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# Language Diversity and Social Action

## A Third Locus of Linguistic Relativity

by Jack Sidnell and N. J. Enfield

The classic version of the linguistic relativity principle, formulated by Boas and developed especially in the work of Whorf, suggests that the particular lexicogrammatical patterns of a given language can influence the thought of its speakers. A second version of the argument emerged in the 1970s and shifted the focus to the indexical aspect of language: any given language includes a particular set of indexical signs, and these essentially shape the contexts produced in speaking that language. In this article, we propose a third locus of linguistic relativity. Our argument is based on recent work in conversation analysis that has shown how the resources of a given language provide the tools for accomplishing basic actions in interaction. To develop our argument, we consider the way in which the resources of three different languages (Caribbean English Creole, Finnish, and Lao) are deployed by speakers to agree with a prior assessment while at the same time claiming greater epistemic authority over the matter assessed. Our case study indicates that the language-specific tools used to accomplish this action (the lexicogrammatical resources) introduce collateral effects and in this way give the action a local spin or inflection.

Does speaking one language rather than another have consequences for thought, and for social life more generally? Anthropologists, linguists, philosophers, and psychologists have all sought to answer this question. The enormous literature, spanning at least 200 years, encompasses everything from formal logic and analytic philosophy to naturalistic observation, psychological experiment, and work bordering on literature and fiction. Everyone from Edward Sapir to George Orwell, from Franz Boas to Toni Morrison has had a say on how the language one speaks does or does not affect one's understanding of, and place within, the surrounding world.

The question of linguistic relativity has been central to the anthropology of language, although the methods for answering the question and the kinds of answers given have undergone significant transformation. Below, we begin by briefly reviewing two broad conceptions of linguistic relativity—first, the notion that different languages can have different effects on thought (e.g., conceptual representations and inference), and second, the notion that different languages can have different effects on sociocultural context (e.g., social relations among interlocutors)—noting some recalcitrant methodological and analytic issues, before turning to the main aim of

the paper. Our goal is to formulate a third version of the linguistic relativity argument grounded in situated social interaction, a realm in which our behavior is not primarily about exchanging information but about getting things done in and through our social relations. In this third locus of linguistic relativity, different languages can have different effects on the kinds of social actions that can be achieved through social interaction.

### Synopsis of the Argument to Be Presented

Within the existing anthropological literature, we can discern at least two distinct versions of the relativity argument. The first—associated with the founders of linguistic anthropology—links language-specific patterns of grammar to thought (in the general sense of mental representations of states of affairs and the inferences that arise from these representations) and habitual behavior (Boas 1911; Sapir 1921, 1949 [1927], 1964 [1931]; Whorf 1956 [1939], 1956 [1940], 1956 [1945]). This version has received significant attention from linguists and psychologists and, over the past 25 years or so, has been pursued in a wide range of psychologically informed studies that use experimental methods to test the cognitive consequences of language diversity (Boroditsky 2001; Gentner and Goldin-Meadow 2003; Lucy 1992*a*, 1992*b*, 1997; Majid, Boster, and Bowerman 2008; Pederson et al. 1998; Winawer et al. 2007, *inter alia*). Studies in this vein have become increasingly sophisticated in terms of both method and their grounding in linguistic typology. At the same time, their per-

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ceived relevance to social and cultural anthropology has lessened because of the increasing focus on individual psychology rather than culture or linguistic practice.

A second version of the relativity argument was hinted at by Hymes (1966), made explicit by Silverstein (1976, 1979), and subsequently elaborated by a number of linguistic anthropologists (see, e.g., Agha 1994, 2007; Briggs 1986; Erington 1985, 1988; Hanks 1990; Ochs 1988, 1990, 1992, 1996; Rumsey 1990). In contrast to the earlier emphasis on referential and predicational aspects of language, Silverstein focused on the indexical relations between speech and its context of occurrence. Indexicality is a sign-function in which a signified is linked to a signifier by a relationship of contiguity (classic examples include smoke being taken to signify fire and a knock being taken to indicate someone at the door; see Kockelman 2005; Parmentier 1994*a*, 1994*b*; Peirce 1955). The basic argument is that by the very act of speaking, speakers both indexically presuppose and create, moment-by-moment, a context. Thus, in saying “Do you know the way to Conn Hall?” the speaker indexically establishes (among other things) an addressee (a “you”).<sup>1</sup> Now consider the difference between English and French. In French, a speaker must choose between address with *tu* or *vous* (and of course, if you say *tu* you can be heard as not saying *vous*, and vice versa), whereas in English there is only one second-person pronoun (Brown and Gilman 1960). These different forms convey something about the relationship between speaker and addressee and about the context in which the talk takes place. Within some specific set of contextual presuppositions, every act of address in French thus takes aspects of the relationship between speaker and hearer and makes them explicit, yet these same aspects need not be articulated in English at all.<sup>2</sup> This difference between the two languages appears to have consequences for the contexts that their speakers establish through speaking one language or the other. It is a simple example because the range of alternatives (*tu* vs. *vous*) is so narrow. Things become considerably more complex when we consider, as we do below, person reference and address in Vietnamese, where the range of alternatives is extensive and where a number of “perspective-taking” strategies are also used. The argument may also be applied to other domains and not just the social deixis of *tu-vous*-type alternations or Vietnamese person-referring forms. Even more basic, perhaps, are the indexical signs (primary among them deictics such as “here” and “now”) by which participants convey and thus constitute or construe the here-and-now of any actual social

encounter. If the first version of the relativity argument emphasizes the consequences of language diversity for the world perceived, the second focuses on the world indexed (and thus produced) in different ways through different languages, in and through the very act of speaking.

To these now well-established versions of the relativity argument we want to add a third. The first version began with language conceptualized as a system for thought and the second with speaking as meaningful social behavior.<sup>3</sup> The third version begins with practices of social interaction and the particular forms of social action that they provide for.<sup>4</sup> Our thesis is that different grammatical and lexical patterns of different languages can provide different opportunities for social action. Since Wittgenstein (1953) and Austin (1962), it has been recognized that by speaking we are not simply, solely, or primarily engaged in describing the world, depicting it, or indexing it in some way. Rather, by speaking we are acting in it. When you say “That’s a really nice jacket,” you have not only described someone’s clothing; you have given them a compliment (see Pomerantz 1978). When you say “The traffic was terrible today,” you have not only described your commute; you have complained about it (Drew and Walker 2009). When you say “Could you give me a lift?” you have not only asked a question; you have made a request (Curl and Drew 2008).

An empirical grounding for this action-based approach can be found in research in conversation analysis. This research tradition focuses on the practices of speaking (and behavior more generally, e.g., gesturing) deployed to accomplish particular social actions. Such actions are organized into sequences in such a way as to establish “an architecture of intersubjectivity” or “a continuously updated context of intersubjective understanding” (Heritage 1984:254–260; see also, inter alia, Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Goodwin and Heritage 1990; Levinson 1983; Sacks 1995; Schegloff 1968, 2007; Sidnell 2010). When we examine conversation, we see that participants themselves can use subsequent turns at talk as evidence for whether and how they have just been understood by the other. This participants’ method can also be exploited by researchers as a methodological and analytical lever. Thus, to determine the particular action that some bit of talk achieves, we can look to see how it was taken up (or not) in subsequent talk (see Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson

3. Silverstein (1976:11) begins, “This chapter will try to develop consequences of the statement that speech is meaningful social behavior.”

4. Silverstein (1987) makes this same distinction between indexicality and purposive action. Our “third locus” relates to Silverstein’s “function<sub>1</sub>,” which concerns “the purposive, goal-oriented use of speech (or equivalents) by intentional individuals in specific situations of discourse, each such usage constituting a ‘speech act’ or ‘speech event.’” (Silverstein 1987:23). His “function<sub>2</sub>,” in contrast, “consists of multiple relationships of existential implication among isolable elements/aspects of a communicative situation. In particular, we can see linguistic elements as the principal system of indexicals, the elucidation of which is a third kind of functional explanation” (Silverstein 1987:31). This is the domain of the “second locus” of linguistic relativity discussed above.

1. Let us clarify what this means. When I ask you a question, and because I ask it, you become an addressee. Obviously, my question has not created you, but it has created a status (in the sense of a set of entitlements and responsibilities) that you now fill (e.g., you are now accountable for not answering the question).

2. Explicitness is important because it relates to whether speakers potentially “go on record” and may thus make them accountable for what they have said or done. This can be seen in relation to T-V (*tu-vous*) address forms in Jacquemet (1994).

1974:728–729 on the so-called next-turn proof procedure). This is crucial because it solves one of the more difficult methodological problems of all relativity arguments (see Lucy 1992*a*, 1992*b*): how to show that a grammatical or lexical peculiarity has nonlinguistic (i.e., cognitive, cultural, action-relevant) consequences. The first version of the relativity argument has come to rely on various forms of experiment using measures such as memory and inference to demonstrate such consequences. The second version typically relies on native-speaker testimony and ethnographic description. A feature of the third version is that the consequences, while clearly nonlinguistic, are nevertheless internal to the data.

We illustrate this third approach to linguistic relativity by investigating the different ways in which a specific type of social action is carried out, using as a vehicle the lexicogrammatical resources of three different languages: Caribbean English Creole (Sidnell 2009*c*), Finnish (Hakulinen and Sorjonen 2009; Sorjonen 1996; Sorjonen and Hakulinen 2009), and Lao (Enfield 2007*a*). The idea is to use the controlled comparison of a single general type of action (what we call an “epistemically authoritative second-position assessment,” defined below as the action of agreeing with what someone has just said while simultaneously signaling that one has greater authority to have said it; see Heritage and Raymond 2005).<sup>5</sup> Each case study reveals the specific grammatical resources employed in that language as well as the associated interactional consequences. A lexicogrammatical structure will be an appropriate tool or vehicle for carrying out a certain social action so long as its semiotic affordances make it well suited to effecting that action, for example, to the extent that people will recognize the function it is being used for. But because any such lexicogrammatical structure will have other structural properties as well (including other meanings), other semiotic affordances are unavoidably introduced. The structure is selected because it has a certain functional feature, but other properties of that structure will be ushered in, and these collaterally selected “features,” in turn, either will be features for other functions or may turn out to be not features but bugs. Either way, the selection of a linguistic structure based on one feature will inevitably introduce other features that give rise to what we refer to as collateral effects, that is, side effects of the selection of a specific means for some ends (see below).

Our three example cases are useful for a number of reasons. First, a good deal is known about the phenomenon central to these cases: “responses to assessments” (see esp. Goodwin and Goodwin 1987; Heritage and Raymond 2005; Pomerantz

5. To be clear: the action here is “agreement.” The “epistemically authoritative” part of what we describe here is laminated onto agreement. So it would, of course, be quite impossible to merely claim epistemic authority without embedding this in some action (e.g., agreement). It is perhaps reasonable to describe, as Heritage and Raymond (2005) do, epistemic authority as being “indexed” here. This would suggest that our case study, while focusing on action, also introduces some features of the second version of relativity we discuss.

1984). Second, the languages differ significantly from each other in structure. Both Lao and Caribbean English Creole are highly analytic languages largely devoid of any inflectional morphology. Finnish, by way of contrast, has an extensive set of inflectional morphemes (suffixes) that attach to both nouns and verbs: nouns are inflected for case (nominative, accusative, partitive, genitive, locative, etc.); verbs are inflected according to the person and number of the subject; and other verbal suffixes convey distinctions of tense, aspect, mood, and so on. While Caribbean English Creole uses word order to convey grammatical relations or semantic roles such as agent and patient, in Finnish, word order is relatively free and these relations are expressed by inflections on nominal arguments. Lao is like the Caribbean Creole in being highly analytic, but it differs—crucially, for our purposes—in that it has an elaborate system of final particles.

### Boas to Whorf: Linguistic Relativity in American Anthropology

A classic version of the relativity hypothesis takes language-specific grammatical patterns and relates them to patterns of thought or, in more recent terms, cognition (of the many recent studies, see, e.g., Everett 2005; Levinson 2003*a*, 2003*b*; see also Gumperz and Levinson 1996 for a useful state-of-the-art volume as of the mid-1990s). Although the ideas can be traced to German Romantics such as Herder (2002 [1772]) and Humboldt (1999 [1836]), this version found full expression for the first time in the writings of Franz Boas (see Duranti 1997, 1999, 2003, 2009; Leavitt 2006; Lucy 1992*b*; Sahlins 1976; Stocking 1996). The introduction to *The Handbook of American Indian Languages* (Boas 1911) contains his most famous statement of the relativity argument.<sup>6</sup>

As part of a broader program of anthropological research, Boas developed an approach to language structure—in particular, grammatical categories—that, like other forms of structural analysis, drew attention to the internal relations between components of lexical and grammatical subsystems

6. Boas developed an earlier version of the relativity argument in relation to the perception of speech sounds in an 1889 article titled “On Alternating Sounds” (Boas 1889). Several Europeans had reported that in certain “Indian” languages, speakers did not make clear and regular distinctions between sounds. On one occasion a sound would be realized as “nd” and on another as “tl.” Boas explained that the phenomenon of alternating sounds lay not in the observed phenomenon but rather in the observer’s own preconceptions. The argument is summarized in the 1911 introduction to the *Handbook*, where Boas (1911:17) writes,

Thus, the lower Chinook has a sound which is readily perceived as a *b*, *m*, or *w*. As a matter of fact, it is a *b* sound, produced by a very weak closure of the lips and with open nose, the breath passing weakly both through the mouth and through the nose, and accompanied by a faint intonation of the vocal chords. . . . observers belonging to different nationalities readily perceive the sounds in accordance with the system of sounds with which they are familiar. . . . The alternation of the sounds is clearly an effect of perception through the medium of a foreign system of phonetics, not that of greater variability of pronunciation than the one that is characteristic of our own sounds.

so as to reveal their partially arbitrary, could-have-been-otherwise character (see Jakobson 1971 [1959] on Boas's approach to grammatical meaning). