situations and identify with social categories that call for different affect displays, be it in terms of the intensity or the nature of these displays. Affect is thus an important mediating agent between language and gender, and, more broadly, between the individual and society. This perspective suggests that contexts, rather than just individuals, be framed as gendered categories. This perspective provides a better model for accounts of, for example, the different affective styles that the Pintupi of Australia adopt in the presence of certain combinations of kin (with gender figuring prominently in the definition of the situation; 316), and the affect-heavy verbal displays through which male customers affirm gendered dominance over cocktail waitresses in an American working-class bar (406).

## LANGUAGE, AFFECT, AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In stratified societies, social groups are frequently perceived as having different affective styles, and class identification rests in part on the individual's affective demeanor. Although little work has been done on either empirically observable patterns or extant ideologies across social groups and cultures, several patterns emerge in the ways social classes and linguistic affect are interrelated.

First, social groups may differ in the general intensity of their affect displays. High-ranking rural Wolof are expected to display an affectively flat *maîtresse de soi,* particularly in contexts where social standing is highlighted,

while low-ranking individuals engage in highly demonstrative displays of emotionality (230; cf also 7 on the Barundi). Suggestive of a similar state of affairs is the contrast between the sensationalistic, self-advertising, and "emotional" communicative style of American newspapers geared to the working classes and the more "rational" news discourse addressed to the upper echelons of society (376). The "neutralizing distance" characteristic of much middle-class (particularly public) discourse serves a double function. It indexes the middle-of-the-road approach that middle-class ideology values (60), and it excludes those who "let themselves be carried away" by their emotional impulses (61:88–89).

Second, social classes can also be associated with different types of affect. Sennett & Cobb (385) suggest that American working-class individuals, when talking about work, engage in discourse that downplays their own achievements, while middle-class ways of talking about such topics highlight the individual's status as the source of success (see also 384 for a discussion of discourse and authority-structure maintenance). Some have hypothesized that anonymity, sharp public-private dichotomy, and relative lack of social control in Western middle-class life foster the use of impression-management strategies, which have become normalized in the eyes of their users (139).

Third, the affective meaning of particular features can vary according to who uses them. In an American industrial environment, the "powerful" have been shown to use the discourse marker *you know* to mark confidence in their own meaning, among other things; the "powerless," in contrast, use it for its dialogic qualities (215, 220).

Critical inquiries into the relationships of language with class structure, class ideology, and political economy have recognized that language can function as a powerful tool in establishing and maintaining power asymmetries (132, 177, 178). Indeed, hegemony is control of both physical and symbolic production (378:314–50), which of course includes language. There is evidence that affect in language plays a pivotal role in social processes. An American prison official's refusal to negotiate with rioting Black inmates until they "calm down" and are willing to "talk rationally"—i.e. adopt a middle-class White affective style (255)—is a telling illustration. Affective styles are also frequently used to manipulate asymmetries. When Wolof griots praise high-ranking individuals in highly affective oratorical deliveries, they move their audiences to admiration, and thus enhance the status of the targets of the praise, who then must display greater material generosity toward social inferiors (233). Among the Wolof again (228), and in Iran (37), Samoa (121), and probably many other societies, deferential and positively affective linguistic behaviors are utilized as power-manipulating devices. Affective elements in language can also serve, in the hands of the oppressed, as vehicles of protest against and resistance to oppressive institutions, dominant groups,

and their symbols (127, 377, 449). Thus emerge satirical genres, folksongs, and jokes targeting dominant groups, which allow the dominated to express their resentment of the status quo. The overwrought self-humbling deference Malaysian peasants show an unpopular landlord (378:25; cf also 11, 190) and the extravagantly theatrical story performances telling of exploits against the powerful in a Lebanese village (160) are striking examples of the exploitation of affective tools in symbolic resistance. The resulting constitutive relationship between hegemony and linguistic affect remains in large part virgin territory. In particular, little is known of the historical dimensions of this relationship (but see 5, 84, 383 for promising avenues). A historically informed approach, where possible, can be expected to help explain the nature of contemporary dynamics among affect, language, and social processes.

