Social Interaction, Social Context, and Language

Essays in Honor of Susan Ervin-Tripp

Edited by

Dan Isaac Slobin • Julie Gerhardt
Amy Kyratzis • Jiansheng Guo

Psychology Press

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Susan Moore Ervin-Tripp

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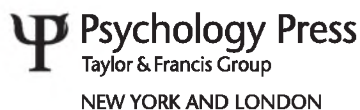

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She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

— *Proverbs* 31:26

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THE EDITORS

We represent several generations of language researchers whose careers have been shaped by knowing Susan Ervin-Tripp. Here we briefly tell our readers who we are in the context of the scholar and teacher whom we celebrate in this festschrift.

Dan Slobin

My interaction with Sue goes back to 1963, before we even met. She had been invited to review psycholinguistics for the *Annual Review of Psychology* and had heard that I — then a graduate student at Harvard — had been reviewing the Soviet literature on psycholinguistics and child language. She wanted to include Soviet work in her review, and asked me to co-author the chapter with her — a flattering invitation that led to continuing collaboration when I moved to Berkeley a year later. I had come fresh from the heady days of early transformational grammar, and Sue introduced me into a group of researchers at Berkeley who were considering language in much broader, and equally exciting frameworks of ethnography, philosophy, and a new field that came to call itself the study of "communicative competence." While this approach fit my natural fascination with crosslinguistic comparison, it took me a long time to learn from Sue (and John Gumperz, Erving Goffman, Dell Hymes, John Searle, and their students) that language could not be studied without attention to the social and interactive contexts in which it is learned and used. In the course of teaching seminars and proseminars with Sue, and following every step of her research over the years, I have become a different kind of psycholinguist. And, in watching her interact with her students and colleagues, I hope to have become a better teacher and member of the academic and larger communities. Over the years, we have worked together to create a functionalist, interactionist, and cross-cultural approach to language. This collection of essays is one of the fruits of that approach.

Julie Gerhardt

I met Susan Ervin-Tripp when I first began graduate school at Berkeley in 1975. The first thing that struck me about Sue's voice was that it was always heard in counterpoint to the voices of others: She was always engaged in a spirited dialectic with other positions — whether it be cognitive universals, indirect speech acts, developmental stage theory, psycholinguistic processing, generative semantics, etc., and she encouraged this attitude

in those with whom she worked. Never dogmatic, she continually welcomed the dissenting voice. Throughout the years of friendship and collegiality, we still have the most fun together looking over a transcript or arguing about the value of psychotherapy. Before post-modernism made "difference" fashionable, Sue always welcomed the play of oppositions and dissenting voices — and never lost her own. What I feel most indebted to Sue for was her unstinting encouragement for my interest in the contextual effects on grammatical meaning. Working on her family project in the late seventies gave me the opportunity to begin to examine the relation between language and context, specifically, how grammatical forms come to have particular uses in particular contexts. This experience was indeed quite formative and remains a cornerstone of my work in looking at the relation between language and context in psychotherapy.

Amy Kyratzis

I first met Sue in 1989 when I came to Berkeley's Developmental Psychology Program to do a postdoctoral traineeship with Sue and Dan. I worked with Sue on projects examining the social interactive bases of children's syntactic and conversational development. She taught me a great deal about discourse analysis, the importance of contextual factors in language use, and the role of language in cognitive development and the construction of social identity. It was as a result of that last influence that I became interested in the role of language in gender development and socialization — the focus of my present research. I had come to Berkeley interested in how language and culture shape thought, and Sue gave me insightful ways to think about these issues. She taught me more general lessons as well. First, that scientific inquiry can occur anywhere — from recording a group of children talking together in school to looking at how a graduate student from another culture addresses her professor. Second, that the results of psychological and social research can inform important social issues, such as the linguistic empowerment of women and minorities. And third, that you should always care deeply about your students, colleagues, and important social issues and that by doing so, you also become a better scholar. I left Berkeley a year and a half ago but my collaboration with Sue continues. She has been a profound influence on my life.

Jiansheng Guo

I first met Sue in 1986, as a graduate student coming fresh from China. Sue's seminar on requests was both an intellectual joy and an effective medication for my initial culture shock. The thorough coverage of different approaches, different methodologies, and different cultural settings in that specific area laid a solid foundation for my entire graduate training and had a long lasting effect on my academic directions. Sue never lost an opportunity to make full use of the seminar participants' unique cultural, social, and individual knowledge and insights. A little embarrassed at the beginning, I quickly learned how valuable my own experience and perspectives could be in academic discus-

sions, as well as those of any other person. The most important influence Sue has had on my thinking lies in her appreciation of the importance of the social and interpersonal contexts of language and language learning. She has exerted this influence not only through persistent and convincing theoretical argument, but also, and more importantly, through her sensitivity to the sorts of subtle interactional dynamics that are too often overlooked by researchers. At the same time, Sue provided intensive training in how to convert these interpersonal dynamics into quantifiable categories, providing her students with effective tools for working with large corpora of naturalistic speech data. In her characteristic style of involvement, Sue generously offered me the opportunity to co-author two papers, one on "requests" and one on "face." I was involved in several of her research projects, coding and analyzing data, writing grant proposals, and sharing the joy of successes and the frustration of rejections. I had the honor to have her as the chair of my preliminary examination committee and as a member of my dissertation committee. The social-interactional approach to language acquisition, which is the major theme of my thesis, is chiefly attributable to Sue's influence and training. Her influence now leads me to future "Ervin-Tripp research areas," such as crosscultural pragmatics in natural discourse, social-interactional foundations of grammar in language acquisition, and the interface between the development of certain grammatical components and social-moral development in various languages.

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PART ONE: SUSAN ERVIN-TRIPP

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SUSAN ERVIN-TRIPP: A MIND IN THE WORLD

Susan Ervin-Tripp has shown us the possibility of redefining the life of the intellectual. Rather than allowing her problem domains to be shaped by traditional task definitions, she has — again and again — gone to "the world" to find problems worthy of study, and has repeatedly returned to the world to share her gained insights. That is, hers is truly "a mind in the world" — in two senses: a mind that takes inspiration from real-world, consequential human situations and that directs its intellectual activity towards changing those situations. In this brief introduction, we wish to illuminate the striking personal characteristics that reflect this theme.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

Although born and raised far from both coasts — in Minneapolis — it is hard to think of Sue's life and work without thinking of such places as France, Japan, the Indian reservations of the American Southwest, and, of course, the two coasts of this country. She has enthusiastically explored and studied diverse peoples, languages, social, and cultural settings. In her research methods, too, one thinks of a diversity of approaches: experiments, naturalistic and controlled observations, interviews — using audio recordings of speech, written texts, video recordings of interaction patterns, and a range of stimulus materials over the years. Similarly, looking at the populations Sue has studied, one finds children and adults, natives and immigrants, monolinguals and bilinguals, individuals and groups.

In the academic setting, she has held positions in departments of psychology, rhetoric, and women's studies. Within her home department of psychology she is rare in being an active member of three divisions — developmental, cognitive, and social. And at Berkeley she has placed her research projects in the Institute of Cognitive Studies (formerly the Institute of Human Learning), the Institute of Human Development, and the Language-Behavior Research Laboratory of the Institute of International Studies. This diversity is also reflected in the range of disciplines that Sue has been affiliated with, as committee member and colleague: psychology, linguistics, anthropology, education, sociology, rhetoric, and women's studies.

INNOVATIVE

More than once, Sue has played a central role in the definition and establishment of a new area of study: psycholinguistics in the fifties, and in the sixties, the modern study of child language development as well as sociolinguistics. And in all three, she has always directed the attention of Americans to the importance of linguistic and cultural variation.

Equally striking is Sue's repeated innovation in the realms of technology and methodology. She was the first person to realize that computers could be useful in storing and analyzing child language data — and that in the days of punch cards and mountains of printout. And, furthermore, the data that she entered on those punchcards came from tape recordings of child speech in an era that had only known written transcripts taken on the fly. (And, as an interesting reflection of the Zeitgeist, while Sue and Wick Miller were carting "portable" taperecorders to children's homes in California, Roger Brown and Martin Braine were doing the same thing on the East Coast — though they didn't use the computer to help them.) When Sue discovered wireless microphones, she ingeniously sewed them into children's vests, so as to be able to gather natural conversation without the intrusion of cumbersome equipment and observers. Thus, when "portable" video recording equipment came on the market, Sue was ready to study children's behavior in context — the context of interaction between family members in their homes.

In order to deal with such large and complex bodies of data, Sue innovated methods of coding and sorting utterances according to both linguistic and behavioral dimensions. Her procedure was always to begin with naturalistic data, work with teams of students (both undergraduate and graduate) to devise and refine coding schemes, and then move on to more focused studies.

ENGAGEMENT WITH PEOPLE

It is noteworthy that these beginning phases of opening up a new territory always involved students at all levels. (In fact, when Sue was offered an attractive early retirement option recently, she declined it, preferring to stay engaged with students, in both research and teaching.) Sue's way of working with students has always been to treat them as co-investigators in a collaborative quest. Another facet of her involvement with students has been an active concern with their professional development — from their first days at Berkeley on through their individual careers.

Perhaps the "mind in the world" has been most evident with regard to her involvement with problems facing women and ethnic minorities — in the state and nation as well as on the campus. We cannot list the many committees, lobbying efforts, and contributions to public education (and educating the public) that fill every year of Sue's biography. But as an indication of this dedication, this is how she summarized her experience as Ombudsman for the University of California at Berkeley in 1987-89:

> The job of ombudsman is highly rewarding, in particular when we receive gratitude for helping to solve a problem that has put someone in jeopardy (e.g., the student who didn't get assurance she was admitted until exam week, the

> student whose graduation was blocked in error), or when by proposing a slight change in procedure or the wording of a regulation or instructions we could remedy a chronic problem. We have set aside special time to investigate issues that appear to reveal structural problems. To faculty members, the unseen crises in the lives of the students we teach are especially poignant. We find that the clients who discover us reveal just the tip of profound problems on the campus, such as the burn-out of bureaucrats who then start making rigid automatic decisions, the conflict many students experience between the time demands of jobs and classes, and the heavy financial burdens borne by many students, especially single parents. The Office of the Academic Ombudsmen is both a safety valve and a valuable sensor for campus problems.

