

Stereotypes and registers of honorific language

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ABSTRACT

Honorific registers are formally discrete but functionally stratified systems, in the sense that an apparently bounded set of linguistic forms allows language users to calculate many concurrent aspects of the pragmatic context of language use. This paper argues that native stereotypes about language structure and use play a critical role in formulating the pragmatic value(s) of register systems. The linguist can neither isolate the forms belonging to a register, nor explain their significance in use, independently of appeal to native stereotypes about language. The paper discusses methods for the empirical study and analysis of such stereotypes. Stereotypes that formulate the social identity of language users play a special role within register systems, grounding the significance of pragmatic acts in the attributes of pragmatic actors. Much of the discussion focuses on how such stereotypes are formulated and what their social consequences are. (Honorifics, pragmatics, metapragmatics, stereotypes, registers, deference, identity, Tibetan)*

Our idea that the people we meet have typifiable social identities, that they are members of certain “social kinds,” is a very LEAKY notion. Everyone potentially has many identities, and most people seem able to move readily among them. Our ideas about the identities of others tend to emerge when particular phenomena are objects of reflection, e.g., what people wear, what they do, and what they do with speech. Phenomena such as these – namely, characteristics of actors and their actions – are quintessentially pragmatic phenomena. Since our ideas about the identities of others are ideas ABOUT pragmatic phenomena, they are in principle metapragmatic constructs. In particular, such ideas are METAPRAGMATIC STEREOTYPES ABOUT PRAGMATIC PHENOMENA.

Such metapragmatic stereotypes are themselves of some pragmatic use to us: They are ways of “fixing” the variability of their pragmatic objects into static, typifiable categories of conscious awareness. Such essentializations or reifications are not only based on what others do; they also help us to deal with others, to do whatever we do with them or to them. In this sense, metapragmatic stereotypes about identity mediate between two pragmatic orders: the pragmatic phenomena that they

construe, and the pragmatic phenomena that they enable. The fact that such stereotypes are consciously grasped makes them culturally pre-eminent in certain ways: They become reportable, discussable, open to dispute; they can be invoked as social standards, or institutionalized as such; they allow (and sometimes require) conscious strategies of self-presentation; they serve as models for some individuals, counter-models for others.

My particular concern in this paper is with stereotypes regarding honorific language, including aspects of its structure, use, and users. I argue that metapragmatic stereotypes about honorific language REVALORIZE the pragmatic properties of such language, imbuing it with pragmatic values additional to the marking of respect or honor. For example, in all languages that possess elaborate honorific registers, some honorific expressions are said to be used only BY certain people or FOR certain people. Such stereotypes personify speech itself. They formulate signs of social identity by linking features of utterance-form with social categories of persons; at the same time, such stereotypes formulate social standards by which individual acts of language use are judged. Much of my discussion concerns how such stereotypes are formulated, and how they serve as frameworks for interpreting pragmatic acts. Stereotypes of persons are only one kind of metapragmatic construct associated with honorific registers, though this special case is of some concern – of great “personal” interest, as it were – to the language user.

This paper consists of six sections, followed by a conclusion. In the first two sections, I show that honorific registers are functionally stratified cultural formations that permit language users to calculate many aspects of the pragmatic context of language use. Such stratification is a direct result of the reflexive ability of language users to formulate stereotypic conceptions of the value of honorific usage. Given such overlays of value, honorific utterances are functionally overdetermined in pragmatic effect: They simultaneously implement distinct types (or “orders,” Silverstein 1996a) of social indexicality. Honorific stereotypes play a critical role in establishing such orders of indexicality, linking them to one another and making them interpretable in a concurrent fashion. I discuss the stratification of indexical value in the case of LEXICAL registers in particular, and describe the relationship between different types of indexical value in some detail.

In the middle three sections, I discuss a number of cases where different patterns of honorific usage are valorized and ranked in themselves, and stereotypically associated with different types of language users. I argue that, once language use is PERSONIFIED in this way, the value of language is NATURALIZED in the attributes of persons. Such processes of personification and naturalization equip social actors with culture-internal diagrams for reckoning the identities of interlocutors. In the penultimate section, I discuss the relationship of honorific language to stereotypes in general, and to status images in particular. In the conclusion, I summarize the implications of these issues for the study of honorific language.

THE TERM "HONORIFIC"

In one important respect the term "honorific" is misleading: The term describes how a speech variety is characterized by language users, not what the variety can be used to accomplish in usage. The phenomenon that the term "honorific" describes is itself a very leaky thing (Agha 1994). Honorific speech is not used only for paying respect or conferring honor; it serves many other interactional agendas, such as control and domination, irony, innuendo, and masked aggression, as well as other types of socially meaningful behaviors that native ideologies of honor or respect do not describe. The term "honorific" as used today by linguists and anthropologists is at least three-ways ambiguous (though as I argue below, the ambiguity is by no means accidental): We can make little progress in understanding honorific phenomena without distinguishing honorific DISCOURSE, honorific LEXICON, and honorific REGISTER at the very outset.

Discourse and lexicon

Honorific discourse of some sort occurs in every human culture. To speak of "honorific DISCOURSE" is to take a radically utterance-event perspective on sign tokens. Honorific utterances are typically accompanied by tokens of non-speech signs (such as gesture, dress, or bodily comportment of interlocutors) that frame the occurrence of articulate speech. In general, therefore, honorific discourse involves the real-time co-occurrence of both linguistic and non-linguistic signs. The term "discourse" is here, as elsewhere, no more than a convenient metonym: It describes a segment of speech tokens, contextualized by sign tokens in other channels. However, we can scarcely describe any stretch of discourse as "HONORIFIC discourse" unless we have recourse to some event/token-independent criterion of honorific value.

Every language contains some items that conventionally possess honorific value; for example, every language contains honorific titles. To this extent, every language contains an honorific LEXICON. However, such lexicons vary enormously across languages, particularly in terms of their grammatical range: Some languages differentiate honorific lexemes only in the grammatical domain of titles and terms of address; others differentiate distinct honorific forms for many parts of speech, including pronouns, nouns, verbs, and adverbs. If a language contains honorific forms in several word classes, multiple honorific lexemes typically co-occur in utterances; such lexeme co-occurrence has important consequences for honorific discourse in that language, permitting simultaneous deference to several individuals, valorization of speech levels, and other forms of indexical stratification, as discussed below. At the same time, the occurrence of honorific lexemes is generally CRITERIAL for identifying honorific discourse, i.e., for identifying a segment of discourse AS honorific in character. But how can the linguist identify honorific lexemes themselves?

Lexeme and register

Although some honorific expressions in every language have distinctive grammatical markers, every language also contains honorific items that carry no overt morphemic mark identifying them as such. Consequently, the only GENERAL method of identification available to the linguist is one that relies on the native speaker's metalinguistic ability to differentiate honorific expressions from the rest of the language. Empirically, the linguist has identified an honorific LEXICAL REGISTER when he or she is able to partition the total lexicon of the language into honorific and non-honorific lexemes in a way consistent with native metapragmatic evaluations.¹ Once identified, of course, honorific lexemes can be shown to have additional properties – including pragmatic values – that are not explicitly described by natives; this is a point I discuss in some detail below. Nonetheless, the linguist's IDENTIFICATION of lexemes of an honorific register relies on native ascriptions of pragmatic value as a criterion.²

The notion of “register” is an analytic construct devised by linguists to capture social regularities of value ascription by language users. Traditional discussions of register differentiation have always relied on the assumption that language users make “value judgments” (Halliday 1964) about language form, that they are able to express “evaluative attitudes towards variant forms” (Ferguson 1994). Yet explicit definitions of register, even by the same authors, have tended to neglect questions of value, defining “register” by contrast with “dialect/sociolect,” and grounding the distinction in contrasts between “situation of use” and “type of user” (Halliday 1964, 1978, Ferguson 1985, 1994). Such definitions are problematic in at least three ways. First, every occasion of use inevitably involves users (Gregory 1988:302); hence the traditional distinction is not formulated by appeal to mutually exclusive contextual variables. Second, language use does not merely REFLECT situations but helps CREATE them as well (Ure 1982:6); the question remains of why linguistic forms are linked with “situations” at all. Third, registers are “heteroglossic” phenomena, typically uniting several types of conventional pragmatic value:

One of the many methods people have for differentiating situations and marking their moods is to draw on (or carefully avoid) the “voices” of others, or what they assume those “voices” to be. The concept of register, then, although initially defined in terms of situation rather than person or group, in fact draws on cultural images of persons as well as situations and activities. (Irvine 1990:130)

It is not surprising, then, that the term “register” is sometimes used inconsistently by linguists (see Hervey 1992 for discussion of this point). I want to suggest that this diversity of metalinguistic opinion on the part of linguists is motivated, to an extent, by differences of metapragmatic opinion on the part of language users. It is not so much that language users disagree about the pragmatic values of language; rather, native metapragmatic stereotypes about pragmatic

values involve several semiotic phenomena, linked together within a register formation.

In the case of honorific lexical registers, for example, language users readily agree that certain lexemes mark relationships of respect, thus typifying speech as a marker of social RELATIONSHIPS. However, native accounts of the appropriateness of any particular usage inevitably appeal to the social identities of persons, in ROLES such as speaker-of, addressee-of, or referent-of the utterance. Since roles and relationships are correlative things, native descriptive practices involve a degree of leakage across correlative objects of metasemiotic scrutiny and characterization. Such leakage makes possible an important type of functional motivation: Stereotypes of respect (and other relationships between interactants) are used to MOTIVATE stereotypes of the identity of individual(s) who fill discursive-interactive roles. For example, the tendency to speak “respect”-fully toward others cross-culturally motivates stereotypes of the “respect”-ability of self. Such motivation shapes the significance of honorific usage, imbuing it with more than one type of value.

In one important sense, such shaping is inherently a re-shaping: Honorific language has properties that are independent of – indeed, inconsistent with – honorific stereotypes. To this extent, honorific stereotypes appear manifestly to simplify and distort independently identifiable features of honorific structure and function. At the same time, stereotypic (re)valorizations imbue language with higher-order pragmatic values, discernible as the effects of usage together with lower-order ones.

Native accounts that formulate stereotypes are thus not only an indispensable source of data for the linguist interested in social indexicality; they are, in themselves, partial and incomplete characterizations of the semiotic phenomena they describe. The linguist is able effectively to rely on such accounts only by being able to occupy analytic ground independent of such accounts. The use of several concurrent methods does not merely serve here (as it does in general) to overcome the limitations of each; it is the methodological basis for studying stratified systems of pragmatic value. In the following section, I turn to the question of how the linguist can distinguish such stratified systems of pragmatic value, returning to questions of the pragmatic uses of stereotypes in the subsequent sections.

FUNCTIONAL STRATIFICATION IN HONORIFIC REGISTER

Language users tend to regard linguistically motivated speaker stereotypes as *sui generis* phenomena, involving single-level relationships between language and people. I argue below that the apparent “rationality” of speaker stereotypes is motivated in part by the way they are naturalized in the non-linguistic semiotic practices in which speaker-actors engage. It is equally important to recognize, however, that speaker stereotypes are also motivated by efforts on the part of language users to rationalize features of LANGUAGE USE itself. Consequently, the

TABLE 1. *Honorific lexical register: A two-way partition of the lexicon, based on native ascriptions of stereotypic value to lexemes (Lhasa Tibetan).*

I. NON-HONORIFIC FORM	II. HONORIFIC (<i>šęsa</i> 'RESPECT') FORM
(a) <i>khö</i> 'you'	<i>khērāā</i>
<i>āma</i> 'mother'	<i>āma laā</i>
<i>qī-qĕĕ</i> 'teacher'	<i>qĕĕ laā</i>
(b) <i>thęp</i> 'book'	<i>chaa-thęp</i>
<i>qhaŋ-pa</i> 'house'	<i>sīm-qhāā</i>
<i>thi-wa</i> 'question'	<i>qālā-ti</i>
(c) <i>to</i> 'go', <i>chī</i> 'went', <i>yoŋ</i> 'come'	<i>phēē</i>
<i>sq</i> 'eat', <i>thūŋ</i> 'drink'	<i>chōō</i>
<i>ši</i> 'die'	<i>šāā</i>
(d) <i>tęē</i> 'give'	<i>nāā / phūū</i>
<i>lΔp</i> 'say, tell'	<i>sūŋ / šu</i>
<i>thi-wa thi</i> 'ask a question'	<i>qālā-ti nāā / qālā-ti šu</i>

linguist can find no analytic purchase on the formulated character of speaker stereotypes without recognizing the extent to which linguistic analysis itself relies on a variety of native stereotypes of language structure and use, nor without a recognition of what the limits on such reliance must be.