## CONCLUSION

This review has investigated various avenues in the study of the affective dimensions of language. Just as emotionality is pivotal in the cultural construction of the relationship between self and culture, linguistic displays of emotionality serve important, if complex, semiotic functions in this process.

As represented in a system of indexical signs, affect permeates all levels of linguistic and communicative structures, all utterances, and all communicative contexts, but it does so in more or less transparent ways. As this review has shown, language users exploit differences among various affective keys in the relative overtness of affect to define contexts, social structures, and their relationship to discourse. The overall effect, which was loosely termed the affective style of groups and contexts, demonstrates the importance of the constitutive linkage between language on the one hand and social categories and situations on the other. In particular, how affect is used and manipulated across contexts can also constitute emotional life. Thus equal attention must be paid to the *representation* and the *presentation* of emotion processes (36, 68, 383); talk (or writing) about emotions is a different activity from the interweaving of emotions and discourse, although the two are related in a complex manner.

Investigations of the role of affect in language cannot proceed without a fine-grained ethnographic inquiry into language use in context. Questions that must be addressed include: Who uses which affective tools, for what purpose, in what context, and what role does affect play in the linguistic representation of symbolic processes (e.g. emotion management)? A linguistic approach to affect thus needs to problematize context and contextualization (33, 167). In particular, since affect in language indexes culturally constructed categories of emotionality, these categories must become a parallel object of inquiry. Ideal contexts for the study of the relationship between language and emotion-

al life are situations in which emotions themselves become the focus of attention: Conflictual events (67, 179), conflict-resolution and therapeutic encounters (443, 446), and the ethnographic interview itself (72) can provide rich ethnographic opportunities for such investigations.

Affect, like other areas of language (152, 232), is deeply embedded in social, political, and economic contexts (4, 11). The indexical nature of affect in language makes it both an ideal vehicle for the affirmation of hegemonic structures and an ideal (often covert) tool in the resistance to these structures. Furthermore, what serves as a vehicle of affect in language frequently also has social meaning. Code switching in a multilingual community, for example, can index levity, anger, or caring, but it simultaneously indexes the boundaries and membership of social groups. As they pepper their conversations with proverbs, older Spanish speakers establish themselves along an age (and status) hierarchy and provide an affectively charged frame for their pronouncements (73). The interweaving of referential meaning, affect, and social categories does not necessarily presume that referential meaning is the pivotal category. The distinctive affective response of Wolof women from different social strata to a suicide scene (high-caste women impassive, low-caste women screaming) first indexes affect, and secondarily rank, through norms of conduct associated with social status (230). And, of course, social meaning can also function as a semiotic mediator between referentiality and affect. Such is the case of the socially stigmatized form *ain't,* which, when used by the British aristocracy, indexes a "studied indifference" to matters of class (321). Affect thus plays an important mediating role in the relationship of the individual to society, but this mediating role is not unidirectional.

How can a closer look at the role of affect in the everyday use of language inform ethnographic concerns? Anthropologists have long recognized that social groups have distinctive emotion-management styles. Ethnographic accounts of emotional life in various groups (e.g. 74, 250, 280, 316, 352) have defined emotions in the context of social action, characterized how particular emotions are evaluated from a normative perspective, and identified "hypercognized" and "hypocognized" (i.e. the focus of more or less cultural attention) emotional categories, to use Levy's (281) useful terminology (cf 54, 307). In their investigations of these questions, ethnographers rely heavily on observations of affect in everyday interactions which, without a sophisticated understanding of how affect is embedded in language, must rely on the more overt, explicit, normative, and best-articulated aspects of interaction (297). What is advocated here is that closer attention also be paid to the more covert ways affect suffuses language. For example, among groups that emphasize control of aggression displays (e.g. 74, 311), can more covert affect indexes, which easily escape normative scrutiny, be used to communicate such feelings as anger in everyday interactions? Which indexes are so used in

what contexts? How is the inherent indeterminacy of many affect-encoding devices exploited? Paying greater attention to such microanalytic concerns, and to the complex relationship between microscopic aspects of emotional behavior and insiders' emotional discourse, can yield a rich and complex ethnographic text.

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