In a way, Susan Ervin-Tripp has been an ombudsperson in the intellectual world as well — attempting to reconcile theories, listening to neglected viewpoints, alerting us to structural problems, and seeking solutions. The leitmotif in Sue's opening chapter is CONTEXT. There she talks about the influences of context on the structure and use of language. Here we underline the context of Sue's involvement with the world as determining the directions and impact of her work.

— *The Editors*

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A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SUSAN ERVIN-TRIPP

Susan Moore Ervin was born in Minneapolis on June 27, 1927. She attended an all-women's high school, then an all-women's college, Vassar College, where she took courses in 11 subjects, among them courses in art history (her major), the social sciences, and several languages. Her undergraduate experiences had already impressed upon her a concern with women's issues, as she noted her good fortune in having had many excellent women professors at a liberal arts college — while those women were not allowed entry at the time to the larger research universities.

After Vassar, Susan Ervin attended the University of Michigan. Her concern with social issues was foreshadowed in her choice of Michigan, where she wanted to work with disciples of Kurt Lewin to use social psychology to try to understand and solve important social problems that were in the forefront of concern in the early postwar years. Disappointed in this quest, but retaining her keen interest in social psychology, she became drawn to the problem of bilingualism by the dramatic personal experience of her bilingual friends, who reported a sense of double identity and dual personality. The issue of the psychological role of bilingualism for individuals became her dissertation topic (Ervin, 1955, Ervin-Tripp, 1964).[1]

Her application to the Social Science Research Council to fund this research brought her to the attention of John Carroll, who in 1951 initiated a move to bring linguistics and psychology together. This connection resulted in two important influences on Ervin's life. First, she was privileged to play a role in the founding of psycholinguistics, taking part (as one of six graduate students) in a workshop sponsored by the SSRC in conjunction with the Linguistic Society of America at Indiana University in the summer of 1953. Ervin made contributions on language learning and bilingualism to the classic report that came out of that summer: *Psycholinguistics: A Survey of Theory and Research Problems* (Osgood & Sebeok, 1954).

The second important result was that John Carroll invited Ervin to work on the Southwest Project on Comparative Psycholinguistics, a wide-ranging attempt to test the Whorf hypothesis by means of comparative research in six language communities: Navajo, Zuni, Hopi, Hopi-Tewa, Spanish, and English. At the outset, then, her formation was cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural, and cross-linguistic (Ervin, Landar, & Horowitz, 1960; Ervin & Landar, 1963). In working with American Indian communities

[1] References cited here are listed in the full bibliography following this essay. We have not attempted to refer to each of Susan Ervin-Tripp's many publications here, but have selectively highlighted some as illustrative of the main trends of her intellectual career.

in the Southwest, Ervin was impressed with the coherence that culture confers upon language and its use — a lesson no doubt incorporated into her later influential work on the situated nature of children's as well as adults' language.

After receiving her doctorate in social psychology from Michigan, Ervin was brought into the Harvard School of Education by John Whiting, and one of the courses she taught there was child language. She reports that this experience is what prepared her to be duly impressed by Chomsky's work, *Syntactic Structures*, when it came out in 1957. In the fifties, language was treated as part of social psychology, and linguistics was often housed in departments of anthropology. Added to this, now, was a concern for the structure of language — an issue which Ervin realized had obvious consequences for child language development.

Ervin moved to Berkeley in 1958, where she taught English as a Second Language in the Department of Speech. One of the first things she did after arriving in California was to obtain a grant to study the child's acquisition of the coherent system of rules described by Chomsky. With linguist Wick Miller, she began one of the first modern studies of child speech *in situ*, making use of the new technology of portable tape recorders to record the speech of preschool children in their homes (Ervin & Miller, 1963, 1964). The design followed by Ervin and Miller was innovative in being naturalistic and longitudinal, while at the same time making use of repeated elicitation devices to tap the growing morphological and syntactic competence of a group of five children. And the technological approach was innovative not only in the use of tape recorders, but also in the use of computers — the first attempt ever to store and process child language data electronically. These data formed the beginning of a series of speech archives at Berkeley — archives that Ervin and her students and colleagues have gone back to again and again through the years, as new theoretical questions have arisen.

Several important papers emerged from this study, including "Imitation and Structural Change in Children's Language" (Ervin, 1964), which is widely cited in the child language literature. Here, Ervin documented three stages that children go through in acquiring plural and past tense morphology in English, including the significant intermediate period of overregularization. This problem has remained a central puzzle for psycholinguistics to the present day. On the basis of the longitudinal studies, Ervin — by then Ervin-Tripp — elaborated a process approach to language development, proposing various strategies used by the child (Ervin-Tripp, 1970, 1971, 1972). Also during this period, she began to note syntactic progress in conversational contexts and the role of conversations in supporting that progress, as reflected in a later paper, "From conversation to syntax" (Ervin-Tripp, 1977). She wrote of her early child language work that she began "to see first language development as a series of stages in a changing language acquisition system that selects and alters what it absorbs . . . suddenly I could see that interference was no different from the enduring structure of the monolingual child's own prior language." This insight allowed her two lines of interest, bilingualism and child syntactic development, to converge. "It also brought to the fore the fact that the differences between first and second language acquisition in reality are often just those factors of intent, motive, social milieu, and communicative choice which are left unexamined in first language acquisition as irrelevant to structure." Thus her work during this era left

her feeling that social factors remained to be incorporated into the description of systematicity in the child's rule systems.

At the same time that Ervin-Tripp was working on the development of grammar, she also continued her investigations of the role of language and bilingualism in thinking. In the sixties and seventies her studies included the language use of Japanese war brides in California (Ervin-Tripp, 1967) and the second-language acquisition of English-speaking children in French Switzerland (Ervin-Tripp, 1974).

In the course of investigating topics of bilingualism, code-switching, and language and thought, Ervin joined forces with a group of linguists and anthropologists at Berkeley. At that time, a new field was emerging, stimulated by the work of John Gumperz, Dell Hymes, and Erving Goffman, brought together under the rubric of "the ethnography of communication." In 1963 a sociolinguistics committee had been proposed to the Social Science Research Committee, and Ervin was instrumental in the founding of this new field, joining the committee in 1966. In 1967, Ervin wrote a survey paper which became a major foundational document of the field (Ervin-Tripp, 1968). The time was ripe for bringing psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics together in the study of child language development, and Berkeley was the right place for making this approach cross-cultural. Together with Gumperz and Slobin and a group of students in psychology, anthropology, and linguistics, Ervin-Tripp took part in developing *A Field Manual for Cross-Cultural Study of the Acquisition of Communicative Competence* (edited by Slobin, 1967), aimed at studying child language within both linguistic and ethnographic contexts. A group of students went off to field sites around the world, collecting dissertation data guided by the field manual; and in the summer of 1968 a major series of workshops was held at the Institute of Human Learning at Berkeley (directed by Ervin-Tripp, Slobin, Gumperz, and Charles Ferguson, from Stanford) to examine data brought back from the field and chart the further course of this interdisciplinary venture. A number of the students who took part in the 1968 meetings went on to become productive scholars in the several intersecting fields of study.

Of her sociolinguistic work during this period, Ervin-Tripp wrote that "the most important contribution in the new field of sociolinguistics appeared to be the discovery of new strata of structure in language." The social phenomena underlying address terminology and other linguistic contrasts were as orderly and rule governed as the syntactic phenomena that Chomsky had focused on, and Ervin-Tripp's interest in social acts and the communicative situatedness of language led to the discovery and description of new dimensions of sociolinguistic structure and process.

Along with her academic research, women's issues became increasingly important to Ervin-Tripp in the context of the social upheavals that began in the sixties. Moved by some of her own experiences (such as not being allowed to march at graduation at Harvard, being excluded from "The Great Hall" of the Men's Faculty Club at Berkeley), and her concern with the more serious issues of the professional opportunities for women in universities and in society, Ervin-Tripp became an activist for issues affecting her women colleagues and students. She was appointed to a committee to report on the status of women at Berkeley. The findings were disturbing. As a result of the report, which came out in 1970, women in the University became organized and introduced a

Civil Rights Complaint to Kaspar Weinberger, then head of Health, Education, and Welfare in Washington. As a result, an Affirmative Action Coalition was set up at the University, and a coalition was formed in the Academic Senate to deal with issues facing women and ethnic minorities on campus. In the years since then, Ervin-Tripp has remained involved on the state and local levels, working for affirmative action programs and serving for a while as the Academic Senate Ombudsman.

Her research turned more and more to issues of developmental sociolinguistics. When video recording equipment became available, she set out to record family interactions in their homes, now with full contextual support. A new archive was in the making, supported by a new generation of computer technology. Ervin-Tripp's investigation of pragmatics had begun with address terminology, and in the seventies it moved on to another terrain of interpersonal communication: request forms. Requests were interesting to her because of their ambiguity and because of the strong influence of social and situational factors on different forms of requests. In addition to studying patterns of interaction in families, Ervin-Tripp and her students collected spontaneously produced directives, observing people in a range of social settings. It was clear that the role of **context** was becoming a guiding theme in her work. An influential paper that emerged from this work was "Is Sybil there?: The structure of some English requests" (Ervin-Tripp, 1976). Here Ervin-Tripp pointed to the role of language in reflecting and constituting social roles and relationships, analyzing the systematicity of social rules underlying language use.

A central theme in much of the more recent work on requests and social interaction is **control**, as realized in relationships of unequal status, such as families and classrooms. See, for example, "Structures of control" (Ervin-Tripp, 1982) and "Language and power in the family" (Ervin-Tripp, O'Connor, & Rosenberg, 1984).

A major part of Ervin-Tripp's program is based on microanalytic analysis of texts of natural conversation. She has pioneered in creating subtle coding systems, attending to a collection of interacting variables. For example, in analyzing requests, the method takes converging measures of such factors as addressee, cost of request, and linguistic form — in order to arrive at an understanding of the interplay of form and function in the acquisition and use of language. The method is described in a recent paper, "Structured coding for the study of language and social interaction" (Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 1993).