Lexical registers

Relying on native speaker's metalinguistic abilities, the linguist can construct paradigms of correspondences between honorific and non-honorific lexemes relatively early during fieldwork. In doing so, the linguist has differentiated a lexical register of honorific forms. An example, drawn from my own research on Lhasa Tibetan, is given in Table 1. The column on the right lists some honorific words, which native speakers characterize as belonging to the *šęsa* ('respect') vocabulary. The column on the left lists non-honorific words, which native speakers characterize as not *šęsa*. The word *šęsa* is a native term for the honorific register.

The left-to-right organization of the table reflects the way such paradigms are created. For any ordinary word in the language (let us call it X) the linguist can ask a native speaker a simple question of the form "What is the *šęsa* word for X?", thus proceeding to construct a bicolumnar paradigm of this type. Since the metalinguistic query employs a native term, the linguist can expect to be readily understood and easily answered. Paradigms like this are easy to construct during the course of fieldwork.³

Although such paradigms are useful analytic devices, they tend to obscure as many things as they reveal; for example, the bicolumnar organization raises the question of the exact way in which the forms on the left correspond to the forms on the right. But even if we leave aside this question for the moment, there are two

other issues, both of which are critical to the effects of *šęsa* lexemes in discourse: Not every speaker knows all the *šęsa* forms, and not all the *šęsa* forms work the same way in utterances. Let us consider each of these points in turn.

First, if we consider the IDENTIFIABILITY of honorific lexemes, we find that not everyone can identify all of them. Many speakers hesitate when asked for honorific forms of ordinary words. They say they don't know the honorific form, or that they are not sure about it. Knowledge of honorific lexemes appears to vary by demographic characteristics of speaker, e.g. birth, class, age, education, or profession. To this extent, honorific repertoires have a SOCIOLECTAL DISTRIBUTION. Such differences, not reflected in the bicolumnar "register" paradigm of Table 1, are critical to the way in which honorific forms are revalorized as markers of the social identities of speakers. Such processes of revalorization have formed the basis of many analyses of honorific registers (e.g. Geertz's 1960 account of Javanese honorifics as comprising "dialects" spoken by different social classes); yet the form such processes take has not itself been studied.

Second, if we consider the USAGE of honorific forms, we discover that not all honorific expressions work the same way in utterances. Different sub-categories of honorific forms mark respect toward different contextual variables, and in this sense belong to distinct functional classes. KNOWING THAT a particular word is a *šęsa* word and KNOWING HOW a particular *šęsa* word functions in utterances are two different kinds of knowledge. Native speakers can communicate the first type of knowledge easily enough, in fairly direct answers to questions (though not uniformly across social categories of speakers), but they have a much harder time describing the indexical effects of honorific lexemes in discourse.

Deference categories. The bicolumnar organization of Table 1 simply differentiates honorific and non-honorific lexemes, thus imposing a two-way functional differentiation on the lexicon. Note, however, that the bicolumnar organization is crosscut by an additional four-way grouping of word forms, (a)–(d). The honorific forms grouped here belong to four distinct classes of honorific lexemes, differentiated on the basis of their functions in discourse. More particularly, the honorific forms listed in Column II belong to four different indexical categories of DEFERENCE.

Deference categories constitute a distinct functional layer superimposed on forms having honorific function. Whereas forms of a language are identifiable as honorific in a purely item-based perspective on its lexicon, the question of what deference categories a language has inherently involves an utterance-based perspective on the use of such forms. For any honorific lexeme, we may ask: Which contextual variable is indexed as the focus of the honorific effect in use? Unlike the question used to differentiate lexical registers ('What is the *šęsa* word for X?'), this is a question that native speakers are not readily able to answer. Reliable answers to this require, instead, the use of traditional methods of grammatical and contextual analysis. Reliance on these methods by the linguist shows that

different classes of lexemes, though all identified as “honorific” by natives, actually index deference to distinct contextual variables in discourse.

Five such indexical categories are described in 1a–e below. The pragmatic phenomenon here at issue is a set of grammaticalized indexical categories: honorific lexemes of distinct grammatico-semantic classes, noted to the left of the arrows, project pragmatic deference to distinct contextual variables in usage, as shown on the right.⁴ Many of these categories are typologically widespread.⁵ I discuss examples from Lhasa Tibetan below.

(1) Grammaticalized indexicals of deference

GRAMMATICAL CLASS OF HONORIFIC LEXEME	CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES INDEXED
(a) human noun (e.g. pronoun, kin-term, title)	→ noun’s referent
(b) non-human noun	→ human being discursively associated with referent
(c) animate subject verb	→ topical referent (e.g. referent of subject NP)
(d) verbs of exchange (ditransitive)	→ actor’s deference to receiver, as evaluated by speaker (where “actor” is the referent of the agent NP, “receiver” is the referent of the dative NP)
(e) (various)	→ addressee of utterance

As noted in 1a, nouns that are semantically [+human] index deference to the noun’s referent. For example, the honorific noun *ama laà* ‘mother (H)’ – exemplified in Table 1 (a) – marks deference to the individual denoted as the ‘mother’ in the instance.

However, [–human] nouns – characterized in 1b, and exemplified in Table 1 (b) – do not mark deference to their referents *per se*. If a speaker speaks deferentially about a house (using the honorific form *sim-qhāā* ‘house (H)’), the typical construal is that the speaker is deferring to a person who is associated with the house in some way. Such association may be permanent (e.g. ownership of the house) or fleeting (e.g. a temporary stay in the house), or even hypothetical (e.g. an imaginary visit to the house). The discursive establishment of such association involves a graded series of default cases: (i) It may be established by the explicit denotation of the current utterance; or (ii) it may be presupposed thematically from prior discourse (e.g. from the entailments and/or implicatures of prior sentences); or (iii) it may be inferable from stereotypic beliefs about the noun’s referent (e.g. beliefs about WHOSE house it is).

Under 1c, we find that honorific forms of animate subject verbs index deference toward the topical referent of the utterance, namely the person being talked about (e.g. in the case of *chōḍò* ‘eat, drink (H)’, the one eating or drinking); cf. other examples in Table 1 (c). The topical referent is frequently identifiable as the referent of the subject noun phrase, though other topic-marking devices may also be used (see Agha 1993a:81–85).

In 1d, we have the class of verbs denoting transactions or exchanges (including verbal exchanges, e.g. *šū* ‘ask (H)’). For such verbs, the speaker projects a

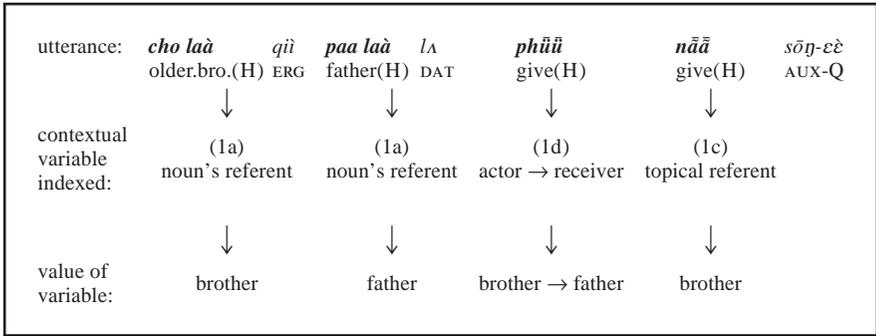


FIGURE 1: Multiple foci of deference in a single utterance: ‘Did older brother give [it] to father?’

deference relation as holding between the actor/doer of the action and the receiver of the action (i.e., in the case of *šü* ‘ask (H)’, from the one asking to the one asked). The “actor” and “receiver” referents are often locally identifiable from the verb’s arguments – the agent and dative arguments, respectively – although other, more globally text-dependent types of formal marking occur as well (e.g. recoverable null anaphora from argument position).

As noted earlier, ordinary Lhasa speakers can easily distinguish honorific and non-honorific lexemes in simple answers to direct metalinguistic queries. However, they cannot readily describe the differences among 1a–d. The linguist’s own ability to differentiate them requires recourse to the methods of grammatical and contextual analysis, methods with which native speakers are not generally familiar (unless, of course, they happen to be linguists as well). To this extent, native metapragmatic terminology (e.g. the term *šesa*) UNDERDETERMINES the semiotic phenomenon which it describes.

Honorific utterances. The fact that honorific lexemes differ in both indexical and grammatical values, as shown in 1a–e, has critical consequences for honorific discourse: Since honorific lexemes differ in grammatical value, several lexemes can co-occur in a single sentence; since co-occurring lexemes can differ in deference focus, different parts of an utterance may project deference to different people. The possibility of such fractionation of deference effects itself motivates secondary rationalizations, as well as stereotypic re-valorizations, on the part of language users.

The utterance in Figure 1 contains four honorific lexemes, all printed in bold-face. Each lexeme has a distinct deferential focus in discourse, specified by the indexical functions noted in 1a–e. The indexical focus of each lexeme is indicated by the vertical arrows.

The first two honorific expressions, *cho laà* and *paa laà*, are both kin-terms, semantically [+human], thus signaling deference to their own referents (cf. indexical function 1a). The two forms consequently project deference to the brother and father, respectively, however these may be identified in context. The third honorific lexeme in the utterance is the verb *phūū* ‘give, offer up, propitiate (H)’. Grammatically, the lexeme is a ditransitive verb of exchange. Indexically, the verb marks deference of type 1d, specifying a deference relation between denoted actor (in this case, the brother) and receiver of the action (the father). The fourth honorific lexeme, *nāā* ‘give, bestow (H)’, is the topic-deferring form of ‘give’ (cf. indexical function 1c), occurring here in a compound verb construction with *phūū*. The verb *nāā* marks deference to the topical referent of the utterance, in this case the individual identified as the brother.

Note, then, that the deference effects of the honorific expressions *cho laà* and *nāā* are referentially congruent in the utterance: Both mark deference to the same referent, namely the speaker’s older brother. However, *paa laà* signals deference to the father, not the brother; it is non-congruent with the other two in just this sense. Finally, *phūū* marks a more complex relation of deference than any of the others, that between the brother and the father. The four instances of deference are consistent with normative respect relationships between the three social dyads (speaker/older brother, brother/father, speaker/father). The utterance is a dutiful diagram of family relations.

Such examples illustrate a feature of honorific discourse that is commonplace across languages of the world: Distinct deference foci are indexically projected from SEVERAL lexeme positions in an utterance. The consistency of overall deference in discourse depends on the congruence of deference effects marked independently by several honorific lexemes.

Consequently, if an utterance contains a single honorific item, its overall deference effects may be locally unclear, or unconstruable. Such utterances do occur in ordinary usage, but they are often characterized by language users as defective in some way. Thus, in the honorific utterance in Figure 2(a), the deference effect of *sim-qhāā* ‘house (H)’ is locally unclear, particularly if the utterance is regarded in isolation, as a decontextualized sentence-token. Since the honorific word is semantically a non-human noun (cf. 1b above), its deference effect depends on discursive association with some honored person connected with the noun’s referent. However, the sentence does not describe whose house it is. A candidate honored person may be inferable by presupposition from prior discourse, or from independent knowledge about the house in question, but this candidate is not motivated by the sentence itself. Construing the focus of deference requires more knowledge of the context in which the utterance occurs than the sentence-token itself provides. For this reason, such sentences are often perfectly construable in natural discourse yet appear defective to native speakers in decontextualized reflection about language.

(2) Lexeme cohesion and “speech levels”: five ways of saying ‘Mother went to [the] house.’

	MOTHER	HOUSE-DAT	WENT	AUX	
(a)	āma	qhāṅpaa	chīī	sōṅ	} mixed degrees of honorific usage
(b)	āma laà	qhāṅpaa	chīī	sōṅ	
(c)	āma	sim-qhāā la	chīī	sōṅ	
(d)	āma laà	qhāṅpaa	phēè	sōṅ	
(e)	āma laà	sim-qhāā la	phēè	sōṅ	

No honorific words occur in 2a, but every available slot in 2e is filled by an honorific form; hence 2a and 2e are maximally cohesive instances of non-honorific and honorific speech, respectively. However, 2b–d intercalate honorific and non-honorific lexemes within the same sentence frame, exemplifying “mixed” degrees of usage in this sense.

