

Introduction

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Intersections

1. Introduction and thematic orientation

As the field of linguistic anthropology has grown, its practitioners have explored an ever more rich and varied range of sociocultural phenomena through the lenses of linguistic and semiotic analyses. The four articles that make up this second issue of *Language, Meaning, and Society* demonstrate the range of phenomena to which the sensibilities of linguistic anthropological analysis can be fruitfully applied.

In reading these four articles, I was struck by the clear and unambiguous intersections among the co-occurring and yet non-identical systems of meaning that inhere to the sociocultural phenomena that each of these authors explores. While the real-world phenomenon that each article treats is radically different from the other three – in one, the virtual world of the massively multiplayer online game *World of Warcraft*; in another, the *waynu*, a genre of traditional song composed and performed in Ancash, Peru; in another, a typologically unusual verbal inflectional paradigm in Tupi-Karitiâna, an indigenous language of south-central Brazilian Amazonia; and in yet another, the fundamental pan-human systems of sociocultural and linguistic categorization – these articles share an interest in making sense of the ways in which discrete systems of meaning

and/or valuation consistently intersect and interact in a particular domain. It is this commonality that gives us the theme of this issue of LMS: *intersections*.

2. Overview of this volume of LMS

Each of the four authors in this issue of LMS crystalizes for us readers the relevance and consequences of a particular intersection between systems of meaning and/or valuation in the phenomenon they tackle. Felix Julca-Guerrero brings to our attention the intersection of the Spanish and Quechua languages within a rich local tradition of expression, the *waynu*, in the highland region of Ancash, Peru; he then explores both the historical and expressive entailments of contact between these two languages in this specific domain.

Liz ErkenBrack brings to our attention the intersection of two simultaneous systems of valuation within the virtual world of World of Warcraft: one system, based on inalienable lived experience; and the other, based on alienable and transferable acquisition of emblems of experience; she then explores the ways in which these two systems of valuation intersect in both the 'virtual' and 'real' worlds of players in the United States and in Bolivia.

Caleb Everett reveals to us the interplay between a structural, or grammatical, understanding of the *na(ka)-/ta(ka)-* inflectional alternation in Tupi-Karitiâna on the one hand; and on the other hand, a socially-informed, contextually-situated understanding of the use of the paradigmatic alternation between these linguistic forms. He demonstrates for us the necessity of analyzing both the structural and the interactional behavior of this paradigm in order to arrive at a single coherent generalization of the meaning of these linguistic forms.

Matsumoto-Gray, departing from a much broader point of view, brings to our attention an analytical perspective, first articulated by Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, which roots

systems of linguistic categorization in antecedent, primordial systems of sociocultural categorization, thereby providing an alternative to the well-known theory that human linguistic capabilities result from an innate "language organ" or similar organic faculty. Matsumoto-Gray explores classifier systems in three languages in order to build further on Durkheim's and Mauss' original insights on systems of classification.

Let us now consider each of these points of intersection in more detail.

3. The intersection of Quechua and Spanish in Ancash *waynu* songs

In "Word Borrowing and Code Switching in Ancash *Waynu* Songs", Felix Julca-Guerrero examines the ways in which two very different languages, Quechua and Spanish, both co-exist and interact with one another within the genre of the *waynu*, a type of traditional song popular in the highland region of Ancash, Peru. Julca-Guerrero introduces us to *waynus* first as a single, widely recognized genre of expression with a particular rich history in Ancash; and subsequently through his own data set, an extensive collection of translated and transcribed *waynus* that use code mixing, code switching, and borrowing between Quechua and Spanish to express the set of themes and sentiments characteristic of the *waynu* in the Ancash region.

Julca-Guerrero elucidates the place and significance of borrowing, code switching, and code mixing in creating the artistry of the *waynu*, arguing that both languages are used in *waynus* to create particular poetic and expressive-communicative effects. At the same time, he links the tension between Spanish and Quechua in the specific context of the *waynu* to the larger social context that harbors gradual processes of language shift from Spanish to Quechua. He observes that Ancash *waynus* provide a fruitful domain in which to study language contact from grammatical, sociolinguistic, poetic, pragmatic, and socio-cultural perspectives, as he traces a

broader trend in language shift from monolingualism in Quechua to bilingualism in Quechua and Spanish, then to monolingualism in Spanish in the Ancash region.

4. The intersection of disparate systems of valuation in World of Warcraft

In "Communicative Commodity Forms: Meaning-Making in World of Warcraft", Liz ErkenBrack explores two systems of valuation within the virtual world of World of Warcraft, or WoW, a massively multiplayer online role playing game in which its players create characters that then interact with other players' characters in real time. The first system of valuation that ErkenBrack describes is the one built in to WoW, in which individual players invest substantial time and effort in the process of creating and animating a specialized character with specialized knowledge, specialized gear and an elaborate social network. ErkenBrack provides a detailed description of the mechanisms of the process by which a player acquire high level gear; she then illustrates for us the normative ways in which this high level gear signifies for players within the world of WoW.