Most recently, Ervin-Tripp has been concerned with the influence of larger discourse structures on children's acquisition of syntax. This work has examined speech activities such as narratives and arguments, searching for the discourse contexts in which grammatical forms emerge, and tracing their subsequent expansion to serve new functions. Most of her papers from this decade elaborate on these issues, and a number of the chapters in this volume, written by her students and collaborators, carry on these themes.

In addition to the work on children's syntactic and discursive units, Ervin-Tripp's current research deals with the functions of young adults' spontaneous conversational narratives and gender differences in the construction of humorous talk (Ervin-Tripp & Lampert, 1992). Again reflecting her innovative data collection techniques, the database for these studies consists of several hundred spontaneous conversations among young adult friendship groups gathered by her Berkeley undergraduate students. Her concern

for the real-life consequences of language and gender has led her to undertake a large-scale study of letters of recommendation, examining the effects of gender — both of letter writer and candidate — on the form and content of letters. As in all of her work, the research is both microanalytic and of social consequence, dealing with language on both the linguistic and social planes.

In 1994 Susan Ervin-Tripp was given the highest honor of the Academic Senate of the University of California at Berkeley. She was chosen to be one of the two annual Faculty Research Lecturers, presenting an overview of her life's work to the campus community. That lecture is the first chapter in this volume. Its title sums up her quest: "Context in Language."

— *The Editors*

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1 CONTEXT IN LANGUAGE[1]

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Everyone is familiar with contexts in language. We understand that there is hyperbole in introductions but not in mid-career reviews. Yet just how context affects language is not treated in core theories of language. Models for the human capacity for language have focused on the function of description, report, analysis, as if talking about the world — physical description or abstract description — were the main use of language. Language is seen as a map of reality, either the reality outside, an abstract reality, or an imaginary reality. In this view, context gets into language mainly by reference. We talk **about** the context.

A dictionary implies a view of language. A dictionary takes as a definition what is centrally different about the meaning of a word from another. Dictionaries are designed merely to distinguish. But language is not a direct map; multiple meanings, or polysemy, is common in language. Among the common words in the English dictionary, *get* has 72 meanings, and *face* has 23 meanings as a noun and 12 as verb. Language tolerates both polysemy and homonymity heavily because humans are very context-sensitive, unlike a machine translator, which can be tripped up.

EVIDENCE ABOUT CONTEXT IN LANGUAGE

My claim is that context permeates language, that contextual assumptions affect how we understand language, and that contexts of speech have to be better understood to develop realistic theories of language and of language learning. First, let us clarify what we mean by context. Take as an example getting a book from a reserve library counter. We normally remember the setting — the counter — and the activity that occurred — a service request — and we remember that the librarian said the book was checked out. These facts we can report, and we have a focused memory about them. But typically we do not notice, unless they are unusual, the physical layout in detail, who else was present behind the counter or before it, the exact exchange, the librarian's syntax, accent, lan-

[1] A version of this chapter was presented as the 1994 Faculty Research Lecture, following Susan Ervin-Tripp's election as Berkeley Faculty Lecturer — a rare honor. — *Editors.*

guage, address terms, verbatim wording, rate of speaking, or the prosody of the speech. These are aspects of context, in the sense that they are present and backgrounded. If they do not survive in our reported memory of the event, how can we say they are important as context? My next examples illustrate our use of backgrounded, non-focal, incidental information.

Context in humor

One evidence that we notice context is that we make humor about mismatches of speaker characteristics and language and of physical setting and language. Many cartoons are based on a clash between the expectations from the picture, which is the context, and the caption. Normally we process the picture rapidly before we read the caption. For example, we see an organist in a giant cathedral playing the organ. We expect a magnificent piece of music. Then the caption tells us what he is singing while playing: *I love coffee, I love tea, I love the girls and the girls love me,* a two-finger exercise.

We also note discrepancies of style and content in cartoons where occupations are identified. These are funny because certain kinds of talk fit particular work in particular settings. In a cartoon, two women in aprons are cleaning up the debris in a deserted corporate boardroom. One says *The tumult and the shouting cease, the captains and the kings depart.* We saw the image of cleaning women, but we were unprepared for them to quote Kipling. It is not what we expect them to be talking about while cleaning; in addition we may not even expect that memorizing Kipling was part of their education. It is both a situational shock and a social background shock. In other kinds of cartoons, the *New Yorker* has judges talking legalese at home to their wives. The following excerpt of stand-up comedy on a recording is another example of work talk brought home. The asterisks indicate special emphasis on the following word.

(1) Airline attendant and husband at breakfast.

W: I *am preparing a *beverage, but if you'd *rather go *without it I'll *certainly hold it *back for you.

H: *No, *look I can't *stand it any more, do you understand me? I can't *bear it, I'm getting *out, I *quit, I want a *divorce!

W: We-ell, if you *do *feel that *way about it, I'd suggest that you *wait until perhaps *3 PM when I *will be back from shopping at the beautiful *Saks Fifth Avenue.

Nichols & May, 1959

The clash here is at several levels, between setting and occupational talk and between content and style. In addition there is a parody, which wouldn't be funny if we have not been listening to the singsong of stereotypical airline attendants' talk. The features of this style can be said to **index** or call to mind airline attendants as speakers, and airlines as settings, showing us that we have been noticing backgrounded information about style.

Humor is a good test of what people know. The spontaneity of laughter shows that audiences notice these features of speech that index setting and speaker characteristics. The humor in cartoons depends on delicate timing because the caption must catch us just as we have made an inference from the picture about what the people might be saying or

how they would be talking.[2]

Context in address

Let me turn now to research on particular speech features that are sensitive to context. The first case is naming, which is familiar to all of us.

(2) Southern white police officer to adult Black male in the 1950s.
O: What's your name, boy?
P: Dr. Poussaint. I'm a physician.
O: What's your first name, boy?
P: Alvin.

"As my heart palpitated, I muttered in profound humiliation. . . . For the moment, my manhood had been ripped from me. . . . No amount of self-love could have salvaged my pride or preserved my integrity. [I felt] self-hate."

Poussaint, *New York Times*, 1967, p. 53

In working on naming (Ervin-Tripp, 1973, p. 305), I showed schematically in a flow chart of choice points how a northerner in my generation arrived at address terms. Generally such an address choice schema starts with child/adult status of the addressee and with the setting (e.g., *Your Honor* when addressing a judge in court, but not outside the court). This southern policeman was brought up to address adult white males as *sir.*, but the policeman had a selector in his address system for ethnic categorization, which involved calling adult Blacks with the first names, as if they were children.[3] These two understood each other perfectly.

Context in request forms

Requests involve another speech act where many features of context systematically affect choice, but not in such a direct way. The factors affecting requests can include relative status and familiarity with the addressee, cost or difficulty of the request in terms of the addressee's current activity, and physical distance. We noticed that physical distance mattered, because in a study of requests in an office, a staff member speaking to a peer nearby might say *Bring me the file,* but to someone further away *Bring me the file, would you, Rose?* (Ervin-Tripp, 1976).

In some quotes taken from a campus medical laboratory (Ervin-Tripp, 1976), we see a technician who indexed familiarity when he was alone with a doctor he worked with: *Hey, Len, shoot the chart to me willya?* but he shifted to a style which indexed the doctor's higher status when outsiders were present: *Shall I take it now, Doctor?* These shifts reveal sensitivity to contextual information.

We found that one of the major determinants of request mitigation, that is moving to a more polite request, was asking for something outside of role, that is extra, beyond

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[2] If you show a cartoon on an overhead projector that distorts the size relation of picture to text, it can fail to be funny, showing that the relative processing time for picture and text is crucial to the humor.

[3] There were "respect" variants for older addressees involving kin terms.

normal expectation, as in the example below.

(3) Husband and wife serving stepfather.
[Wife to her husband Ben]
Bring some out, so that Max could have some too. . . .
Geschmacht. Hmm. Oh it's delicious!
Ben could you hand me a napkin please?

Example provided by Harvey Sacks

Here we see the wife can address direct, unmitigated imperatives to her husband in the co-host role since someone else is beneficiary, but she uses a mitigated request when the beneficiary is herself.

Understanding intent

The wife said "Ben could you hand me a napkin?" Why can't Ben just answer "yes" to this question? It is the case that a great many utterances which are treated as requests by listeners could be taken as something else. They look like something else. When I asked a child *Why are you in the garden with your socks on?* I was surprised to hear an explanation rather than to see an exit from the garden or removal of socks, since I heard what I said as a directive. We are surprised when a 10-year-old to whom we say on the phone *Is your Dad there?* says *Yes* and does nothing about it. Below is an example of another misunderstanding.

(4) A misunderstanding between a foreign student and an elderly landlady.
A: Can we move the trash bin over here?
L: Oh, Anna, I didn't know you had a roommate!

This problem arose because of two misunderstandings. One was the *we*, which is used downward by authorities, as in the teacher's *let's take our naps now* or the doctor's *we should check his temperature every couple of hours.* In the context of conventional action, *we* from an authority can mean *you.* Anna used *we* to mitigate a directive, but the landlady heard it as a request for permission. What Anna meant was *could you move the trash bin over here?* or even *could you have the trash bin moved over here?*

Permission requests and directives for the hearer to act, like *can I have some juice*, often look alike. What prevents these apparent ambiguities from causing trouble is that people take contextual expectations, or action trajectories, and social information into account. That is, there are always two interpretive processes. One is understanding the message about action in the current or future time. The other is understanding the social message about status, emotion, or distance in the context of speaking. In most contexts at least one of these aspects is conventional or obvious, so the other can be calculated. Since the context is known before the message is heard, there is little risk of ambiguity. The backgrounded context is thus what makes the other kind of meaning unambiguously interpretable.

Marking social relationship

Naming and requesting appear to be occasions which are not so necessary or unavoidable as to require the indexing of social relationship in every interaction. For instance, we

know people who simply avoid naming because they cannot figure out how to position themselves. There are European languages in which reference to a hearer's action or possessions requires choice of familiar or formal, *tu* or *vous* or *usted* or *lei*, *du* or *Sie*. So in awkward situations one does not refer to the addressee in any way. But in Korean and a number of other languages, one cannot talk at all without such social indexing, since every finite verb requires a marker. Even in a comment that it is raining, one must indicate relative social status; these forms are used everywhere, even within the family.

(5) Korean social marking in a church group in the United States[4]

[Eunsun is a 29-year-old-woman in charge of music. Gwangsu is a 33-year-old male economist, president of the church group. Gwangsu is angry at a suggestion of Eunsun and shouts.]

1 Bintae: Please state **-shi** that as a suggestion, and. . . .
2 Gwangsu: No, even after you came to the United States. . . .
3 Chuhee: Let's control our emotions **-ta.**
4 Gwangsu: No you are just . . . The members are expecting only
5 to be receivers and even now,
6 does anyone know everyone's name?
7 That's impossible!
8 Hey, you don't do things like a GAME.
9 Why should we do that?
10 Eunsun: I'm not talking about doing anything like a GAME-**eyyo.**
11 Gwangsu: No! communication is the best means of
12 fellowship-**eyyo**.. [stands up]
13 {[in English] OOOOOKAAYYY? COMMUNICATE!
14 COMMUNICATE!
15 [claps hands, stepping towards each member]
16 ONE! AFTER! ANOTHER!}
17 Chuhee: Please calm down-**shi-eyo.** Song, 1994

In the Korean part of the text there are two types of marking, the verb suffix *-shi* and the sentence-final markers *-ta* and *-yo*, involving the formality of the situation and the degree of deference to the addressee (See Table 1.1). The *-shi* suffix is the informal polite verb marker. Notice that in lines 4 to 9 Gwangsu does not use any status markers at all. Korean speakers hear this segment as very rude indeed. It's hard to think of what would be comparable, perhaps like shouting "you idiot" at someone. The forms used in the rest of the segment are informal but deferential markers appropriate to speaking about and to people who are not intimates. After it is modeled in 10, Gwangsu uses the appropriate sentence marker in 12. The *-ta* form in 3 is in the first person so it is not deferential, since it concerns the first person. Note that it is not, therefore, a request as in line 17 or in Text 4 above.

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[4] For ease of reading, the Korean part of the text is given in lower case English, with the markers of status in boldface. Only the upper case segment 14-17 was actually spoken in English.

TABLE 1.1. Korean Speech Levels and Contexts in Sentence-final Markers

Speech level	Context	Declarative	Question	Order/Request
Deferential (jondaetmal)	formal	-pnita	-pnika?	-shipshiyo
	informal	-yo	-ngayo?/ -nayo?/ -uyo?	-sayo
Semi-deferential	formal	-o	-na?	-gae
	informal		-nga?	-shio/-so
Non-deferential (panmal)	formal	-ne	-ni?	-ae
	informal	-ta	-nya?	-ra

So, 1984.

The important fact about Korean is that you must know the addressee's relative age and status to be able to talk to anybody, and you keep reminding people of your age and status by the speech markers you use. You can hear new acquaintances spend five minutes learning when each graduated, what their occupation and company is, and if they are women, whether they are married, and whether they have sons. In order to avoid doing this, sometimes bilinguals switch to English (Howell, 1967).

Code-switching

Gwangsu shifted to English in 13 to 16. English allows him to approach and direct each person but again it takes him away from the distancing markers normal to Korean and makes his colleagues nervous, if we judge the comment in 17.

Code-switching is the most dramatic way of making a shift in context for interpreting speech. Bilinguals frequently do not recall the language of an interactional event. That is, they treat the language, if it was not unusual, as a background feature, using it in interpretation but not storing it as focal information.

Why is the particular language spoken relevant in interpretive outcomes? We all are aware that languages code the physical world differently. A vivid example is the difference between the Navaho and English color system. We tested English and Navaho monolinguals on a range of hue chips controlled for intensity and brightness, and found two points of major difference (Ervin, 1961). The low-brightness mustards were called *hlitso* by almost all the Navahos, who responded quickly, but Anglos were not agreed on naming these hues,[5] only 30% naming them hesitantly a qualified *yellow*, and Anglos call *yellow-green* what is still a good *yellow* for Navahos. The range of hues Anglos call *green*, *blue*, and *purple* are all called *doothlizh* by Navahos, albeit often with nuancing

[5] Respondents were asked to name colors, so both the hue name and the time of response when shown a Munsell color ship were recorded. In the "best" or prototypic hues, close to all respondents agree on the name, but at the boundary between two hues, only half give a particular color name.

qualifiers. In English, Navaho speakers still consider *hlitso* to be *yellow*, since there is no good competitor. Navaho dominant-bilinguals had great difficulty in naming chips in the range of *dootlizh* in English; it is unforgettable to hear a Kelly green called *purple* or a purple called *green*. Bilinguals keep the Navaho boundary for green/yellow in English because the categorization of the yellows is less ambiguous in Navaho than in English, but when English insists on dividing up a single Navaho category, and provides no dominant translation for the Navaho name, the amount of experience with the second language predicts sharpness of the new category boundaries.

In addition to physical world category differences, speakers do not have the same ideas about the social world when they shift language. If you require that a particular language be spoken, you can alter message content. In a pilot study as a graduate student in the early fifties, I showed the same picture to Japanese bilinguals, and instructed them to tell stories at one session in Japanese, and in the other, in English. The Japanese bilinguals in the study were American-born Nisei graduate students who had grown up on the West coast until being relocated during World War II. One Thematic Apperception Test picture showed a woman standing in front of a field where a man was plowing. These are the two stories told by the same speaker, revealing difference in family thematic focus. In a later study, involving direct instruction to use a stereotype (Ervin-Tripp, 1967), I was able to show that these story contrasts with language context cannot be simulated easily under instructional set.

(6) *Thematic Apperception Test* picture stories by the same speaker.
[The picture depicts a woman standing in front of a field, with a farmer ploughing]
[in Japanese]
A student is in conflict about being sent to college because her mother is sick and her father has to work very hard to support the student. The father prays for the student's success.
[in English]
A sociology student observes farmers at work and is struck with the difficulties of farm life.

In Japanese, the students tended to talk more about their families, and less about studying. I also asked them to complete sentences. The beginning of the sentence is shown in boldface.

(7) Sentence completions by the same speaker on two occasions.
[in Japanese]:
If the work is too hard for me, he says "well, this is merely . . ." and as if whipping himself, he works all the harder.
[in English]:
If the work is too hard for me, I'll just quit.
[in Japanese]:
I like to read about sociology.
[in English]:
I like to read comics once in a while because they sort of relax my mind.
[in Japanese]:
My greatest pleasure is to graduate from graduate school.

[in English]:

My greatest pleasure is to lie on the sands of the beach out West.

This was the same speaker, replying on two different occasions in the two languages. Last year one of my Asian-American students studied what is called the "model minority" fallacy. In the difference between the English and Japanese replies, by speakers a generation or more older than our students, we see the dilemma. In one language they are the model minority, in the other, they don't want to be.

The important point for my purposes here is that language choice, whether spontaneous or required, alludes to values and can background interpretation. So even when bilingual speakers cannot recall the language in a segment of talk, we find they use language as contextual information to interpret meaning.

Another context is shared experience or something mentioned earlier in the discourse which sets up expectations for what follows.

(8) Two brothers in a round of earthquake narratives.[6]

a Art: you know... you know that that nice glass china display case in our dining room?
b Neal: ==in the dining room.
c Cass: oooooh.
d Neal: trashed
e Cass: forget it
f Neal: absolutely trashed
g Art: ==whole thing a=bsolutely=
h Neal: =every single bit of glass and=
i Neal: =pottery in th-=
j Art: = yeah=
k Olga: ==and crystal?
l Neal: ==all the crystal trashed
m Art: ==crystal
n Neal: ==everything trashed
o Cass: oooh my *gaaawd

UCB Disclab: QUAKE

Since this story is from a round of stories about the effects of a recent California quake, the previous context sets up preliminary components, so the main event does not need to be mentioned.

CONTEXT IN ACQUISITION

Is this sensitivity to the nonverbal and verbal aspects of context simply a result of adult sophistication, or do we have to consider identifying the details of context sensitivity as

[6] In this text, == indicates "latching" or picking up the turn on the beat as if the same speaker were continuing without a pause; = xxx = indicates a segment overlapped with another simultaneous passage.

part of our language learning skill? Context sensitivity was part of our prehuman heritage, and was not relinquished when language developed. A basic condition for language learning is juxtaposition of symbol and event, so learners have to attend to both text and context. They have to make the link to give meaning to the symbols. So let us turn to language learning issues.
Context for purposes of learning can include:

- the physical and social setting,
- the event or activity that occurs in that setting,
- the understood goals and emotions of participants,
- the local topic,
- any speech that is retained, at least the preceding turn, including of course the code used.

Evidence of children's notions of physical context

From the earliest ages, children notice the background contextual information we have been talking about. They pay attention to the physical context of use first, including the people present, as the history below of learning about *from* illustrates. The children begin with the directional, physical orientation, then later the *by means of* use can be seen, which for some children yields *from* answers to *how* questions.

(9) Examples of *from*
2;2 It came from my book-box.
2;3 It come from in the bathroom.
2;5 It came from my toe. [of sock]
2;11 Look at that knocked down tree from the wind.
3;0 I not tired from my games.

Clark, 1993, p. 58.

2;5 A: What do they taste like? (play-doh worms)
C: Taste from right in here.
(points in mouth — means they taste bad.)
2;5 A: Where did you get this?
C: From Daddy.
2.11 C: Because I dropped my rifle on my toe.
Because I hurt my toe from my rifle.
3;01 A: Ask Chicken Little how do you drink, Harvey.
C: I drink from a cup.

Miller-Ervin UC Transcripts[7]

Notice that at first *from* means physical directional source. Clark's data give consistently *it came from* or *it come from* (compare *it came off*) even when an adult speaker would have a different wording. That is, the first meaning of *from* is a spatial, directional one. Adults often ask where something comes from or came from. The extension to

[7] Coded and computerized transcripts constructed by Wick Miller in the early sixties, now maintained in the disclab account of the cogsci.berkeley.edu computer, accessible by request.

causality is modeled in such adult uses as *He got a bruise from falling down, they're sticky from cooking*, and *you'll get cavities from candy.*

Children notice what is present in the physical context of speech and learn very early in Korean to simply omit noun arguments of the verb in talking about what is present, to presuppose them (Clancy, 1993). Presence in talk as a referent comes to play the same role as physical presence, by age 3. That is the age when English-speaking children have learned to supply pronouns in anaphoric cases where nouns occurred in recent talk (Ervin-Tripp, 1977).