As noted earlier, the term *ṣesa* ‘respect’ is used metalinguistically to differentiate lexemes belonging to honorific register. The same term is used metalinguistically to describe honorific sentences as well. A sentence may be characterized as *ṣesa* even if it contains only one honorific word; but sentences become better examples of *ṣesa* if there is greater register consistency in lexical choices. The most highly valued *ṣesa* sentences are those in which every possible slot is filled with a *ṣesa* word. Thus one of the ways in which metalinguistic practice exhibits a type of functional “leakage” is that the metalinguistic term applies to different kinds of linguistic objects, such as words AND sentences. Such leakage is not peculiar to the Lhasa Tibetan case. Uhlenbeck long ago described exactly the same type of leakage in the application of the Javanese metalinguistic terms *krama* (honorific) and *ngoko* (non-honorific), describing it as an “ambiguity” in native conceptions of language structure and use:

In order to be considered a KRAMA-sentence it is not necessary that the sentence contains only KRAMA-elements. The presence of one single KRAMA-word or KRAMA-morpheme in a sentence which otherwise contains only words neutral to the distinction KRAMA-NGOKO, suffices for characterizing the whole sentence as KRAMA. The ambiguity of the Javanese terminology reflects the important fact that a complete description of the Javanese forms of respect requires attention not only to their paradigmatic aspect, that is to the lexical-morphological relations between the various items involved, but also to their syntagmatic aspect, that is to their co-occurrence in the sentence. In the existing literature this requirement has not always been recognized. (Uhlenbeck 1970:442)

Such metalinguistic “ambiguities” appear to be extremely widespread across languages of the world. In fact, no native terminology for characterizing respect forms has thus far been described that seems systematically to discriminate the level of the word from the level of the sentence. This fact itself suggests that a native speaker’s metalinguistic grasp of semiotic phenomena is an inherently leaky thing. Such leakage across objects of metasemiosis is of central importance

to the way in which stereotypes of speaker identity are motivated within honorific registers.

Leakage across objects of metasemiosis: Stereotypes about words, sentences and speakers

Just as native metalinguistic usage exhibits leakage across words and sentences, it also exhibits leakage across sentences and speakers as objects of metasemiotic reflection. Native speakers frequently describe the difference among the alternatives in 2a–e as differences among **SPEAKERS WHO PRODUCE THEM**. In particular, people who produce the honorifically mixed sentences of 2b–d are said to be less “refined” than people who produce “pure” sentences like 2e.

If we consider such metalinguistic stereotypes, we see that talk about language has begun to involve people. Persons are not linguistic objects, and in this sense they differ profoundly from words or sentences. But aspects of personhood can nonetheless be **MOTIVATED** in relation to aspects of language. In such cases, two unlike things – aspects of language and aspects of people – are united together to form **SYNCRETIC OBJECTS** of metasemiotic scrutiny and characterization. In order to clarify how such processes of motivation work, we need to get clearer about the objects of metasemiotic activity. Both sets of considerations are summarized in Table 2, and discussed in the sections below.

Stereotype and object. As noted earlier, speakers of many languages use the same metalinguistic term to characterize both words and sentences. In Lhasa Tibetan, for instance, the term *ṣḡsa* ‘respect’ applies to both kinds of linguistic objects, as shown in Table 2, Column I. However, the metalinguistic sense of the term varies somewhat according to the object of metasemiosis, construing its object rather differently in the two cases.

The “respect”-fulness of **WORDS** is conceptualized in terms of a discrete, binary type of distinction: Native speakers say that words of their language are of two kinds, those that are *ṣḡsa*, and those that are not *ṣḡsa*. This is an ideological construct in its own right. The lexicon can, of course, be partitioned in this way; but once partitioned out, the *ṣḡsa* sub-lexicon can itself be shown to contain words that differ from one another in deferential foci (see ex. 1), as well as in gradient degrees of respect (see Agha 1993b:136). Nonetheless, the metapragmatic stereotype about words – that they come in two kinds – is a widespread and routinized cultural belief about the power of words vis-à-vis the question of respect.

The “respect”-fulness of **SENTENCES** is typified in gradient terms. When native speakers use the term *ṣḡsa* as a metalinguistic term for characterizing sentences of their language, they readily point out that some *ṣḡsa* sentences are more potent in their effects than others. Such sentence gradations correlate highly with degrees of lexeme cohesion. Since a sentence is a structure built, *inter alia*, through word concatenation, discrete contrasts of “respect” at the level of words – plus the

TABLE 2. *Functional leakage* (\Downarrow) and *iconic motivation* (\Leftrightarrow) across objects of stereotypification.

Objects of stereotypification	Stereotypes		
	I RESPECT	II PURITY	III REFINEMENT
(a) WORDS	“respect”-fulness of words (discrete)		
	\Downarrow		
(b) SENTENCES formed from words	“respect”-fulness of sentences (gradient)	\Leftrightarrow “purity” of sentence (gradable “speech-levels”)	
		\Downarrow	
(c) SPEAKERS producing sentence-tokens as utterances		“purity” of sentence token uttered by speaker (gradient)	\Leftrightarrow “refinement” of speaker (gradable essences)

GRAMMATICALLY free combinability of honorific and non-honorific lexemes – yield gradient distinctions of “respect” at the level of sentences.

Once “respect”-fulness becomes a gradiently applicable stereotype of sentences, such gradations are themselves susceptible to further stereotypification. It is important to see, however, that the occurrence of a larger number of *šęsa* words at the sentence level does not monotonically yield MORE “respect” toward someone. Rather, it generally implies a greater COHERENCE of the deference projected by the sentence, whether it be greater coherence along a single axis of relationship – e.g. speaker-to-mother, Fig. 2(b) – or greater coherence involving a network of relationships among several individuals, e.g. speaker, brother, and father in Fig. 1. Whereas words can discretely be evaluated for respect, or lack thereof, the “respect”-fulness of sentences involves gradient degrees of deferential coherence.

Perhaps because of this qualitative difference, differences between sentences are often stereotyped by appeal to notions rather different from “respect.” One common type of appeal involves notions of the “purity” of speech itself, as indicated in Table 2, Column II. For example, sentences like those in 2e and Fig. 1 are described as “purer” examples of “respect”-ful speech than sentences like 2b–d. Although all these sentences are gradiently instances of *šęsa*, 2e is more *šęsa*, or purer *šęsa*, than 2b–d. In more complex honorific sentences (e.g. multiclausal sentences), the number of slots in which honorific alternants can occur, and therefore, the number of rankable sentences, is very large. For such cases, it is possible to construct a cline of a dozen or more utterances that native speakers can discriminate and rank in terms of their honorific effects. Such differences are tantamount to differences in speech level.⁷

At the level of sentences, native metapragmatic awareness employs the gradient “respect”-fulness of its object of metasemiosis as a model or diagram for evaluating its “purity.” It is not merely that honorific sentences, once typifiable for inherent purity, become evaluable for speech level; it is also that evaluability for speech levels preserves the gradable structure of its model – namely, the gradient possibilities of “respect” coherence – in evaluations of “purity.” Gradations of “respect” coherence iconically motivate gradations of speech “purity.”

Stereotypes of honorific speech purity are not reducible to stereotypes of respect; they are partly modeled on them by analogy, but they involve other phenomena as well. Two differences are particularly worth noting. First, talk of the purity of honorific speech is based on stereotypes and standards concerning many linguistic phenomena other than the use of “respect”-ful words, e.g. pronunciation, speech tempo, and use of dialect variants. The cohesion of “respect” lexemes is only one among several semiotic variables that motivate cultural conceptions of the purity of honorific speech, even though it is central to the evaluation of sentences. Second, the “purity” of honorific sentences is typically rationalized by language users by appeal to SPEAKERS who utter them (Column II). I discuss several examples below. Such leakage across objects of metasemiosis is routinely accompanied by iconic motivation (cf. Column III): People who habitually utter purer

speech levels are stereotyped as more “refined”, and conversely, “refined” speakers are said to use purer speech levels.

Stereotypes of speaker are associated with honorific speech partly for reasons that have nothing to do with speech levels *per se*. A pervasive fact of honorific usage is that all members of society do not control the use of honorific expressions equally well. Some speakers speak with regional accents and idioms, even when speaking honorifically. Some speakers, e.g. members of aristocratic families, command larger lexical REPERTOIRES than others.⁸

Nonetheless, asymmetric command over speech levels itself serves as a diagram for reckoning social categories of speaker. In fact, in every community where the sociolectal distribution of speech styles is grasped by natives in terms of stratifying ideologies of value reckoning (style X is “higher” than style Y, which is “higher” than style Z, etc.), the stereotypic construct yields a higher-order system of demeanor indexicals derived from the lower-order system of deference indexicals. That is, given an asymmetric distribution of lexical repertoires and speech levels across social categories of speakers, patterns of other-directed deferential usage yield stereotypes of speaker-identity-and-rank that can themselves be scaled according to a hierarchy. Thus the act of speaking honorifically about others becomes laden with social meaning about oneself. In this way honorific speech becomes indexical of speaker status and demeanor.

Leakage and motivation. I have argued that the formation of stereotypes of speaker typically involves leakage across objects of metasemiosis, e.g. between word and sentence, between sentence and speaker. The importance of functional “leakage” has long been recognized as a principle correlative to the notion of systematicity in language (Sapir 1921, Silverstein 1981a). I have been talking about leakage across objects of metasemiosis in the following way: Native metasemiotic practice underdifferentiates semiotic phenomena – relative, at least, to our analytic differentiation of them (e.g. into words, sentences, and speakers). Such relative underdifferentiation is, of course, the very basis of the analyst’s view that native metapragmatic practice underdetermines the semiotic phenomena it construes. So, even though native speakers do not systematically distinguish the four phenomena in 3a–d, they are all analytically distinct, as I have argued above.

- (3) a. Deference indexicality: deference to REFERENT(S) and/OR ADDRESSEE of discourse (see 1a–e).
- b. Lexical register: a stereotypic repertoire of inherently “respect”-ful WORDS (see Table 1).
- c. Speech levels: ranking of SENTENCE “purity” by implicit criteria of lexeme cohesion (see 2a–e).
- d. Speaker stereotypes: e.g. ranking of SPEAKERS by criteria of lexical repertoire size and sentence purity (see Table 2, and discussion below).

Whereas native speakers underdifferentiate distinctions of deference (cf. 3a), they have no difficulty reporting the existence of a register of honorific lexemes (3b).

Thus pragmatic effects that are motivated by grammatical and indexical value, and that are interpretable only in contextualized discourse, are believed to be inherently – or essentially – properties of words. Such essentialism transforms the value of language. Once words are regarded as valued cultural commodities in themselves, patterns of word usage motivate additional ideological constructs, such as speech levels (cf. 3c). Here again, the contextual underpinnings of speech-level distinctions (i.e. that lexeme cohesion motivates deference coherence) are not grasped as such; rather, speech levels are described by appeal to distinctions of sentence “purity.”

Notions of word “respect” and sentence “purity” motivate stereotypes about speakers (cf. 3d). The formulation of speaker stereotypes construes language as a commodity possessed by people. Such stereotypes are based on a simple type of gradient iconism: Those who command LARGER repertoires of the lexical register and those who speak in the PUREST speech levels are stereotypically regarded as having the most refined and statusful personas. Thus attributes of one object of metasemiosis (speaker) are derived by iconic motivation from properties of others (lexical repertoires, speech levels).

Once they are available as valued cultural commodities, speaker stereotypes are regarded culture-internally as single-level semiotic relationships between features of language and properties of people. Yet the foregoing analysis shows that their cultural reality depends on relationships across several semiotic layers, each providing at best a partial motivation for any other. But the logic of seriated motivation is such that “other”-focused deference to referents or addressees (in 3a) is revalorized as a system of “self”-focused speaker indexicals (in 3d).

Given such social processes of valorization, particular honorific utterances (which CONCURRENTLY involve speakers, referents, addressees, words and sentences) are OVERDETERMINED in pragmatic value. An honorific utterance becomes a semiotic event that permits the calculation of many aspects of its pragmatic context.

Honorific utterances are overdetermined in pragmatic value precisely because language users are able to take a reflexive perspective on language itself, seeking to rationalize its properties in relation to the rest of social life. I want to turn now to a discussion of how users of a language go about “finding some motivation” (Silverstein 1996b:294) for features of language use in relation to other semiotic constructs. One of the ways in which functional leakage is relevant to acts of finding motivation in this sense is that it is part of the preparatory conditions of such acts: Functional leakage between language and non-language (as distinct objects of metasemiosis) is a pervasive, in many ways ineluctable, process, not entirely under the control of language users. Nonetheless, it is a process over which language users routinely seek to exercise some control. Such effort is best exemplified in cases where language users con-

sciously and strategically engage in the metapragmatic activity of describing the pragmatics of speech.

METAPRAGMATIC NARRATIVES

When language users describe honorific usage, they often formulate extended narratives about the uses of honorific forms. Such narratives are peopled by social beings of different kinds. They describe social personae as engaged in pragmatic acts of language use. In such types of metasemiotic work, the boundary between language and non-language is erased, yielding stereotypic constructs that motivate one in terms of the other.