The second system of valuation, parasitic on the first system, is one in which these specialized characters are bought and sold as commodities by real-world players of WoW, located anywhere in the world, through the medium of the internet. ErkenBrack argues that what the purchaser/player is buying, when buying a high level character that has been created by someone else, is "a *potential* experience that can only be had by acquiring a commodity fashioned by the labor-time of the vendor". She then argues that this second system of valuation impacts, and even undermines, the first system of valuation, within which most players operate and, importantly, within which most players expect all other players to operate as well. She notes, "The [character's] gear is diagrammatic, not just of the class and level of the character but

also of the normative behavioral patterns and time investment necessary to acquire the gear, thus even partial semiotic irregularity [due to having purchased rather than having created a character] is deemed undesirable."

Yet, in tension with this set of normative expectations is the fact that a cash economy thrives on the internet among players of WoW willing to create, or "farm", high level characters and those willing to pay well to purchase these farmed characters. Thus, these two systems of valuation are copresent, real, and durable – and, importantly, it is only the lived, shared experience of play that may reveal to any given player which of the characters accompanying him in the virtual world of WoW may be authentic and which ones farmed, sold, purchased, and assumed.

5. The intersection of grammatical and social systems of meaning in Tupi- Karitiâna

In "Tropic Extensions of the Speech Act Scene in Karitiâna", Caleb Everett examines the intersection between a structural analysis and a use-based analysis of a particular verbal prefix set in Tupi-Karitiâna (hereafter K.), an indigenous language spoken in south-central Brazilian Amazonia – an intersection that Everett argues was crucial for him in arriving at a single, coherent generalization about the use and meaning of this prefix set in his K. data set. Everett argues that while a structural analysis reveals the function of the *na(ka)-ta(ka)* prefix set in establishing the configuration of the Speech Act Scene in K., a contextualized, use-based analysis of these prefixes his data set reveals the principled deployment of these prefixes to convey a particular stance on the part of the speaker, a stance that extends and reconfigures the speech act scene to include non-first/second person referents with whom the speaker is aligned. Everett identifies this pragmatic extension as a *trope* – a metaphorical, non-literal use of linguistic

resources.

Everett begins by exemplifying for us that in most cases, these prefixes constitute an inflectional paradigm which marks a voice distinction relative to the 'speech act scene'. (The speech act scene in or for a given utterance is the set of speaker(s) and hearer(s) active in that utterance or strip of interaction; the first and second person referents). Structurally, or grammatically – which is to say, in decontextualized and decontextualizable utterances – the *na(ka)*- prefix is used to mark a 'non-speech act participant' as the endpoint of the action of the verb; while the *ta(ka)*- prefix is used to mark a 'speech act participant' as the endpoint of the action of the verb.

However, Everett then exemplifies tokens in his data set from naturally occurring discourse in which the *ta(ka)*- prefix is used for a third person referent – a use that is consistently considered infelicitous by speakers in decontextualized utterances. It is only through exploring the social and interactional contexts of these tokens that he is able to come to understand the felicitous, creative uses of these prefixes to convey a particular stance – one in which the speaker opts to 'tropically' incorporate into the active speech act scene a third person non-speech act participant with whom he or she is aligned. Everett's discussion and analysis effectively draw us with him to his conclusion that neither a structural nor a use-based analysis of the *na(ka)/ta(ka)*- prefix paradigm alone could yield a coherent generalization; each type of analysis requires recourse and reference to the other.

6. The intersection of cultural and linguistic category systems

In "Categorization: Connections between Language and Society", Katherine Matsumoto-Gray examines the similarities between processes of categorization in language and processes of

categorization in human cultures and societies. Using ideas first set forth by Durkheim and Mauss (1963 [1903]) on cultural classification systems, Matsumoto-Gray argues for a fundamental relationship between cultural and linguistic systems of classification and seeks a social/historical explanation for both systems.

Matsumoto-Gray begins her article by defining "classification" as "a symbolic system that allows people to sort their experiences with the world into groups which are distinct from each other." From that point of departure, she explores the similarities between the cultural classification systems identified by Durkheim and Mauss and the central qualities that she identifies with the categories that constitute the system of language: they are "arbitrary, abstract and immense". After outlining the analysis and conclusions set forth by in Durkheim's and Mauss' work on "primitive classification" in their 1903 publication of the same name, Matsumoto-Gray examines facets of the classifier systems in three different language contexts – Dyirbal, Jacaltec, and American Sign Language – which lead her to conclude that "uniquely human capabilities are not language specific, but human specific and may have developed out of societal structure."

Matsumoto-Gray concludes by summarizing her two main arguments: that "classification systems that are overtly marked in language and those that are not are essentially the same phenomenon" and that because "the nature of classification is symbolic" therefore "there must be a social origin for all ... classification". In this article, Matsumoto-Gray strives to align fundamental aspects of language and society with one another through the lens of categorization.