Speech events as context

While turns, or response forming, is one of the earliest kinds of evidence of discourse organization (Ervin-Tripp, 1977), as soon as they play with one another, children begin to form ideas about speech events as organized contexts. Even an 18-month-old may report a phone conversation as *Hi Fine Bye.* So the outlines of speech events are part of the contexts that children come to identify.

(10) Spanish-speaking 5-year-old, with 7 months in English
S: Hello
E: What's you doin?
S: Fine
E: My mommy told me to go to school.
S: Me too.
E: OK, bye. I'll call you back tomorrow.
S: OK, bye.

Ervin-Tripp, 1981

In the above example we see the bare outlines negotiated successfully by a second language learner, including the salutation, correct response to the first move, content acknowledgment, and repetition of farewell.

(11) Spanish-speaking immigrant aged 5, with 5 months in English
S: Hello, come to my house, please.
E: Who are you?
S: Nora
E: Nora, you've got to say, "what are you doing?"
S: What are you doing?
E: Making cookies. What are you doing?
S: Making cookies, too.
E: OK, bye.
S: Bye.

Ervin-Tripp, 1986

In this case something has to be taught, since the child has moved into the content without the correct first move after the greeting. The native speaker makes clear that there is a required first entry after the salutation. In this example we see that the recognizable speech event, a telephone call, has come to have normative components. Children can come to recognize the limited set of appropriate moves at each phase, so each utterance is interpreted according to its place in the event organization.

Although we have seen that adult request forms can be complicated or superficially ambiguous, the contrast between requests and non-requests is evident and important to children. Some children even mark the contrast in their speech, as some languages do. For instance, Budwig (1989) found that some children use a different first-person pronoun for the subject in requests than they do in information statements: *my want that* but *I like that*. *My build tower* represents a desire, and *I see kitty* represents a report, for such a child.

Even more dramatically, Julie Gerhardt (Gee & Savasir, 1986) found that 3-year-olds use the supposed English synonyms *gonna* and *will* very differently. *Will* is the future form for offers, requests, compliance, for agreement, for responding to the other, for questioning desires. *Gonna* is the form for talking about personal goals and intentions (like *I'm gonna be the mommy*), for statements, and for impersonal questions. In short *gonna* is the term for planning, *will* for enacting collaboration with another.

Interpersonal acts as contexts for syntax

Children's requests are a privileged context for certain syntactic advances. The first temporal and causal clauses occur in children's requests and negotiations of future plans.

(12) Speaking to doll
2;3 would you like some juice?
would you like some more juice, after you eat these?
Ervin-Miller transcripts, UC Disclab

(13) Circus figures doll-play
4;7 M: {[fortis] can I have him because I *like him!}
Kyratzis, 1993

(14) 4-year-old peers
[John grabs a clown from Carl]
a clown, guess what I think, cause I have a clown.
so this is mine, I got an exciting show.
Kyratzis, 1992

(15) Story retelling of 7-year-old girls
the little *sister *cried, because her brother turned into a *deer.
Kyratzis, 1993

The first causal clauses justify requests. Kyratzis saw many of these in boys' disputes over toys (13, 14). The last example, from a girl's narrative (15) shows the extension of causal clauses from use to justify, which occur in younger children (Kyratzis, Guo, & Ervin-Tripp, 1990), to use for conveying propositional truth relations. Thus grammatical form use is sensitive to the interpersonal functions of language.

Since requests are important to children, and of high frequency, children are sensitive to the form and context variations involved. By 4 they have learned to mark high cost requests to high status persons and strangers differently. They address more polite requests to their fathers than to their mothers, and to owners or at least possessors of toys (Ervin-Tripp, 1982).

The reasons they do this are not clear. Many parents are under the illusion that

politeness is learned because it is rewarded. When the likelihood of compliance was high (what we call low-cost requests), politeness actually reduced compliance, according to our data. But the child observes that in cases where compliance is not expected — like asking for something owned or in use — the most effective directives to younger children are aggravated, and the least effective are polite. Loud, angry commands are effective in compelling obedience from younger siblings. And mitigation is less effective to adults than a simple command or request. In conditions where compliance was unlikely (what we call high cost cases), adults complied[8] with 42.6% of plain, unmitigated commands or requests, but only 26.8% of polite requests by children (Ervin-Tripp, Guo, & Lampert, 1990).

The only condition in which there is a payoff for politeness is in talking to older children. Children addressing control acts to peers or older children were successful only 23.8% of the time with neutral direct forms, but 52.6% of the time with polite forms (Ervin-Tripp et al., 1990). The reason for that is clear. Adults are not interested in getting their status rewarded by children, but other children are. Studies in nursery schools also show that subordinate children give more polite requests to dominant children (Wood & Gardner, 1980). Status is up for grabs between children so they pay attention even to symbolic rewards such as being spoken to with respect. Sometimes that is their major focus (Mitchell-Kernan & Kernan, 1977). But we noticed that adults rewarded by compliance neither aggravation nor mitigation in the speech they receive from children.

Understanding directives

If the context of speech is important in establishing how children interpret what is said, what happens when the surface message appears to contradict the context? We did a set of studies in which there were both requests and prohibition events. We created comic books and dialogue, and asked the children to make an outcome. In one story, children were making a mess by spilling food on the living room furniture and rug. When a mother's voice said *are you spilling food*? the children told us the mother wanted the children to stop. In one project, we located American and English children who had lived in Geneva, Switzerland, six to nine months and were in French-medium schools. When we used the food-spilling story with such children in Geneva, and had the mother say, *Eh ben, c'est bien*, the child would still say the mother wanted them to stop. But when for this sample of children we did the story in English, and the mother said *Great, go right ahead, it's good*, children under 7 were baffled. *She's lying, she's tricking*, they say. After 7, they did not expect literal prohibitions any more, even in English, and could interpret the sarcasm.

What this tells us is that language choice provides clues to the interpretation of meaning. Children in Geneva told us they had heard in French this type of sarcastic comment, which is routine in families in continental Europe. They learn early what it

[8] We are not sure how adult compliance is altered by videotaping in the home — the conditions under which our data were gathered.

means. English and American children do not hear this type of conversational challenge in their families. When they live in Geneva, they can recognize it in French, however, because it is in the context of French conversations that they hear such talk (Ervin-Tripp, Strage, Lampert, & Bell, 1987).

Code-switching

Children, like adults, switch language to convey new meanings, changing the cultural resources they can draw upon. The belief contexts for their speech have changed along with the language.

(16) Dispute between two Chinese 5-year-olds in American classroom

A: My father, bigger your father.
B: You father big big big big big
A: My father my father like that [reaches high]
B: My father stronger your father!
A: My father like that [wide stretch]
B: Hunhuh, my father stronger, faster.
[switch to Cantonese]
A: I'm gonna tell your father that you steal things.
B: When did I steal things?
[A enumerates]
A: When we go outside, I'm gonna hit you.
B: Well, you'll have to run very fast.....
A: ....When you grow up and you steal, your wife isn't going to like you.

Ervin-Tripp, 1981

Now it strikes me that this is an un-American prediction. It would not have been made in English.

Children's subtle observation of the background features of adult speech is never revealed so fully as in their role play. Below are some segments from studies of doll and puppet play in 4- and 5-year olds.

(17) Role playing with dolls

Director: uh now *pretend he doesn't have a broken*arm
Doctor: {[lower pitch] *well, we were *wrong about the broken *arm}

Kyratzis, 1993

(18) Puppet play

Child DOCTOR: uh *well I think ya have a *hernia
Adult PATIENT: what's a *hernia?
Child DOCTOR: it's a *sickness like a *disease..... well **she's dead.

Andersen, 1990

(19) Puppet play

Child FATHER: will my little girl be okay?
Child DOCTOR: yes, she vill. but do you vant to sleep with her all night long? For every day?
Child FATHER: well, yes, I do.

Andersen, 1990

In these scenes, the father and the doctor display their authority with *well* as a marker of being in charge, as well as technical vocabulary. In addition, the voice pitch distinguishes men from women, and sometimes doctors from fathers. The German accent in (19) is another evidence doctors are special.

Andersen found that younger children change the accent and pitch to represent roles. Later they also change vocabulary, speech acts (who gives directives), and the style of directives. The subtlest feature noticed by the children was the coding of status by the little discourse markers at the beginnings of utterances, like these:

(20) Puppet play

Child teacher: *okay *now *well the first thing I would like to ask you
have you ever been to school, 'kay?

Child teacher: *well now then I think you should
take out your *papers.

Andersen, 1993

The children noticed that these markers occurred more in high status speakers, and that low status speakers used *uh* more often. The *okay* of teachers is of course stereotypical, but it is precisely these stereotypes that children are busy acquiring from incidental observation of speech features.

Anyone who speaks French knows that there is a high frequency of turn initiators like *eh bon, bien mais. . . .* The French children in playing roles mark status with the choice between these markers, with *bien* more frequent with higher status roles, and *eh* with lower status roles (Andersen, 1993).

CONCLUSIONS

What we have found is that children are sensitive to the social and interactional features of the context very early. These they encode linguistically by their choices of pronouns, person, aspect, modal auxiliaries, pitch, prosody, discourse markers, register, and vocabulary choice. If they are bilingual, they switch language for social purposes, altering rhetorical resources and cultural allusions.

When we look at natural talk we find it filled with indicators of the setting. This situational indexing is learned very much in the same way as word meaning, by a very powerful context-sensitive memory device. Contextual co-occurrences with linguistic features are stored in a frequency calculator, so that the correlated features come to index context, and indeed can be used to change the social interpretation of any malleable features such as situation and status. Economies of form can then occur through multiple meanings (polysemy). That is, if a form changes its interpretation according to context, the storage process must include information about the relevant contextual factors. Since such polysemy is very frequent, the human mind must prefer polysemy and contextual indexing over simple vocabulary expansion.

The language acquisition system cannot discriminate what will go into the dictionary and the grammar from the rest of contextual information. Evidence that there is massive learning of language features beyond those described in current lexicons and grammars

suggests that current theories of language acquisition have too narrow a definition of language.

Why have we so systematically kept context out of the language system? There are certain points where it crept in even in the most formalist linguistics. There was no way to deal with such differences as imperative versus interrogative without at least thinking about function (though as we have seen, the relation is complex). Languages like Korean, which index addressee or referent status, force us to find out what status is for the speaker. Robotics designers have been compelled to address those aspects of context at the time of speech that would affect the ability of the machine to carry out commands, that is, aspects of language dealing with contextual physical features such as motion and direction. Such attention is within the paradigm of focused attention and reference mapping. But directions for robots, unlike human directions, do not have to deal with extensive presupposition and allusion. Robots are not polite. They do not run the risks that airline pilots do, of failing to understand directives because of social masking (Linde, 1988).[9]

The omission of context from linguistic accounts has occurred because some linguists have considered contextual structure to be too chaotic, too idiosyncratic, to be characterized systematically. When linguists began to identify variable rules (Labov, 1969), the separation of the variable from the obligatory or categorial was obvious and unavoidable. Variationists have gradually introduced context into their analyses. What we are now beginning to do is use contrasts in linguistic features, including those that are variable, as our guideposts for identifying both the structure of conversation and the structure of context, indeed the immediate social structure for speakers. Linguistic features can tell us what are natural human categories for context. Such an approach can at last systematize the domain of context.

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[9] Linde's study of airplane crashes and airplane simulated cockpit exchanges revealed that important warnings from subordinate personnel might be couched in the language of deference and fatally ignored.

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PART TWO:
PRAGMATICS AND SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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2 THE LANGUAGE OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP[1]

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There is a very big idea in psychology and anthropology these days which can be missed because its parts are distributed across authors and fields and there is some shifting of conceptual terms. Nakedly stated, the idea is that the self in Japan, China, Korea, India, Java, Thailand, the East generally, with Japan usually named as the clearest case, is not the same as the self in the West, with the United States usually named as the clearest case. The self in the East is said to be relational, interpersonal, or collective whereas the self in the West is individualistic and autonomous. The self in the West is, furthermore, said by Deborah Tannen (1991) and Carol Gilligan (1986) to be more characteristic of men than of women. Women in the West are said to have a more relational, a more Eastern self. And, what is more, the deflection of the West from its present doomsday course is thought to depend on the moderation of Western male individualism by Eastern-and-female relationism (Geertz, 1975; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Gilligan, 1982, 1986; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Marselli, DeVos, & Hsu, 1985; Roland, 1988; Sampson, 1985, 1988, 1989; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Shweder & LeVine, 1984; Tannen, 1991; Triandis, 1989; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988).

Understandably, no one has cared to step forward as champion of so broad a thesis, so flatly stated. However, Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama in the July, 1991, *Psychological Review* have been bolder and more inclusive than most. Their paper "Culture and the Self" sets forth implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation, together with some persuasive evidence. It is getting a lot of attention.

The self construed as independent is organized as a repertoire of attributes — more or less intelligent, sociable, practical, hard-working, sports-minded and the like; attributes conceptualized with little reference to others. Persons are thought to be inherently separate; connections are means to ends and can always be sundered.

For the self construed as relational, separation is a nightmare. It is imperative to maintain connections. Relations are primary goals in themselves and action is always contingent on the thoughts and feelings of others.

I have no trouble understanding what is meant by an individualistic autonomous self,

[1] This paper was given in slightly different form as the Neil Graham Lecture at the University of Toronto, November, 1991.

but my intuitive grasp of what is meant by a relational self is weak. To strengthen it I have been looking at differences in the expression of social relationship between Indo-European languages and Southeast Asian languages, particularly Japanese, Javanese, and Korean.

In any language whenever one person speaks to another, it is necessary before speaking to ask: "Who am I?" "Who is this other person?" "What is this person to me?" For the speaker of English the answer can be as simple as: "My role is that of the speaker, known as *I*; the other person's role is that of the addressee, called *you*." For French, as for all the major European languages, there is one contingency; the speaker is always *je*, but the addressee may be either *tu* or *vous* depending on the relationship between the speaker and the addressee. For Japanese, and some other Asian languages, the contingencies seem endless and there are diverse outcomes on every level of linguistic analysis. Most strangely to us and most interestingly for the theory of the relational self, the speaker cannot even choose a term of self-reference without considering the relation between the self and the addressee.

PRONOUNS OF ADDRESS

Forms of address, especially pronouns of address (Brown & Gilman, 1960), make a good entry point into the language of social relationship. As far as pronouns are concerned, present-day English is the most impoverished case. We have only *you* whether for many persons or for one person. In the past, however, English had *thou* as an alternative to *you* in speaking to one person, a pattern preserved forever in Shakespeare's plays. All the other Indo-European languages (whether Italic, Germanic, Slavic, or Indo-Iranian) have at least two possibilities, the most familiar cases being *tu* and *vous* in French, *du* and *Sie* in German, *tu* and *Lei* in Italian, *tu* and *Usted* in Spanish, *ty* and *vy* in Russian. In all these cases a form originally exclusively plural has been recruited historically to be used also as what is loosely called a polite singular. English added *you* to *thou* in imitation of the French court after the Norman invasion. The European forms can be traced back to Latin *tu* and *vos* and so the abstract symbols T and V are used to stand for no particular phonological realization but rather for pronouns that pattern in ways to be described in whatever language.

T and V are relational forms in the sense that their meanings do not crystallize on the level of either speaker alone or hearer alone. In this respect they are like kinship terms used as vocatives. Just as it is not a property of any person to be addressed by everyone as *mom, dad, son*, or *daughter*, it is not a property of anyone to be always addressed as T or as V. It depends — on the relationship between speaker and hearer. Kinship terms do not serve to relate each person in a community to each other person; for most dyads there is no kin term. Pronouns of address, however, constitute a fully connected language of social relationship. After 30 years of work by many scholars on many languages, it now appears that the same two dimensions universally underlie not only pronouns of address but all address forms, such as, in English, first name, title, and title plus last name. The dimensions are status and closeness or intimacy. The universality of these

dimensions in address systems suggests that they are the basic dimensions of social life generally.

Status is the vertical of social life and it is an asymmetrical relation; one member of the dyad is higher and one is lower. The address pattern governed by status is likewise asymmetrical or nonreciprocal. The lesser member, or subordinate, gives V and receives T. On this abstract level the pattern is universal but the calculation of status is culture-specific. In one place or another, in one century or another, every sort of socially significant attribute has entered into the computation of relative status: sex, age, occupation, generation, caste, kinship (V to parent, T to child), lineage (V to nobility, T to peasants), religion (*thou* in Shakespeare's time to Shylock and to all Jews and Turks; *you* to the merchant Antonio and to all Venetians and Christians). The threshold for the expression of status differences, the magnitude of the interval that requires expression, is also culturally specific. It is not claimed that all actual differences of rank must be expressed asymmetrically. In America most of us are on a first-name basis very quickly, if not from the start. In Japan a one-year difference in year of graduation between schoolmates or in year of birth between brothers is expected to be reflected in different address choices for the full life of the relationships.

Intimacy, the term used to designate the range from stranger to close friend, is the horizontal of social life and it is a symmetrical relationship founded on similarity or identity in significant personal attributes that create like-mindedness. The address pattern governed by intimacy is also symmetrical: The two members of the dyad give the same pronoun. The difference is that strangers exchange V whereas intimates exchange T. The personal attributes taken account of in the computation of similarity are culture-specific and have included sex, age, kinship, birthplace, race, dialect, and, in general, just the same attributes that figure in the determination of status. For intimacy it is similarity that counts whereas for status it is relative value. Thresholds for the expression of intimacy are also culture-specific. Professor Roman Jakobson, the great linguist and speaker of many languages, once told me that when he would switch from, say, French to German, with a particular other person, he had to do a quick take on whether the two of them were on a mutual T basis in German as they were in French.

A society in which the asymmetrical status rule is pervasive suggests hierarchical organization whereas the symmetrical intimacy rule suggests pluralistic equality, and so it is not surprising that egalitarian social movements have often included the reform of pronominal address in their revolutionary programs. In France in 1793 the use of *vous* in the singular was condemned as a remnant of feudalism, and mutual *tu*, along with *citoyen* or *citoyenne*, were prescribed for all. In the Russian and Chinese Communist Revolutions it was the local version of mutual T and, of course, *comrade*. The Society of Friends or Quakers, a leveling movement in 17th century England, forbade its members to take off their hats to any, whether high or low, and required them to *thee* and *thou* all men and women without any respect for rich or poor, great or small. It should not be thought that such reforms were painlessly accomplished. Thomas Ellwood, a newly converted Quaker, has written that his father fell upon him with fists for giving him *thou*. Secretaries at the University of Stockholm in very recent years found themselves struck dumb by a new rule requiring them to say T to even the most elderly and

eminent of professors.

The efforts to reform pronoun usage and, indeed, usage of all address forms seem implicitly to have assumed some kind of Whorfian position on language and thought. Mutual T should produce or facilitate or perpetuate equality and fraternity. In the event, however, all such reforms have by now failed and the asymmetrical status rule, along with the intimacy rule, is to be found everywhere. No society has ever eliminated status differences; probably they are needed to motivate qualified individuals to fill certain very demanding positions and it seems as though status differences always will find expression — in some linguistic way.

The consistent failure to reform T and V for reasons of ideology might seem to predict failure of the effort, now about 20 years old, to reform another pronoun, English generic *he*, as in "the child he," into something like *he-or-she*, in fairness to women, but in fact this second reform is coming along nicely and will, I think, succeed. Not in any of the ways prescribed or predicted since all of these think of reform as the replacement of one word by another. What is happening instead, I judge from my own writing and the writing of students, is that we have learned to spot the ideological rock downstream and get past it by any one of half a dozen alternatives, including *they* and *he* or *she*, or a slight redirection of course.

The normal rules for the use of T and V create the possibility of expressive uses which break the rule to express emotions or attitudes. There is, for instance, the T of contempt, used to a person entitled to V. In *Twelfth Night*, Sir Toby Belch urges Andrew Aguecheek to send a challenge to Cesario: "Taunt him with the license of ink, if thou thou'st him some thrice, it shall not be amiss." One theory of how English came to lose its *thou* holds that *thou* was so much used to abuse and depreciate that it became impossible to use it *routinely* to people on any status level whatever.

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC UNIVERSAL

There is, finally, a sociolinguistic universal in the use of T and V which tells us something universal about social relationship. Remember, if you will, that T and V are abstract symbols for certain patterns of usage and do not represent any actual words in any language. The universal goes like this: If there is a form, call it "T" or call it "X", that is used symmetrically between equal-status intimates, and if there is a form, call it "V" or call it "Y", that is used symmetrically between equal-status strangers, and if these same two forms, "X" and "Y", are also used asymmetrically between unequals, then it is always the case, in the dyad of unequals, that the intimacy form "X" is used downwards and the stranger form "Y" is used upwards. The logically possible alternative for the asymmetrical pattern, "Y" downwards and "X" upwards is never found. Why should this be so?

There is one additional universal that seems to offer a clue. Relationships between adults normally begin with mutual V. Sometimes, with continued interaction and discoveries of likemindedness, acquaintances advance in intimacy, and mutual T comes to feel right. The question is who will initiate the change or make the suggestion that both

change? In German there is even a little ceremony called the *Bruderschaft.* One waits for a mellow occasion, perhaps with a glass of wine, and says: "Why don't we say T to one another?" One says it, but which one? The answer is unequivocal and seems everywhere to be the same. If there is any inequality of status, an advance of intimacy must be initiated by the superordinate: the elder, the nobler, the organizational superior. It was Freud who, after many years, finally suggested to his inner circle: "Why don't we say *du* to one another?"

We think that the invariant norm linking higher status and the extension of intimacy, as when a German professor says *du* and a student *Sie* or an American Professor uses first-name and a student uses title-plus-last-name, can be thought of as the initiation step in a frozen state. While frozen, and it may stay frozen for the life of the dyad, it represents the asymmetrical status pattern. It is not a disagreeable freeze because it looks for all the world as if the superordinate were offering the hand of friendly equality. Subordinates everywhere know, however, that it may not behoove them to grasp that hand right off and reciprocate with first name. Servants in 17th century France, though receiving T from their masters, were never to return it; African Americans in the South in the past, though called by their first names by Whites, were never to return the familiarity; American college students know that it is a delicate judgment when, if ever, to first-name any given professor.

The prescriptive rule that increases of intimacy should be initiated from above governs many kinds of behavior other than forms of address. Among Indian subcastes in Tamilnadu higher subcastes may give gifts of cooked food (a kind of intimacy) to lower subcastes but not vice versa. For American businessmen it is easier for a superior to ask for the loan of a comb from a subordinate than vice versa. There is the famous bridge party in *A Passage to India* when Mr. Turton, the chief British officer in Chandrapore, throws a party for high-ranking Indians — to bridge the gap between Indians and the Raj — but of course Indians were not free to invite him back, and the drama of the novel is propelled by one Dr. Aziz who, wanting to be friends with several English, invites them on an expedition to the Mirabar Caves. Finally, there is the *droit du Seigneur* or *Jus primae noctis* according to which the feudal lord had the privilege of the first night with the bride of any of his vassals. In *The Marriage of Figaro,* it is Count Almaviva's intention of exercising this privilege with Figaro's bride that creates the comic conflict.

Why should there be this particular rule for the development of familiarity between status unequals? It appears to be in direct opposition to social motivation. Status may be assumed to flow between unequals and so the junior member of a dyad of unequals should generally have more to gain from increased closeness than the senior member. Perhaps it is not too strong to say that the junior is always ready whereas the senior is not. Which is just why the rule must oppose the motivation. If juniors freely initiated moves to decrease distance, they might frequently experience rebuffs and that would create strain in the system, possibly even a move to deny status claims. The senior must be the Gatekeeper to minimize conflict.

Most of the work confirming the invariant norm has been done on Indo-European languages. All of these languages have second-person singular and plural pronouns

which can be traced back thousands of years to Proto-Indo-European roots, and the use of the plural as a singular of deference in the 4th century seems to have been copied by one royal court from another. It is possible, therefore, that the so-called universal norm is really only an invariant of Indo-European languages and can be fully accounted for by common descent without invoking a general hypothesis about familiar relations between status levels. Japanese, Chinese, and Korean are not Indo-European languages and have no history of common descent. They, therefore, constitute a good test of the universality of the invariant norm.

In all three Asian languages the norm seems, superficially, to fail and always for the same reason. For example, in Japanese, close friends, both male, may exchange a pronoun like *kimi* or *omae* or first names, and strangers may exchange the pronoun *anata* or else last name with the suffix *-san* and, between unequals, it is the case, as the norm predicts, that the intimate forms are used downwards. The problem comes with address upwards to kinfolk of ascending generations or superiors in an occupational hierarchy. The rule is, for Japanese, that no pronoun whatever and no proper name may be used, but only kin terms like *father* or *grandmother* and occupational or professional titles like *Mr. Section Chief, doctor*, or *teacher* (Akimoto, 1990). The forms used upwards between unequals (kin titles or occupational titles) are, in other words, not the same as any of the forms used reciprocally, and so the preconditions for the universal norm are not satisfied and the universality of the invariant norm is not tested in these cases and, in fact, not testable in the usual way. The usual test can only be used when a language uses two forms to express three things: intimacy, distance, and inequality, which is the case for T and V in Indo-European languages but not for the three Asian languages. However, Kroger, Wood, and Kim (1984) have found ways of testing the Asian languages, not for the T and V pattern, but for the hypothesized links among intimacy, distance, and inequality in address forms of any kind, and their results confirm the hypothesized universal. There are confirming results also from other non Indo-European languages, especially Egyptian Arabic and Dravidian Tamil (Levinson, 1982), and so the claimed universality of the invariant norm remains unchallenged.

If I may repeat, the norm is not a direct expression of universal social-psychological motives but a universal control on motives. A control easily lifted for convivial occasions like APA social hours, but when it is in place, as it usually is, it serves to minimize the conflict that familiarity with inequality can cause.

SOCIAL REGISTERS

I have called T and V, titles, and names forms of address, and that they certainly are, but in more careful sociolinguistic use they are called "referent relationals" and distinguished from "addressee relationals." A referent relational, like T or V or a title, in expressing the speaker's relation to some addressee must, at the same time, *refer to* the addressee. An honorific like "your grace," similarly, *refers* to the one it honors. Addressee relationals, properly so called, are another matter. The honorific, or elevated, speech styles, or levels, of Japanese, Javanese, and Korean express respect for the addressee without

referring to the addressee. Speech levels or styles are *ways of talking* which reveal the speaker's sense of his relation to the addressee without referring to the addressee; it is something like saying *residence* rather than *home, dine* rather than *eat, steed* rather than *horse.* All languages have referent relationals but only a few have well developed speech levels, and among these few are Japanese, Javanese, and Korean.

Honorific style in Japanese is to be distinguished from polite style and familiar style. Honorific style is the way to talk to people to whom one wishes to express special respect; polite style is usual style. Familiar style is for long-standing intimates, and the student of Japanese-as-a-second-language is sometimes advised that he need not learn to produce it because, as a foreigner, it will never be appropriate for him to use it. In Japanese the styles are distinguished from one another by lexical alternants such as *hito* which is neutral for *man* and *okata* which is honorific, *yaru* which is neutral for *I give* and *kudasuru* which is honorific. The styles are also distinguished by the prefixes *o-* and *go-* and the suffixes *-san* and *-sama* and by the verb ending *-masu* which, in regular ways, create honorific forms. And by much more.

In Javanese, the basic language is called *ngoko.* It is the level first learned in childhood and used throughout life with close friends or those of a lower social order and is said to be the language in which everyone thinks. Among higher levels of respect, the most important is called *krama. Krama* provides five-to-six hundred lexical variants for *ngoko* morphemes; for instance, *sega* is *ngoko* for *rice* and *sekul* is the *krama* alternative, *njupuk* means *take* in *ngoko* and the *krama* alternant is *mendhet.* It is difficult to be sure, but Javanese levels of respect seem to be more tightly constructed than Japanese styles in the sense of having stricter co-occurrence rules. Using the *ngoko* word for *take* entails using the *ngoko* word for *rice.* Stylistic combinations that violate rules, mixing words from different levels, would simply be uninterpretable in any social psychological way.

At first one thinks there is nothing in English at all comparable to the speech levels of Southeast Asian languages. However, the late Harry Levin at Cornell in recent years (Levin, Long, & Shaffer, 1981; Levin & Garret, 1990) made a good case for the existence of what he called a "formal register." The formal register in English is characterized by Latinate rather than Germanic words and, for Germanic words, low frequency, and by sentences having a difficult-to-process center-branching syntactic structure. It is, incidentally, interesting that "high style" in all the languages so far studied in this connection is more difficult in a language-processing sense than plain style. It is not learned early nor do all speakers attain the same level of competence. For especially skilled practitioners high style has an exhibitionistic and intimidating function (Smith-Hefner, 1988).

With our ears opened by Levin's research, we begin to notice the many uses of the English formal register. The heroine of Tennessee Williams's play *Summer and Smoke* is Alma Winemiller, a minister's daughter. Alma is Spanish for soul, did you know that, and this Alma is too soulful to win the man she loves and, in the last scene, falls so low as to pick up traveling salesmen. Williams characterizes Alma in part by assigning her a too formal register for every occasion, climaxing on a Fourth-of-July when she says to the young man she loves: "The pyrotechnical display is going to be brilliant but there really ought to be an ordinance forbidding firecrackers." *Pyrotechnical* and *ordinance* are

low frequency Latinate words, and Alma's young man says: "Do you know that you have a reputation for putting on airs a little bit . . . you have a rather fancy way of talking . . . pyrotechnical display instead of firework, and that sort of thing."

At the ceremony last year of installation, or should I say investiture or inauguration, for the new president of Harvard, someone said that the first such ceremony had been entirely in Latin and we all chuckled at the vanity of our forebears and dozed as speakers used words like *installation, investiture, inauguration, intellectual, taxing, rewarding, improvisation, affliction, governing*, and *convention.* In fact, the ceremony still is in Latin or, at any rate, it is so Latinate as scarcely to be English at all.

PERSON FORMS IN JAPANESE

The speech levels of Asian languages are distinct strata in ways that formality in English is not, but the existence of these strata is not the most interesting thing for the theory of a relational self. The interesting thing is that in using speech levels, the speaker must be attentive to the self and all that appertains to the self, must distinguish a group to which the self belongs, an ingroup, from all outgroups. The basic principle of Asian politeness is always to humble the self and elevate others. Within the Japanese family, father is both addressed and referred to deferentially as *otoosan* and mother as *okaasan* and elder brother as *oniisan.* Referring to these same persons to an outsider, the speaker must not use the honorific ingroup elevating forms but the humble forms, *chichi* for father, *haha* for mother, and *ani* for elder brother. If, however, the speaker refers to members of the outsider's family, then it is the honorific forms that must be used. When the ingroup is the business firm rather than the family, the same principle applies. An employer will use humbling expressions to refer to members of his own company to an outsider. On the telephone, even a very junior member will refer to department head *Mori* as *buchoo* (department head) or *Mori,* not the more deferential *Mori-san.* The examples I have given happen to be referent honorifics but the same principle applies to the full range of addressee honorifics. For the actions, thoughts, and possessions of the self, honorific forms are never to be used. And, so, to speak politely, it is necessary to have always in mind, the extended self, the self and its close connections, distinguished from others and the connections of others.

I once heard a Japanese linguist begin a lecture by saying: "I am 48 years old." This was her dramatic way of illustrating how much must be known about the other person and one's relation to that person before speaking. Am I, for instance, younger or older? An age difference of 15 years or so can affect the choice of a second-person pronoun in an Indo-European language which may have two or three such pronouns. Japanese has six and any difference of age can determine which of the six, if any at all, can be used. But the psycholinguistic contrast comes nearer the self than second-person pronouns. If I were speaking Japanese, I would not even know how to formulate the question "Am I younger or older?" without "placing" the addressee because there are six first-person pronouns. In view of my relation to the lecturer, and the fact that she is female and I am male, should I refer to myself as *watakushi, watashi, atashi, boku, ore,*

or, surely not, *wagahai.*

Probably I would use no first-person pronoun at all. If the lecturer has ever been a student of mine, even if it is now 15 years since she took her degree and even if she has become a very eminent scholar, she will still address me as *sensei* (teacher) and I, in speaking with her, will be entitled to use, and most likely use, *sensei* and not any first-person pronoun to refer to myself.

T and V, I have said, are strictly relational forms in the sense that it is not a property of a person to be always a T or a V, but one or the other, depending on the relation to the speaker. In Japanese, forms of self-reference are also, and in just the same sense, relational. The man who refers to himself as *sensei* to his students calls himself *otoosan* (or father) to his daughter, *oniisan* (or elder brother) to his younger brother, and to a neighbor's son, doing a little fictive kinship calculus, becomes *ojiisan* or uncle. It is as though the self were reconstrued, in each significant relationship, as a term in that relationship.

Dorinne Kondo, a Japanese-American anthropologist, in her book *Crafting Selves* (1990) writes eloquently about the effects of first-person reference in Japanese: "I never felt myself to be an autonomous freely operating individual. As a resident of a neighborhood, as a friend, a co-worker, a teacher, a relative, an acquaintance, a quasi-daughter, I was always defined by my obligations and links to others. I was always caught in webs of relationships . . . where relationships define one and enable one to define others. The epiphanal moment when I realized the lack of importance of any personal self apart from social obligations was perhaps the most eloquent in my experience . . . ."

Takao Suzuki, in his book *Japanese and the Japanese* (1978) draws equally strong conclusions: "Other-oriented self-designation is . . . the assimilation of the self, who is the observer, with the other, who is the observed, with no clear distinction made between the positions of the two. It is frequently pointed out that whereas Western culture is based on the distinction between the observer and the observed, on the opposition of the self versus the other, Japanese culture and sentiment show a strong tendency to overcome this distinction by having the self immerse itself in the other" (p. 145).

BEYOND LANGUAGE

And so we have arrived. The Japanese self is indeed relational in the sense of being thoroughly intertwined with others on the evidence of the structure of the Japanese language. And since the structure of Korean and Javanese are, in the relevant ways, the same, then we may conclude that Javanese and Korean selves are similarly relational. But — the seasoned and often-burnt student of language and thought must hold back. In the past, the evidence of language structure has not proved sufficient to establish psychological conclusions. Differences of color lexicon, strongly suggestive of differences in color perception, have turned out not to be correlated with color perception. Differences in numeral classifiers (between Navajo and English) strongly suggestive of differences in shape categories have turned out not to have such cognitive correlates (Brown, 1986). Differences between Chinese and English in the expression of counterfactual conditionals

irresistibly suggestive of differences in logical reasoning seem to be associated with just the same universal logic (Au, 1983; Bloom, 1981). The lesson is that language structure can suggest psychological hypotheses, but it is necessary always to test such hypotheses in direct psychological ways. How might that be done with the hypothesis that the Japanese self is relational and the Western self independent and individualistic?

Japanese terms of self-reference and address follow the lines of reciprocal roles: parent-child, teacher-student, elder brother-younger brother, husband and wife. Such roles are inherently relational. The prescription for playing the role of a parent is written in terms of behavior toward children, not only the linguistic behavior of self-reference and address but everything that goes into child-rearing and lifelong concern. And the child's role is similarly defined in terms of what may be expected from parents and what is owed to them. If the Japanese, more than Americans, seem to identify the self with the roles that the self plays, that would be evidence that the Japanese self is more relational than the American self. So, not to put too fine a point on a blunt thought, let both Japanese and Americans be asked to answer the question "Who are you?" some 20 times. If the Japanese more often respond with role terms — an elder brother, a third-year student at Tokyo University, a married woman — that would be evidence of a more relational self. What should be the contrasting American specialty? Nonrelational attributes — the very stuff, as it happens, of all the American instruments that purport to map the self-schema — I am: intelligent, fun-loving, conscientious, and so on and so on.

There is plenty of expert testimony that, for the Japanese, one's social roles are very close to one's self. Lebra writes: "Role commitment among the Japanese can be so strong that . . . the role becomes the core of the individual's self-identity. The incidence of suicide due to an error in role performance demonstrates that role can become identical with self or can come to represent all meaning in life" (1976, p. 85). Observers agree also that what has been called "role perfectionism" (Befu, 1986) and "role narcissism" (De Vos, 1973) is the principal component of self-esteem. The anthropologist Harumi Befu (1986) who created the phrase "role perfectionism" comments: "The Japanese commitment to a role is a commitment to do well against all odds. The implication is also that, no matter how lowly the role might be, it is worthy of a person's utmost efforts" (1986, p. 25). For Ruth Benedict (1946), the name for the same central theme was "taking one's proper station." One of her illustrations is unforgettable. The Japanese have a saying equivalent to our "neither fish nor foul." It is "He is neither elder brother nor younger brother."

There is also linguistic evidence of the centrality to the Japanese self of social role and role perfectionism, evidence in addition to the structure of self-reference and other-reference. There is, for instance, the suffix *-rashii* which may be added to nouns naming categories of human beings but which does not make sense with every such category. We have explored the uses of *-rashii* with native speakers of Japanese and learned that it makes perfect sense to say *onna* (woman) *rashii, otoko* (man) *rashii,* and *otokonoko* (boy) *rashii.* A woman who is *onna rashii* would be sweet, refined, and graceful; a man who is *otoko rashii* would be *majime* (serious), decisive, and strong; a boy who is *-rashii* would be energetic, lively, and sturdy. An elder brother could be *-rashii,* an aunt, a

policeman, but not, for instance, a stranger or an acquaintance.

What *-rashii* seems to mean is a model exemplar of a social role, the *real thing* as it were. This is an idea that we can express in English with one or another noun phrase construction. In Japanese, however, the idea has been grammaticized and in two instances lexicalized (*otokorashii, onnarashii*). This is a difference of codability and probably it means something. What it is likely to mean is that perfection in role performance is an idea more salient for the Japanese people than for Americans. As always, however, we cannot be sure without a more direct test.

Stephen Cousins, at the University of Michigan, has, in fact, made a first direct test (1989) by asking Japanese college students, in Tokyo, and American college students, in Ann Arbor, to answer the question "Who am I?" 20 times. Approximately 60% of American answers were psychological attributes whereas only about 20% of Japanese answers were attributes. Approximately 30% of Japanese answers were social roles and only about 10% of American answers. These results, as far as they go, confirm the hypothesis that the Japanese self is more relational than the American. There were, however, no significant differences between men and women of either nationality and so no support for the idea that women are more relational than men.

Several of us at Harvard, myself and Renée Oatway and Satohiro Akimoto, have done a "Who Am I?" study defining relational responses in a way that is closely linked with interpersonal language systems. Our results, obtained from the Japanese women only so far, are very close to those of Stephen Cousins. Japanese women respondents made twice as many relational-self answers as did Americans, and American respondents make four times the attribute answers given by Japanese. The specifics add interest to the general outcomes. Forty-two percent of the Japanese women specified their occupational positions in terms of school and year and 40% specified their family positions in terms of younger and older siblings. Very few American women "placed" themselves in either of these ways. In speaking Japanese, much hinges on these social positions; in speaking English, very little.

The most striking qualitative result to me was the complete absence from the self-characterizations of the Japanese women of what might be called the lexicon of independence; American women described themselves as "autonomous," an "individual," "self-motivated," a "free spirit," an "original," and, of course, an "independent woman." There are Japanese equivalents for all these terms but none, literally none, was ever used.

The "Who am I?" test is a simple way of operationalizing the relational self, but it does not contribute much to one's internal understanding. On that side I have learned the most from Junko Kaji (1993), who is not an anthropologist or a psychoanalyst, but an undergraduate concentrator in psychology at Harvard, and I will close by reading a few passages from her 1992 honors thesis "The Fragmentation of the Japanese-American Self."

"The conflict between my own Japanese and American halves is illustrated . . . by my understanding, or rather my misunderstanding, of two [basic] Japanese terms: *sunao* and *amae*. Since I grew up in a home where my parents and older sister spoke Japanese . . . I was exposed to these terms many times as I was growing up. However, I did not (and still don't) understand the concepts behind the words *sunao* and *amae* as they are