The rhetorical success of such acts of stereotype production itself depends on several features of narrative form and content. One difference involves the POSITIONING OF THE NARRATOR'S SELF in relation to the social personae described and motivated through evaluations of speech: Are the narrator's own speech habits explicitly invoked? Or is the speech stereotype objectualized in an impersonal way? A second difference involves the LOGIC OF MOTIVATION: Are current utterances held up as emblems of identity? Or are attributes of people used to motivate the appropriateness of utterance-form? A third difference involves the NARRATIVE TRAJECTORY of such descriptions, particularly their topic/comment structure: Is utterance-form the narrative topic when an identity stereotype is produced? Or is identity itself topical (and an honorific form part of the comment) within the narrative "plot"? A fourth difference involves EXPLICITNESS: How explicitly is one semiotic phenomenon used to motivate another?

Some common genres of narrative activity

One common type of metapragmatic narrative is a type of egocentric reckoning of social identity that motivates self-and-other differentiation relative to patterns of language use. Such metapragmatic discourse construes differences of speech habit as EMBLEMATIC OF DIFFERENCES IN IDENTITY, employing language to motivate differences in social identity. For example, when Lhasa speakers are asked to comment on the acceptability or appropriateness of sentences that appear marginal by speech-level criteria, the most common rejoinder is that such sentences would never be uttered by "pure" Lhasa Tibetan speakers, even though foreigners (like myself), or children, or people from Kham might speak like that.⁹ But although foreigners and children have their uses in such accounts, they are imperfect "others" from the point of view of the task of self-differentiation: They are "others" either completely, or only temporarily. By contrast, people from Kham, or Khampas, are indigenous people who are permanently available as semiotic scapegoats, and are routinely employed in this capacity in metapragmatic accounts.

Thus the metapragmatic report in 4 was offered to me on an occasion when I asked a native speaker if he would use a particular honorific construction, one

that I knew to be normatively defective. My query made speech norms topical; the respondent commented by appealing to social identities:¹⁰

- (4) Explicit egocentric motivation of identity from speech

ŋatso fītees sī-qi-ma-reè, khampa sī-qi-reè.
 we like.this speak-NZR-NEG-AUX Khampa speak-NZR-AUX
 'We wouldn't talk like that, [but] Khampas would.'

The response here consists of two parallelistic clauses distinguishing the speech habits of the respondent's social group (unnamed, but indexically referred to as 'we') from those of a non-'we' or "other." Since the "other" is named by the ethnonym *khampa*, the indexically centered self is contrasted with an explicitly named other to whom defective speech is ascribed as a habit. The narrative trajectory thus moves from an isolated utterance (the topic of my query) to people and their speech habits. The speaker, along with the unnamed group in which he is indexically centered, is now typified as norm-upholder. The pragmatic success of this typification depends on constructing a metapragmatic order of self-and-other that is hard to call into question. The 'we' is not explicitly named, and the way in which Khampas actually speak is, in a sense, irrelevant, since there are no Khampas copresent who will speak for themselves.

Acts that explicitly PRESCRIBE appropriate usage to others form a second genre of metapragmatic discourse. Such prescriptions are addressee- or audience-centered, rather than egocentric. They appeal to entire discursive-interactive events, whether real or imagined, as objects of metasemiosis. For example, when parents correct the use of honorifics by children, such metapragmatic prescription indexically presupposes the social identity of the current addressee (i.e. the child); and it explicitly mobilizes this identity in imaginary scenarios of language use, in which the child is transposed to role of narrated speaker (e.g. 'You shouldn't speak like this to her!'), or to roles of narrated addressee and narrated speaker in different clauses ("Who told YOU to speak like that?") Such prescriptive discourse locates a current interlocutor (i.e. the child) in narrated scenarios of language use. The scenarios depict the (in)appropriateness of particular speech forms, relative to configurations of role identity, in highly explicit ways.

In a third metapragmatic genre, the appropriateness of speech to identity is left highly implicit. Here named social beings are described as engaging in encounters in which particular linguistic forms are exchanged. A narrated speech segment is formulated as appropriate to such interlocutors in such accounts. Yet the CRITERION of appropriateness is never made explicit.

The example below was offered to me by another consultant, TT, with whom I was discussing evidential constructions in the language. The discussion took place in Los Angeles. At that time, TT and I had never discussed either the structure or the use of honorifics in the language. Just prior to TT's utterance, we had been discussing the Lhasa Tibetan gnomic evidential, a construction used to talk about general truths. After completing a round of discussion, TT spontaneously

offered the imaginary scenario in 5 for the use of a NON-HONORIFIC evidential utterance. The Tibetan utterance is the last segment of 5, and is glossed in 6 below.

(5) Implicit and decentered typification of speech in terms of identities:

TT: That's very much the situation. Let's take another example. Maybe Ṭḷṣiṣi's been here many years in America. So we were discussing. Maybe you thought maybe Ṭḷṣiṣi doesn't know anything to talk about Tibet. *qhō lA phöō qor lA qĕĕ šīŋ-qi yōōmaareĕ.*

In prior talk, TT and I had been using the proper name Ṭḷṣiṣi to refer to an imaginary speech participant whose identity changed several times to suit our purposes during the course of discussion. In the new example that TT introduces here, Ṭḷṣiṣi is described as a Tibetan who has been living in America for many years. He is, by implication, a person easily regarded as somewhat distant from his cultural roots.

With the social identity of topic now established, the event of speaking about Ṭḷṣiṣi is itself introduced by two explicit framing devices. The first one explicitly introduces the participants of the speech event: "So we [i.e. you and I] were discussing [Ṭḷṣiṣi]." ¹¹ This frame restricts the roles of speaker and addressee in subsequent talk to either TT or me. The second frame "Maybe you thought . . ." explicitly imputes a viewpoint to me – namely, "Ṭḷṣiṣi doesn't know anything to talk about Tibet." This imputed viewpoint is propositionally identical to the Tibetan sentence that follows it, as its gloss in 6 makes clear.

(6) *qhō lA phöō qor lA qĕĕ šīŋ-qi yōōmaareĕ.*
 he DAT Tibet about DAT speech know-NZR NEG.GNOMIC
 'He hasn't anything knowledgeable to say about Tibet' (non-honorific)

The parallelism of propositional content between (i) the thought explicitly imputed to me and (ii) the Tibetan sentence that follows the imputation makes it clear that the Tibetan sentence in 5–6 is one I am supposed to have uttered. The parallelism of content is a third, albeit implicit, framing device stipulating that I am the individual filling the role of speaker of the Tibetan utterance. By residual implication, TT himself is cast in the role of addressee of my speech. The Tibetan utterance is metapragmatically decentered in two important ways, and both types of decentering are critical to its enacted pragmatic effects. First, it is produced by TT but represented as my speech, and hence decentered with respect to participant role inhabitation: Its speaker and addressee are specified by reversing current role inhabitation. Second, it is decentered vis-à-vis the specification of non-participant topic: Ṭḷṣiṣi, the person anaphorically referred to by *qhō* 'he (NH)', is not just non-copresent; he is an imagined persona created to serve a temporary purpose.

The Tibetan utterance that I am supposed to have uttered contains no honorific items. The Bakhtinian "voice" I am given is one that does not defer to Ṭḷṣiṣi. Since Ṭḷṣiṣi is a made-up person, his social identity consists solely of two attributes: He lives in America, and is not knowledgeable about Tibet. My imputed lack of deference to him is explicitly contextualized by these attributes. We cannot, of

course, say WHY TT chooses a non-honorific utterance to represent my talk about ṬAŠİİ – only THAT he imputes a non-honorific utterance to me in talk about a culturally alienated person bearing that name.

Such metapragmatic narratives do not construct stereotypes about social persons; they typify speech as appropriate for people. They formulate the appropriateness of (narratively rhematic) speech-forms for speaking of (narratively thematic, already typified) persons-and-settings. Characteristics of persons and settings are, at best, indexically presupposed by the utterances deemed appropriate to them. Such presuppositions are always cancelable in later talk, in the sense that the narrator can always deny that any given, indexically presupposable aspect of the setting was criterial for producing the utterance-form at issue. Unlike the prescriptions noted above, metapragmatic narratives of this kind come cheap in the sense that they pose little risk to the authority of the narrator.

An extended example

In extended discussions about honorific usage, language users often move among several types of metapragmatic motivation, frequently embedding the results of subsequent talk in results already achieved. The examples presented in 7–15 below are contiguous segments of talk between myself and DW, a Lhasa speaker in his thirties. In these examples, the activity of finding a motivation between speech and identity consists of tacking back and forth across distinct objects of meta-semiosis – from speech to identity, and back again to speech – in ways that cumulatively reinforce each other across distinct phases of the conversation.

Before the segment in 7 began, DW and I had been talking about deictics; the topic of conversation turns to honorifics only because of DW’s intervention. The segment in 7 begins with my inquiring about a sentence involving the deictic *yaneè* ‘from up there’ (in line 1). However, my example sentence contains an honorific subject (*qhōō* ‘he (H)’), and a non-honorific verb (*yōŋ* ‘come (NH)’), thus constituting a “mixed,” lexically non-cohesive example.

(7) Explicit metapragmatic prescription:

1. AA: if I say *qhōō yaneè yōŋ sōŋ*
2. DW: uh hunh
3. AA: right? meaning ‘he came from up there’
4. DW: uh hunh
5. AA: right? ... or if I say ... uh
6. DW: actually when you when ... this is [sli– slight correction in a way
7. AA: [yes ... yes yes ... yes
8. DW: when you say *qhōō* ... that’s a honor[ific
9. AA: [honorific,
10. so you don’t say, [so *yōŋ, phēè* ... *phēè*
11. DW: [*yaneè yōŋ sōŋ*
12. y– you won’t [say that
13. AA: [right, right, right ... *qhōō yaneè phēè sōŋ*

DW initiates a prescriptive correction in line 6, pointing out in line 8 that the subject, *qhōō* ‘he (H)’ is honorific, and in lines 11–12, that it is inappropriate with

the non-honorific *yaneè yon sōn* ‘came from above (NH)’. Meanwhile, I hastily initiate self-repair in lines 9–10, and in line 13 I offer the more lexically cohesive alternant *qhōō yaneè phēè sōn* (*phēè* is ‘come (H)’; the adverb *yaneè* and the auxiliary verb *sōn* have no honorific forms). During the course of this repair, however, I make a metapragmatic claim about my own lexically non-cohesive example. The claim links users to usage (“so you don’t say . . .,” line 10), and is echoed by DW’s “you won’t say that” in line 12. This raises the question, however, of just who does, or does not, speak in this fashion.

This is the question that DW begins to explore in lines 14–22. After saying “yeah” in line 14 (thus ratifying my repair of line 13), DW offers two types of imagined scenarios for mixed usage in quick succession – one in which such usage would be all right (lines 16, 18), and one in which it would invite ridicule (lines 18, 20).

(8) Explicit remotivation:

14. DW: yeah, and a lot of times if
 15. AA: right
 16. DW: if we are kids [or something we’re talking about
 17. AA: [uh hunh uh hunh
 18. DW: then it doesn’t matter, but if you’re grownup and have a sense
 [of honorific things
 19. AA: [sure sure sure sure
 20. DW: then if you say *qhōō phaneè yon sōn* they will laugh
 21. AA: right right right right
 22. DW: sort of like a funny

The first scenario itself describes two imaginary settings in order to motivate the acceptability of an already instanced (now, thematically presupposed) speech alternative, namely the mixed usage referred to anaphorically by “it” in line 18. The occurrence of mixed speech IN THE SETTINGS NOW DESCRIBED is evaluated metapragmatically by the predicate “doesn’t matter” in the same line. These two new settings are described disjunctively in line 16, as either the setting in which the interlocutors are children (“if we are kids”), or the setting in which the topic permits such talk (“or something we’re talking about”). Since both settings are described by modalized predications around the pronoun “we” in line 16, the imaginary settings are indexically linked to the current interaction involving DW and myself, yet peopled by characterized alternatives to our situation, involving interlocutors explicitly distinguished from ourselves (cf. “kids”), or some inherently casual topic (“something we’re talking about”).

The second type of scenario is introduced as the obverse, “grownup”/“honorific things” case in line 18. In the ensuing evaluation, the direction of motivation is from a non-speech setting (“if you’re grownup and have a sense of honorific things”) to a speech-event occurring in it (“then if you say *qhōō phaneè yon sōn*”), and is evaluated by a different metapragmatic description – “they will laugh” (vs. “it doesn’t matter”). The setting in which “you” engage in mixed usage is now peopled by a “they” who find such usage ridiculous. This raises the

question of just who is typified by the “you” and the “they,” since the first of these imagined beings bears a problematic relationship to myself (I am grownup, but may or may not “have a sense of honorific things,” being a foreigner), and the “they” is not typified at all.

The picture of speech practice that DW and I have been co-constructing now receives a further complication. I now claim that I have met two kinds of Tibetans: those who are consistent in their non-honorific usage (line 24) as well as in their honorific usage (line 26), and those who “mix up the two” (line 32), using the honorific *qhōō* with the non-honorific *yōŋ* (line 34). DW ratifies the existence of both types of Tibetans but proceeds to ground the identity of the latter in geographic locale (lines 37, 39), narrowing it finally to Kham (line 41).

(9) Rebuttal and reidentification

23. AA: you know this is a sort of funny thing because among some of my uh ... Tibetan
 24. speakers they alw- always say *qhō* with *yōŋ*
 25. DW: uh hunh
 26. AA: and then *qhōō* with *phēè*
 27. DW: right
 28. AA: right?
 29. DW: uh hunh
 30. AA: but then I also met a lot of people
 31. DW: uh hunh
 32. AA: who mix up the two ... right?
 33. DW: right
 34. AA: they will say *qhōō* with s- *yōŋ*
 35. DW: right [sure
 36. AA: [as a kind of intermediate level of respect
 37. DW: right, this ... this comes in that ... like a ... into the ... a northern
 38. AA: yes
 39. DW: part of [Tibet
 40. AA: [I see
 41. DW: like say in a Kham
 42. AA: Um hmm

In the next segment, DW begins to characterize what happens when Khampas speak Lhasa dialect in conversation with Lhasa speakers. Although such speakers engage in “Lhasa dialog” (line 45), they reveal their identity as Khampas by the fact that they speak “with the strong Khampa accent at the same time” (line 49); moreover, “a lot of times” Khampa speech contains utterances that are mixed with respect to speech level (lines 53, 55).

(10) Personification of mixed usage as Khampa speech:

43. DW: and when you meet Khampas
 44. AA: yes
 45. DW: uh ... they speak uh [Lhasa dialog
 46. AA: [yes
 47. DW: right?
 48. AA: yes yes
 49. DW: but with the strong Khampa accent [at the same time
 50. AA: [yes yes yes
 51. DW: and then ... they talk .. they they use honorific [uh words
 52. AA: [yeah

53. DW: but lot of times they would say *qhōō* གཤམ་པའེེ
 54. AA: uh hunh
 55. DW: or maybe uh ... *khērāā sḡ*
 56. AA: uh hunh
 57. DW: meaning that ... please ... *khērāā chōō tāā*
 58. AA: uh hunh
 59. DW: meaning its honorific [like *khērāā chōō* meaning
 60. AA: [uh hunh uh hunh
 61. DW: like please have some
 62. AA: right right right ... but except they're say[ing
 63. DW: [but then
 64. AA: *khērāā sḡ*
 65. DW: yeah ... but then you would say *khērāā sḡ*
 66. AA: ah hanh hanh hanh
 67. DW: and they will use all the words together, honorific
 68. AA: right right
 69. DW: but that does not mean that they don't respect, [or
 70. AA: [yes yes
 71. DW: didn't give the honors
 72. AA: right right right
 73. DW: but somehow
 74. AA: yes
 75. DW when Khampa speaks
 76. AA: yes yes yes
 77. DW: and everybody understands [that they will speak that way
 78. AA: [yes ... yes yes
 79. DW: it's acceptable to everybody (laughter)
 80. AA: yes yes (laughter)
 81. DW: you know
 82. AA: right right right

In line 55, DW represents a Khampa speaker as saying *khērāā sḡ* ['you (H) eat (NH)'], but represents his "meaning" in line 57 as "please ... *khērāā chōō tāā*," using both English and Tibetan in the gloss. In line 59, DW evaluates the Khampa's utterance as "meaning its honorific," likening its meaning to the meaning of a purer Tibetan utterance ("like [the] *khērāā chōō* ['you (H) eat (H)'] meaning"), and then again in line 61 to ITS English gloss ("like please have some"). The Tibetan glosses that DW provides in lines 57 and 59 are maximally honorific representations of the "meaning" of the Khampa's mixed usage in DW's own honorifically purer speech. Since DW is a self-identified Lhasa speaker, DW's metapragmatic activity suggests that a Khampa's saying *khērāā sḡ* is like a Lhasa speaker's saying *khērāā chōō*. The analogy drawn here is not an analogy between two types of persons, or two types of speech, but between two types of PERSONIFIED SPEECH.

To see this, we have to note that DW typifies Khampa speech by appeal to two features of utterance form: The first is explicitly described as "the strong Khampa accent" (line 49), which indexes that the speaker is Khampa; the second is the mixed usage, attributed to the Khampa both by enacting an honorifically mixed utterance as his speech (lines 53, 55), and then by explicit description ("they will use all the words together, honorific ..."; line 67). Both cues serve jointly to PERSONIFY mixed usage as Khampa speech. However, the utterances DW uses to

GLOSS the Khampa's speech are lexically cohesive by register criteria. They are implicitly personified as Lhasa speech by the fact that DW is a self-identified Lhasa speaker.

The Khampa's mixed-honorific-speech is now a syncretic object of metasemiosis that unites aspects of speech with aspects of personhood. It is a stereotype of personified speech. It is a stereotype only to the extent that "everybody understands that they [= the Khampas] will speak that way" (line 77). The stereotype itself mediates the relationship between a personified speech event ("when Khampa speaks," line 75) and its cultural value ("it's acceptable to everybody [laughter]," line 79). The value of the Khampa's mixed honorific speech for the Lhasa speaker is that such speech is not only "acceptable" as what Khampas do, it is also a little ridiculous to the Lhasa ear.

The most interesting thing about "Khampa speech," it turns out, is that Lhasa speakers use it as well. But they use it to make jokes, as DW goes on to explain.

(11) Khampa speech as the language of Lhasa jokes:

83. DW: so ... and nowadays like uh younger ... kids
[and things like that, younger generation]
84. AA: [uh hunh]
85. DW: they ... sometimes they know
86. AA: un hunh
87. DW: how the words has to be used
88. AA: un hunh
89. DW: but they play around with it, joke [around with the words]
90. AA: [uh hunh uh hunh]
91. DW: sometimes you know
92. AA: uh hunh
93. DW: like ... *khērāā* ... *khērāā* ... *khērāā* *sā tāā*, *khērāā* *sā tāā*
94. AA: uh hunh
95. DW: they would say that
96. AA: right right right
97. DW: just jokingly
98. AA: right right right

The mixed usage has already been typified as humorous ("sort of like a funny," line 22); it has been re-typified as "Khampa speech" (lines 43–82), and evaluated as "acceptable" but humorous to the Lhasa ear (line 79). These typifications support the view, now worked out in lines 83–98, that when such mixed/funny/Khampa speech is used by Lhasa speakers, it counts as an objectualized language of jokes. However, not all Lhasa speakers are said to use it: Its users are typified as "younger kids" (line 83) who may even know correct Lhasa usage (lines 85, 87). The language they use is, of course, an extraordinary language in that it has extraordinary effects: It counts as a joke.

But this extraordinary vernacular somehow seeps into the mundane, becoming a type of "daily usage" as well.

(12) Leakage again:

99. DW: and then somehow sometimes it becomes, you know
100. AA: yes

101. DW: daily usage
 102. AA: yes yes yes
 103. DW: at the same time (laughter)
 104. AA: (laughter) so people sometimes do use it in a daily usage as well
 105. DW: ye[ah
 106. AA: [even ordinary people who are not Khampas?
 107. DW: right, ordinary people use it

By the end of this segment, DW agrees with me (lines 106–7) that such daily usage is practiced by ordinary people as well, by people who are not Khampas. But these are ordinary people who, as he goes on to tell me, are either “quite friendly” (line 113) or “have a good relationship with each other” (line 115). They are personified as intimates of some sort.

(13) Remotivating speech and identity – the intimacy of dyads:

107. DW: right, ordinary people use it
 108. AA: yes
 109. DW: but when they use it
 110. AA: yes
 111. DW: uh ... in a way
 112. AA: yes
 113. DW: that either both of you are quite friendly
 114. AA: yeeees, yes, yes
 115. DW: or, we have a good relationship with each other
 116. AA: yes yes
 117. DW: so, then, at that sense you don't have a tension of that, you know
 118. AA: yes

The behavior of such intimates is evaluated in line 117 in terms of the effects of such usage within the interaction itself: “you don't have a tension of that.” In the segment that follows this comment, DW evaluates the implications of such behavior relative to the normative standards of the community.

(14) Remotivating speech and identity – the “liberty” of individuals:

119. DW: you have the words that you use
 120. AA: yes
 121. DW: and how you refer to certain things [has to be honorific and things
 122. AA: [right right
 123. DW: you don't care about that
 124. AA: right right
 125. DW: so, sometimes you use it, sometimes you don't
 126. AA: yes yes
 127. DW: so you have a liberation, a liberty of that [thing
 128. [yes yes yes
 129. DW: you know, how to use the words
 130. AA: yes

The appeal to normative standards is introduced in line 121: “how you refer to certain things has to be honorific.” People already typified by appeal to reciprocal intimacy in INTERACTIONAL dyads are now typified in line 123 as individuals who “don't care about that” (the antecedent of ‘that’ in line 123 is the description of normative standards in line 121), thus undergoing a re-typification in relation to SOCIAL standards. The personae now constructed are characterized by the fact

that “sometimes [they] use it, sometimes [they] don’t” (line 125), thus achieving a “liberty” (line 127), relative to social norms, regarding “how to use the words” (line 129).

DW returns to the question of normative standards quite explicitly in the final segment. The speaking persona that he now typifies is indexically referred to as “I,” and the participants together as “we.” The metapragmatic representation of speech events is, to this extent, INDEXICALLY LINKED to the current speech event, even though the events are CHARACTERIZED otherwise, both by an explicitly counterfactual “if,” and by descriptions predicated of the “I” and the “we.”

(15) Remotivating speech and identity – the normative self:

131. DW: but other times, if ... we just met
 132. AA: yes
 133. DW: and that I know that you are
 134. AA: yes
 135. DW: a respected person in the community, or whatever
 136. AA: yes
 137. DW: then I will always uh pay attention
 138. AA: yes
 139. DW: to what words that I use
 140. AA: yes yes
 141. DW: and how I use it
 142. AA: yes yes yes
 143. DW: yeah
 144. AA: yes yes ... nice ... that’s very interesting ... OK ... uuuh ... OK ... so now ...
 in this example

In these “other times,” the speaking persona is described as engaging in encounters between non-intimates (line 131), encounters in which the interlocutor has high status (135). For such encounters, DW claims, “I will always uh pay attention to what words that I use and how I use it” (lines 137, 139, 141). The persona now at issue is the speaker’s normative self, maximally differentiated from every other persona constructed in prior discourse.

In that prior discourse, by contrast, DW has differentiated several social personae as engaging in mixed levels of usage: (i) Khampas; (ii) young Lhasa speakers trying to be funny; (iii) intimates, or people who “have a good relationship with each other”; and (iv) people who “don’t care” about normative standards, who achieve a kind of “liberty” (line 127) of “how to use the words” (line 129). Note that the last group, whose usage is characterized in a completely open-ended way – “sometimes [they] use it, sometimes [they] don’t” (line 125) – remains the residual category in this account. Any Lhasa speaker who uses mixed speech levels, and who does not belong to groups (ii)–(iii), can be said to belong to group (iv).

It is important to see, however, that although the classification of (ii)–(iv) is a classification of Lhasa speakers who OCCASIONALLY use the mixed variety, it is motivated in several ways by the stereotype that Khampa speech INHERENTLY involves mixed levels of usage, i.e. stereotype (i). Recall that all the varieties of personified speech that DW describes emerge as “solutions” to the problem of

mixed speech levels – a problem I posed for DW, both implicitly (by using the mixed variety, line 1) and explicitly (by claiming to have met Tibetans who use it, lines 30, 32). Moreover, the stereotype of Khampa speech (lines 43–82) is the first proposed solution to this problem. The fact that the stereotypic Khampa speaker sounds funny to the Lhasa ear subsequently motivates a second solution, by analogy (lines 83–98): Young Lhasa speakers who have mastered honorific usage, but want to be funny, can do so simply by speaking (as Khampas typically do) in the mixed variety.

The third variety of personified speech involves “daily usage” (line 101), but such usage is said to occur only when a very particular interactional framework is given as PRESUPPOSABLE in discursive events: The interlocutors must be “quite friendly” and “have a good relationship with each other” (lines 84, 86). Speech is here conceptualized as an inert device for labeling already-formed relationships, itself devoid of any power to transform them. Yet under these conditions of already-formed friendships, Lhasa speakers are said to speak more casually than in the formal situation described toward the end (lines 131–44). In contrast, Khampas are believed always to exhibit the casualness, informality and unguarded simplicity characteristic of nomadic folk. They are often said to be loyal friends.¹² It is therefore entirely “rational” for DW to suppose that WHEN Lhasa speakers interact in an unguarded, open, and friendly way, their speech should approximate the speech of Khampas.

The fourth account (lines 119–30) is an offshoot of the third but is distinct in the way it explains the mixed variety. It is prefaced by an appeal to the COMMUNITY’S honorific repertoires and norms of honorific practice: “you have the words that you use and how you refer to certain things has to be honorific” (lines 119, 121). Those Lhasa speakers who “don’t care” (line 123) about such norms achieve a kind of “liberation” (line 127) in “how to use the words” (line 129). In doing so, Lhasa speakers manage to step outside the normative standards of their community and become LIKE the nomadic outsiders for whom such liberty is a natural condition.

PERSONIFICATION AND NATURALIZATION

Particular linguistic varieties become personified whenever they are associated inherently with some social category of beings. This process characteristically has two related and mutually mirroring aspects. On the one hand, inert, inanimate semiotic forms are, by stereotypic construal, identified with certain social beings and their activities, yielding a language that is stereotypically identified with persona and personhood – a language whose cultural value is shaped in part by the trope of personification. On the other hand, once the characteristics of social beings become ideologically correlated with linguistic repertoires, the personified speech that results appears itself to be motivated rather than arbitrary. It is naturalized in the attributes of the social personae with whom it is connected.

For example, DW's original personifying claim was that mixed usage is characteristic of Khampas speaking the Lhasa dialect (lines 43, 45 ff.) The claim grounds a lexically mixed variety of (Lhasa) SPEECH in the behavior of KHAMPAS; the overt logic of motivation is from speech to people. Once the mixed variety is personified as Khampa speech, the resulting stereotype becomes a mobile semiotic resource for rationalizing the behavior of Lhasa speakers. The stereotype has now become a metasemiotic engine, as it were, capable of fabricating or producing many accounts of how Lhasa speakers do what they do, and when. Different attributes of the Khampa – whether these are themselves motivated by speech (e.g. their imperfect attempts at Lhasa dialect makes them “funny”), or motivated by ethnic stereotype (e.g., that they make loyal friends; see note 12), or by the material conditions of their existence (e.g., that they are nomads or brigands, outside Lhasa society and its laws; see note 9) – now serve to explain the contextualized speech-behaviors of Lhasa speakers. The logic of motivation is now from people to speech-events: It is not that Lhasa speakers are inherently like the Khampas; rather, they are likened to Khampas on certain occasions by how they speak. The indexical effect perceived as LIKENESS is motivated by the stereotype of Khampa usage.

The stereotype of the Khampa's-mixed-usage is not a disembodied belief. In the instance, it is a construct to which DW makes appeal in trying to solve a problem that I have posed for him. Yet the stereotype in question is a culturally routinized construct. It belongs to a cultural genre of metapragmatic discourse that personifies imperfect Lhasa speech as Khampa speech. It is a genre of discourse I have seen employed by many Central Tibetans, including those who are not from Lhasa city but identify themselves as Lhasa speakers. It is a mobile instrument for grounding the identity of self-in-speech against the identity of an imagined other-speech.

Moreover, the genre has no cultural authority beyond the fact that it is routinized. Self-identified Lhasa speakers do not engage in such accounts without indexing self-effacement in some way, whether by laughing out loud (as DW does repeatedly), or by using epistemic modals that index uncertain opinion. The genre calls attention to itself as a type of casual and informal folk wisdom.

In all these ways, the typification of honorific behavior by metapragmatic narratives differs from the typification achieved by metapragmatic TERMS, such as register names. Metapragmatic terms are themselves simple words and expressions, not extended narratives. They are consequently much less explicit in how they typify observable speech behaviors as objects of metasemiosis. At the same time, metapragmatic terms provide a decentered motivation for the characteristics of speech, appearing to account for them in ways not inherently connected to the current speaker. Metapragmatic terms gain their authority in part by the appearance of objectivity. But an equally important reason for their authoritative-ness is that, although in principle they are available to everyone as instruments of typification, not everyone knows all the metapragmatic terms in practice, partic-

TABLE 3. *Canonical names for “honorific” register in four languages.*

Tibetan	Samoan	Japanese	Javanese
<i>šgsa</i> 'respect, respectful speech'	' <i>upu fa'aaloalo</i> 'respectful words'	<i>kei-go</i> 'respect lan- guage' <i>sonkei-go</i> 'honoring language' <i>kenjō-go</i> 'humble language' <i>tenei-go</i> 'polite lan- guage'	<i>krama</i> 'polite behavior, speech' <i>krama inggil</i> 'high polite' <i>krama andhap</i> 'humble polite' <i>madya</i> 'middle (polite)' <i>ngoko</i> 'ordinary word/ speech' <i>basa</i> 'language; polite language'

ularly in the case of the more elaborate terminologies. Despite these differences, metapragmatic terms also contribute to the cultural work of personification and naturalization, and it is to a consideration of these issues that I now turn.

REGISTER NAMES, INSTITUTIONALIZATION, AND AUTHORITY

All languages contain some metalinguistic terminology for characterizing different aspects of their own structure and use. The metalinguistic terms with which I am here concerned are words and expressions used to characterize the pragmatics of honorific usage. Within this broad area of metapragmatic terminology, some terms acquire a canonical status for language users insofar as they belong to traditional inventories for describing honorific repertoires and their usage. Some examples, with approximate glosses,¹³ are given in Table 3. Although additional terms exist in each of these languages, the terms cited here constitute a basic inventory of register names in native traditions.

Register names describe their objects – themselves semiotic phenomena – in highly specific ways, thus imposing a descriptive closure on what they describe. Simple words and expressions impose a structure on more complex semiotic phenomena by serving as descriptive labels for them. This process is termed “entitlement” by Burke 1962. Words en-title the phenomena they describe. Metapragmatic terms en-title their pragmatic objects as having stereotypic indexical values.¹⁴ Canonical metapragmatic terms, such as traditional register names, formulate authoritative stereotypes about the semiotic phenomena they en-title. The metapragmatic term tells the language user what its pragmatic object is there for. Whether honorific usage routinely (always? only?) implements such pragmatic values is, of course, a different question.

For example, Lhasa Tibetan speakers are wedded to the view that *šęsa* repertoires involve respect; they are guided to this view by the undeniable fact that ‘respect’ is the lexical meaning of the word *šęsa*. At the level of honorific discourse, however, *šęsa* utterances achieve many kinds of enactable effects that do not fit – easily, or at all – with what the stereotype proclaims. Enactable effects in honorific discourse depend on how the utterance is contextualized. If a higher-status person defers to a lower-status person, such ‘respect’ may be indistinguishable from irony, condescension, distantiation, coercion, or even a veiled threat. In such cases, the presence of honorific lexemes in an utterance may provide only the thinnest veneer on acts of condemnation, anger, rudeness (Hijirada & Sohn 1986:366–67, Hwang 1990:48), or other types of veiled aggression. But the stereotypic view that politeness or respect is somehow at issue forms an essential-(ized) component of utterance significance, a component to which interlocutor(s) typically attend WHILE ATTENDING TO whatever else the utterance-act achieves.

At the same time, register names exhibit considerable leakage across different objects of description, as we have seen – serving to typify not only words but also utterances, speech levels, and in many cases, non-linguistic behavior as well. For example, the Javanese metapragmatic term *krama* ‘polite behavior, good manners’ (Uhlenbeck 1970:442), and its variant *tata-krama* ‘politesse, politeness in conduct’ name standards of behavior or conduct that involve not only the proper use of lexical registers and speech levels, but also non-linguistic behaviors such as lowering of the head and body when entering a room (Errington 1988:35). Thus many kinds of semiotic phenomena may be grouped together under a single metasemiotic description; MANY PHENOMENA TYPICALLY ARE. The inherent leakiness of metapragmatic terms itself serves as the point of departure for further metasemiotic work, such as that performed by narratives.

Register names nonetheless have a RECEIVED AUTHORITY relative to institutionalized traditions of terminological practice. Although terminological traditions change over historical time, they appear static to most speakers. When competing traditions co-exist at a given time, most speakers may be unaware of alternatives (Wang 1990); or awareness of competing alternatives may create consciously articulable doubts about society-wide standards (Paulston 1976). In such cases, different social categories of speakers may treat different traditions as authoritative for themselves.

The creation of authoritative stereotypes is itself the product of large-scale processes of cultural history of which most individual members of society have little or no awareness (cf. Mugglestone 1995). Yet canonical register names are themselves instrumental in promoting authoritative stereotypes of usage. Two broad patterns of institutionalized authority are particularly worth noting.

In languages that have elaborate register terminologies, some terms are not known to the ordinary speaker at all. Thus Errington (1988:99) observes in the Javanese case: “There is another metalinguistic term, *krama andhap*, common in the literature but hardly known to native speakers.” That is, the term *krama an-*

dhap is not widely known in the social domain of native speakers, but it is widely known in the social domain of specialists or experts, such as native grammarians (and now, linguistic anthropologists). Canonical metapragmatic terminology is often an esoteric vocabulary. Those who know it and use it well are socially empowered by such knowledge. In such cases, the canonical character of metapragmatic terms is itself reinforced by a semiotic “division of labor” (Putnam 1975, Silverstein 1987:151–58, Irvine 1989:257–58), whereby knowledge of the properties of such terms is considered the special province of experts. In every culture, such “expertise” is implicitly allocated to members of distinct social domains, such as members of privileged social classes, people of higher education, monks, or native grammarians. In such cases, THE AUTHORITY OF TERMS IS GROUNDED IN THE EXPERTISE OF SPECIALISTS; conversely, the social allocation of expertise may be grasped in an alienated form, as the authority of terms.

In a second type of case, the received authority of tradition is actively promoted by overtly political institutions, such as the nation state. For example, Tongan speech levels (Philips 1991) are described by natives in terms of a tripartite metapragmatic distinction: commoner speech, noble speech, and kingly speech. This tripartite distinction is a government-sponsored idealization or simplification, available to native speakers through schooling and government handbooks. Although these terms are known to everyone, they are not adequate for describing the semiotic phenomena they typify. For example, “noble speech” is used not only to speak deferentially about nobles, but also non-noble chiefs, local magistrates, and persons in authority (in Tonga or elsewhere), as well as “to raise the level of formality and politeness in public discourses generally” (1991:378).

The lack of fit between state-sponsored TERMINOLOGIES and actual everyday practice is rationalized by speakers in various metapragmatic NARRATIVES, including some routinized ones. Philips notes, “When I asked Tongans why noble terms might be used in some of these examples, I was told it was because ‘a Noble might be present’” (1991:378). Note that this account re-motivates the lack of fit by rationalizing referent-indexicality as bystander-indexicality. Note also that such a narrative PRESUPPOSES the authority of the term “noble speech” in offering a narrative rationalization of its appropriateness.

I have described such acts of narrative motivation in the Lhasa Tibetan case in some detail above. Lhasa speakers do not hesitate to produce explicit metapragmatic NARRATIVES about *ṣesa*-forms-and-their-usage. They formulate many different kinds of accounts, offering diverse kinds of motivation for the pragmatic phenomena at issue – including motivation in stereotypes of social identity. But however diversified the production of NARRATED stereotypes may be, the narrator tends periodically to return to the culturally authoritative TERMS. For example, DW formulates several stereotypic identities of language users in exx. 7–15 above, but he keeps returning to questions of “respect” and “honor” throughout his account. The enduring effect of register names is that they fashion culturally authoritative stereotypes about the uses of honorific language. Secondary stereotypes,

such as those formulated in everyday narratives, are constantly measured against the received wisdom and authority lexified in register names.

STEREOTYPE FORMULATION AS CULTURAL PRACTICE

The activity of narrative remotivation is an ongoing cultural practice whereby language users rationalize and remotivate the pragmatic significance of language use. Insofar as such practices essentialize features of language use in formulated images of persons, they link the micro-order of interactional politeness to a larger-scale politics of social life.

Personification of respect register as an attribute of high-status beings

Some metalinguistic terms imply personification by virtue of their implicit semantic structure. Metalinguistic terms like Samoan *'upu fa'aaloalo* 'respectful words' and Lhasa Tibetan *ṣeṣa* 'respect, reverence' both invoke notions of respect. A noun like "respect" is, of course, a two-place relational noun (like "marriage"); if such a noun is used to characterize speech, such characterization raises the question of whom the speaker is linked to by the relationship of respect.

Such lexical suggestion may itself be rationalized by more extended types of narratives. It appears that, in the Samoan case, native speakers give elaborate accounts of how speech is grounded in social personae, offering folk taxonomies of the social personae who can serve as objects of speech deference. Duranti notes (1992:80) that Samoan respectful words "are SAID TO BE ASSOCIATED with a particular class of people, namely, titled individuals (*matāi*), including chiefs (*ali'i*) and orators (*tulaafale*)" (emphasis supplied). Duranti carefully distinguishes the stereotype before going on to discuss actual usage, but it is useful to consider what happens when the two are not distinguished.

Milner's earlier account of Samoan honorifics (1961) incorporates such folk taxonomies into explanations of usage itself. He describes the Samoan respect vocabulary as a specialized resource that Samoans use for "speaking about" their chiefs. However, he uses the term "chief" in two ways, writing one with a capital initial and the other with a lower-case initial. He defines the former as follows (1961:296): "Chief (with a capital) will be used in the sense of a title-holder who is a Chief as opposed to an orator." On the same page, Milner explains that lower-case "chief" includes four subcategories: (a) elected title holders, including orators (*tulaafale*) and elected chiefs (*ali'i*); (b) "persons whose birth in certain lineages *ipso facto* confers a certain rank upon them"; (c) those in a "special position in Samoan society," such as "leader of the untitled men (*maanaia*)" or "village virgin (*taaupou*)"; and finally, (d) "persons who by reason of their status (whether it be founded on occupation, accomplishments, or age) are treated with a certain deference. They also include in general, ministers of religion, teachers, doctors, civil servants, whether of Samoan or other origin."

Note that Milner's first category of 'chief' includes 'Chiefs', while the fourth category of 'chief' can include almost anyone. We are left with the impression

that ‘chiefs’ are people who get deference, and the fourth variety of ‘chief’ contains everyone who is “treated with a certain deference.” It is not just that the classification has become circular; rather, the circularity is typical of the way in which residual categories are left open-ended in folk taxonomies. (Recall DW’s claim that the fourth type of people who break Lhasa honorific norms are people who “don’t care” and are thus at “liberty.”) Milner’s account appears to be a very detailed characterization of native stereotypes of usage – even though he himself regards it, inaccurately, as an account of usage.

Similarly, in describing Javanese honorifics, Geertz 1960 described the *krama* style of Javanese as the “dialect” of the Priyayi, or traditional nobles. This view is incorrect as an account of actual usage, as Uhlenbeck 1970 has pointed out in some detail. But the mistake is not an accidental error; it is culturally motivated by native metapragmatic discourse. The term *krama* ‘polite behavior, good manners’ semantically represents ALL its objects of metasemiosis (e.g. lexical registers, speech levels, and gestural norms, as discussed above) as involving “politeness.” The term itself raises questions similar to those raised by “respect”: Whose politeness? Politeness to whom?

The semantic implications of the term are made explicit by personifying narratives, some of which are apparently quite routinized. At the level of actual usage, “every speaker of Javanese, regardless of his social status or geographical origin, uses all of the speech levels” (Poedjosoedarmo 1968:57); however, *krama* (and more generally *basa*) speech levels are stereotypically regarded as the speech of the Priyayi, or traditional nobility: “Foreigners and Javanese alike HAVE LONG ATTRIBUTED the best, most highly refined forms of Javanese language and art to this noble and courtly class” (Errington 1988:2; emphasis supplied). Once *krama* is personified in belief as the speech behavior of the Priyayi – a view encouraged by the Priyayi themselves – then all the values of refinement and elegance traditionally associated with the speech variety are attributable by projection as characteristics inherent to the Priyayi as a social class. The cultural value of the repertoires, as well as of other aspects of Priyayi behavior, reciprocally illuminate and motivate each other, thus naturalizing many aspects of Priyayi identity. For example, the Priyayi become arbiters of linguistic standards, themselves using the term *krama désa* ‘village krama’ to characterize expressions that they perceive as non-standard *krama*. The term *krama désa* implies that people who use non-standard *krama* are either villagers or LIKE villagers in their lack of sophistication. Culture-internally, the purest forms of honorific usage are personified as the speech of noble-urban speakers; once naturalized as their speech, it empowers such persons to typify non-standard usage as the speech of commoner-rural persons.

Stereotypes of regional identity

I have been arguing that processes of stereotypification frequently take syncretic objects of metasemiosis, linking speech and non-speech together as composites to

be typified. It is worth emphasizing, however, that such linkages emerge under conditions of historical contingency. Once formulated, stereotype valorizations appear to be rationally motivated. Yet they have, at best, an *ex post facto* rationality.

An example of such historical contingency may be found in the patterns of migration that influence evaluations of *keigo* 'honorific' register in the Japanese prefecture of Tateyama (Hendry 1992). Tateyama is a provincial town, two hours by train from Tokyo. The population consists of three main groups (relative to patterns of migration): families long indigenous to Tateyama; families from Tokyo who live in Tateyama part of the year; and families who migrated to Tateyama from Tokyo more than two generations ago but still maintain residences in Tokyo, or send their children to school there.

The Tateyama dialect of Japanese differs from Tokyo speech in a number of respects, including pronunciation and idioms; it also has a more simplified system of *keigo*. Under these conditions, the use of the more elaborate *keigo* repertoire typical of Tokyo speech becomes a second-order indexical of cosmopolitan self-identity – in addition to the “first-order” other-directed deference indexicality implemented by its use. Conversely, the simplified *keigo* register typical of Tateyama speech is revalorized, secondarily, as indexical of rural self-identity; to this extent it is revalorized as a particular type of sociolect, namely a geographic dialect.

The fact that such stereotypes construe differences of *keigo* repertoire (simpler vs. elaborate) as iconic of regional self-identity (rural vs. cosmopolitan) depends on demographic facts that are initially exogenous to speech. The demographic patterns are products of the migratory trends which are, in one sense, CONTINGENT facts about the speech community: They are speech-independent historical processes of demographic change. However, the effects of such migratory trends – i.e. the resulting demographic differences – are indexically presupposable as an aspect of the community whenever speech events occur within it. Once the stereotype comes into existence, the demographic pattern is no longer exogenous to speech. It has become endogenous to speech stereotypes.

Such stereotypes motivate different “rational” strategies of speaking from the interested perspective of different socially-positioned actors. Many upper-class speakers who run businesses in Tateyama have command over the Tokyo dialect, as well as over the more elaborate *keigo* repertoires (whether by virtue of origins or education). In trade encounters, such speakers switch “downward” regularly in dealing with customers. In such cases, at least two types of style shifting are possible: Tokyo dialect vs. Tateyama dialect, and elaborate *keigo* vs. simplified *keigo*. Speakers who are able to control such shifts can implement multiple contrasts of self-identity during the course of trade encounters, e.g. cosmopolitan vs. local, upper vs. lower, refined vs. crude, and out-group vs. in-group. At the same time, many lower-class locals attempt a degree of social climbing by “struggling to master” the more elaborate *keigo* repertoires. However, such tropic uplift sometimes takes two generations, frequently requiring careful schooling of children.

Stereotypes of gender

The above examples suggest that speaker stereotypes have two rather general characteristics. First, linguistically motivated speaker stereotypes tend to presuppose classifications of social actors that are independently motivated; to this extent, they are naturalized in – i.e. are remotivated with respect to – other social-semiotic practices in which speaker-actors engage. Second, once formulated, speaker stereotypes are amenable to strategic manipulation to the extent that they are consciously grasped by social actors. Studies of gender stereotypes of honorific usage provide further evidence for both generalizations.

Gender stereotypes of honorific usage are amenable to strategic manipulation in that speakers tend to overuse stereotypic gender markers in interactional contexts where gender identity is independently at issue. Using statistical indices of Japanese female speech as a baseline, Shibamoto 1987 has shown that Japanese women tend to overuse stereotypic markers of “femaleness” in contexts where they are required to create a distinctive impression of femininity; however, other statistical indices of Japanese female speech that are NOT stereotypically grasped as markers of femininity (e.g. greater NP ellipsis, fronting of constituents) are not strategically overused in such contexts. In Japanese culture, women are stereotypically believed to use more honorific forms than men. Correspondingly, among the statistical indices Shibamoto considers, the frequency of honorific usage varies most significantly in contexts of “feminine” display: In theatrical role play on television, where female actors are required to play “womanly” or “feminine” roles, honorific inanimate nouns (distinguished by *o*- prefixes in Japanese, cf. type 1b above) as well as honorific verbs (cf. types 1c and 1d above), show the most dramatic and salient patterns of overuse, relative to usage levels found in natural conversation. Patterns of strategic over-use of honorifics by women in contexts where displays of “femininity” are required show (i) that gender stereotypes of honorific language do indeed enable self-focused enactments of female identity (in addition to other-focused deference); and (ii) that stereotypic signs of gender identity are more amenable to strategic manipulation than are non-stereotypic signs precisely because their indexical values are consciously grasped by speakers.

Gender stereotypes about honorific language tend to be naturalized in speech-independent social practices as well. In the case of Javanese honorific registers, Smith-Hefner (1988:537) observes, “The fact that these polite registers are distinct vocabularies which are labeled by speakers gives them a high degree of psychological salience, allowing for their manipulation to express not only politeness, but various aspects of social identity.” In particular, differences in the social-interactional contexts where polite usage is practiced by men and women motivate, in turn, differences in gender-specific “status images.” Men tend to cultivate the use of larger lexical repertoires and higher speech levels than women, but this greater use of honorific register typically occurs in contexts of PUBLIC interaction, such as those involving religion, politics, or commerce. Thus the

greater usage of polite forms by men is secondarily naturalized under status images of AUTHORITY. Women tend to use more honorific lexemes than men within the home; e.g., women tend to engage in asymmetric honorific address/reference to their husbands. Although this fact itself may imply women's lower status, this implication is not supported by other social practices within the home; for example, women tend to have greater control than men over household affairs and finances. Similarly, women use more honorific forms than men in address/reference to children, yet such usage is recognized as prescriptive speech (with metapragmatic names like *ngajari basa* 'teaching polite speech'), itself culturally valued as necessary for the proper upbringing of children. The greater use of polite forms by women in such contexts is naturalized under status images of REFINEMENT: "The double message of polite speech allows women themselves to interpret their speech as refined rather than deferential, and, in general, women do not consider inferiority to be the issue" (Smith-Hefner 1988:551).

SOCIOLECT AND REGISTER

One traditional argument that links language use with social identity goes as follows: Since language users differ in social status (itself defined by appeal to macrosocial categories, viz. age, gender, class, ethnicity, profession), as well as in patterns of speech usage, the CORRELATION between social status and speech habits should tell us something about the social identities of speakers. If such a correlation is termed a "sociolect," then according to this argument, sociolects clarify aspects of social identity, insofar as the latter are reflected in speech.

The foregoing considerations suggest that this argument is incorrect, or at least incomplete. The correlationist perspective assumes that linguists are the only people interested in finding correlations between speech behavior and social status. However, as the above data show, language users are themselves correlationists *par excellence*, themselves interested in describing such correlations and in motivating social reality in terms of them. Language is employed by language users not only in semiotic activity but also in metasemiotic activity. Language use counts as semiotic activity when it serves to enact pragmatic effects, such as the marking of relationships and the inhabitation of identities. Language use counts as metasemiotic activity when it serves to formulate the significance of pragmatic affects, i.e. to describe, comprehend, or classify pragmatic phenomena.

I have argued that the differentiation of speech varieties into REGISTERS is the product of this second type of activity. The most overt form of such activity is explicit metapragmatic discourse that DESCRIBES the pragmatic values of language; the most distinctive effect of such activity is the formulation of stereotypes of pragmatic value that transform or REVALORIZE the pragmatically enactable effects of language use. We have no analytic perspective on the FORMULATED character of stereotype values without an independent perspective on the object(s) of stereotyping. Taking such an independent perspective, we note the following:

(a) Distinctions of DEFERENCE INDEXICALITY in honorific discourse are underdifferentiated in native accounts that report the existence of a LEXICAL REGISTER of honorific forms.

(b) Whereas deference effects are subject to many kinds of tropic manipulability in honorific discourse (e.g. deferring to others beyond their due, coercing others by deferring to them), the presence of HONORIFIC LEXEMES identifies utterances as intrinsically honorific in effect, whatever other extrinsic (contextualized) effect such utterances may have.

(c) Native metapragmatic accounts are pervasively characterized by leakage across objects of typification; e.g., names for lexical repertoires are used by natives to describe HONORIFIC SENTENCES as well.

(d) Once deference is essentialized as a property of words and sentences, metapragmatic activity rationalizes different pragmatic values in relation to each other; that is, differences in speech habits (whether differences of lexical repertoires, or of the lexical cohesiveness of sentences) are personified as stereotypic markers of the social worth of SPEAKERS (and conversely, the speech of the most statusful speakers may be regarded as a cultural standard by others).

(e) Such status images may be differentiated further, yielding more precise classifications of “social kinds” by further essentialization and re-motivation relative to additional attributes of speaker-actors; e.g. re-motivation with respect to ethnicity, class, and gender are widely attested.

The cultural significance of metapragmatic discourse lies, therefore, in its capacity to formulate CULTURAL DIAGRAMS OF SOCIAL-SEMIOTIC PRACTICE. Such diagrams are internally leaky, thus presenting inherent possibilities of perspectival contestation; yet their diagrammatic quality consists precisely in the extent to which different orders of indexicality are motivated by (i.e. presuppose or imply) each other, and can be used explicitly to rationalize or justify one another in further metapragmatic discourse.

Linguists and anthropologists have long attempted to come to terms with the cultural significance of social practices by appealing to native terms for describing such practices, often fashioning technical descriptive terms by glossing native terms; e.g., the term “honorific” is a good cover term for the native terms in Table 3. Yet native terminologies for honorific phenomena are neither descriptively neutral nor exact. They selectively name only some of the indexical effects of honorific usage, and they are often polysemous with respect to different levels of structure and use. Canonical register names formulate “frozen” images of the cultural significance of language use. Such images are selectively backed – and promoted – by the authority of social institutions. I have discussed two cases of this type above: backing (i) by the authority of EXPLICITLY political institutions, such as the nation state, or (ii) by the authority IMPLICITLY embodied in semiotic “divisions of labor,” whereby the status-position of cultural “experts” itself serves to promote authoritative stereotypes.

The very imperfection of authoritative stereotypes routinely results in efforts on the part of language users to rationalize and remotivate the significance of usage in everyday narratives. Although narrative remotivation may serve a variety of contingent interactional purposes, culturally authoritative stereotypes, e.g. that some usage involves “respect” or “politeness” or “nobles”, frequently serve as the points of departure for such activity. Further metasemiotic work tends to gravitate around authoritative stereotypes – at least until the structure of authority changes, whether independently, or because of the particular metasemiotic activity at issue.

CONCLUSION

Honorific language is traditionally regarded as a language of status. Yet as I have argued above, “status” cannot be conceptualized as a fixed, immutable, semiotically unmediated measure of social position. The foregoing examples show that honorific usage does not simply mirror pre-established distinctions of social status. Rather, distinctions of social status are themselves formulated culture-internally by appeal to attributes of social persons, including the way they speak. Thus patterns of honorific usage have a REFLEXIVE relationship to social status – appearing both to respond to independent status distinctions, and to promote status valorizations themselves.

It is worth emphasizing here that such reflexivity poses no paradox for the language user. The two poles of this reflexive relationship operate at distinct levels, involving differences of both FOCUS and DURATIONAL SCALE. First, the sensitivity of honorific choices to addressee or referent status is an other-focused phenomenon; the capacity that habits of honorific usage have to index speaker status is a self-focused phenomenon. Both are critical to the coherence of INTERACTIONS, where individuals move across roles of speaker and addressee in different turns. Second, the valorization of speech habits as a marker of speaker status involves large-scale processes of cultural history that formulate differences of speech habits as indices of social distinction; in the moment-to-moment unfolding of discourse, the status position of interlocutors appears constant, forming a relatively fixed backdrop for interactional strategies. Cultural processes that formulate stereotypes of persons on the basis of speech habits provide a seemingly immutable, ideologically “naturalized” background of social distinction against which individual acts of speaking occur.

Such status images are implemented concurrently with, and form an emergent background for, acts of deference. Yet to describe their interpretability as simply involving “background knowledge” is potentially to neglect their culturally formulated and perspectively contestable character. I have argued instead that such status images are better conceptualized as an order of stereotypes about the pragmatic value of signs; that stereotypes of personified speech essentialize features of pragmatic speech(-events) in the attributes of pragmatic

actors; and that personifications of honorific speech are inevitably remotivated and rationalized with respect to independent social practices. It would be absurd, for these reasons, to suppose that status images are REDUCIBLE to stereotypes of language use. I have argued, however, that the contrary assumption – that status can be regarded as a language-independent measure of social position – is equally problematic. We can only get beyond such dichotomies, moreover, by recognizing that the study of status language requires appeal to several different levels of analysis.

Once it is abstracted from all these considerations, a lexical register of honorific forms is nothing more than a paradigm of words on a page. It is just that we cannot explain why these words are so significant to language users, or how they do their cultural work – off the page – independently of these considerations.

NOTES

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¹ This is no less true in the special case where the native speaker works as a linguist on his or her own language. In this case, such metapragmatic evaluations are available to the “linguist” as introspectable “native speaker intuitions.” It is important to see that “native speaker” and “linguist” are roles that may be occupied by indefinitely many people at different times, and even by the same person when that person attempts a systematic analysis of his or her own language.

² This criterion extends beyond the identification of honorific words *per se*. For example, the linguist’s ability to distinguish honorifically valued grammatical affixes and prosodic features – from non-honorific variants – relies on native ascriptions of pragmatic value as well. Given the lower metapragmatic “transparency” (Silverstein 1981b) of affixes and prosodic features, language users are not generally able to segment such honorifically valued forms from accompanying utterance material. Nonetheless, the fact that natives TREAT utterances containing such forms as honorific in effect – and sometimes describe the utterances (overall) as honorific – remains a necessary criterion for the IDENTIFIABILITY of the forms themselves.

³ Access by a “linguist” to “native” traditions of lexicography or indigenous grammarology (cf. note 1) forms another important source of data – distinct from both oral elicitation and unsolicited metalinguistic commentary – where the products of native metalinguistic ability are accessible to the linguist through written textual artifacts.

⁴ I have argued elsewhere (Agha 1993b:132–35) that “deference” categories index DEFERENCE-ENTITLEMENTS in actual usage: they index that an individual in a discursive-interactional role (referent, addressee etc.) is worthy of deference. Whether or not such an individual appears worthy of deference by utterance-independent criteria – e.g. dress, demeanor, or apparent status position – is critical to whether or not the linguistic utterance is judged APPROPRIATE to its presupposable context. This match, or congruence, across semiotic modalities is critical to whether utterances are judged polite or rude, for example. But the deference-entitling properties of honorific expressions depend only on the capacity of the expression to index deference to an individual in a contextual role.

⁵ Of the five types of deference indexicals shown here, only 1a–d are found in Lhasa Tibetan. Elaborate repertoires of the addressee-focal indexicals noted in 1e are found in languages of East and Southeast Asia, notably Japanese, Korean, and Javanese. The referent-focal verbs in 1c–d are attested in these languages as well, but they are typologically more widespread: They are also found in Central and South Asian languages, such as Lhasa Tibetan, Ladakhi, Mongolian, Persian and Urdu. Samoan and Nahuatl have substantial repertoires of type 1c, but repertoires of type 1d are either small or non-existent. Australian languages are typologically distinct in possessing bystander-focal forms, in addition to some referent- and addressee-focal forms. Deference categories of type 1b are widely

attested in many languages but work differently in referent-focal, addressee-focal, and bystander-focal systems. Additional types of deference categories have been described as well (Irvine 1992, 1997). European languages possess elaborate repertoires only of type 1a, the most widespread typological category.

⁶ Speech levels are ideological constructs in the sense that they revalorize and essentialize infelicities of contextualization, whether of referential congruence or deference coherence, as “impurities” of sentence structure. “Impure” sentence-tokens do occur in natural discourse, where their deference effects are perfectly construable by external contextualization. They are regarded as DEFECTIVE SENTENCES in decontextualized native reflection about language, and so described in native ideologies about language: The defect is rationalized as the MIXING of honorific and non-honorific words in sentences. Thus one type of stereotypic construct, the lexical register, is used to MOTIVATE another, i.e. speech levels. Both constructs motivate stereotypes of speaker “refinement,” as I show below.

⁷ Unlike Javanese, Lhasa Tibetan does not have an elaborate metalinguistic terminology for describing speech levels. This does not mean, of course, that natives cannot rank speech levels if asked to do so. Attempts to get native speakers to answer questions like “Is X higher than Y?” (where X and Y are sentences) make it perfectly clear that natives can distinguish speech levels with potentially open-ended fineness of discrimination. Although Javanese has a discrete terminology that actually names a few such distinctions, intermediate levels can also be named in that language by combining metalinguistic terms into compound nouns (Poedjosoedarmo 1968). Javanese speakers can probably perform the discrimination task better than Lhasa Tibetan speakers, who have a minimal set of named varieties to work with. But in all such languages, the number of distinctions that can be made is much larger than the number of metalinguistic terms serving traditionally as names of speech levels.

⁸ Yet the very fact that stereotypes of speaker identity are formulated around diverse semiotic phenomena entails that cues to such social identity are often implemented in discourse with varying degrees of role dissonance. For example, a speaker may exhibit command over many honorific lexemes, but his utterances may be non-cohesive by speech level criteria; or a speaker may use high speech levels but speak with a regional or rustic accent. Such dissonance is itself informative, of course; it aids attempts to reckon identity from speech.

⁹ Kham is the eastern province of Tibet. Before the Chinese invasion, it constituted a frontier against the Chinese provinces of Szechwan and Yunnan, as well as a periphery with respect to the two central provinces of Tibet, Ü and Tsang. Traditionally, Khampas were semi-nomadic pastoral herdsmen, and many also belonged to bands of brigands who made travel across the region difficult and sometimes dangerous. In more recent times, Khampas formed an effective resistance group against the Chinese invasion, using a base in Mustang (Nepal) to carry out guerrilla actions against the People’s Liberation Army until the 1970s. Khampas are described as unsophisticated country folk by central Tibetans. They are also romanticized in folktales as fierce, lawless, and sometimes heroic. Khampas speak a dialect distinct from central Tibetan, though most are familiar with the Lhasa-based koiné spoken in the central provinces.

¹⁰ The following symbols are used in the interlinear glosses in examples 4–6: DAT ‘dative case’, NEG ‘negation’, AUX ‘auxiliary verb’, NZR ‘nominalizer’. In the conversational data in 7–15, Tibetan expressions are *italicized*, and honorific lexemes marked by **boldface**; pauses greater than 0.5 seconds are marked by dots (...), shorter pauses and prosodic breaks by commas; overlaps are indicated by brackets across lines.

¹¹ Although the direct object of “discussing” is not explicitly spelled out by TT, the subsequent context makes it clear that the discussion is about ṬAṣi. Noun phrase arguments that are recoverable from context are routinely omitted in Lhasa Tibetan by pervasive null anaphora. TT tends to extend this pattern to English, resulting in sentences like “So we were discussing,” which sound incomplete in English.

¹² The following stereotype offered by Sarat Chandra Das, the leading Indian authority on Tibet in his time, is completely typical. Speaking of a “lama of Khams” whom he had met during his travels, he reports, “My further acquaintance with him confirmed me in the opinion I had formed of the Khambas. Though they are wild, they are devoted friends, and when once one becomes intimate with one of them, he will be faithful to the end” (1988 [1902]:156).

¹³ The glosses in Table 3 are approximate in the sense that they do not reflect the polysemy of register names. For example, the Japanese term *tenei* means ‘polite’ as well as ‘careful’, thus captur-

ing features of both the (addressee-focal) deference and the (speaker-focal) demeanor indexicality involved in the use of *tenei-go* repertoires. Moreover, different register names in Table 3 variously underdifferentiate words, repertoires, sentences, utterances, or speech levels; and some are also used to describe non-linguistic behaviors, as discussed below.

¹⁴ The English verb *to entitle* has two rather distinct common usages. In the first usage, typically involving people, the verb implies a sanction, e.g., *He is entitled to the money*. In the second, typically metalinguistic usage, the term implies a semantic description, e.g., *The poem is entitled "The sorrow of love."* The two usages are related to the extent that effective characterizations create their own sanction. To say that metapragmatic terms yield stereotypic en-titling of usage is to say that such terms serve to typify usage (by virtue of their own semantic properties) even in acts of decontextualized reflection about usage. To say that pragmatic usage yields deference-entitlements (see note 4 above) is to say that such usage shapes the context of usage (by virtue of its indexical properties) while the forms are still in play.

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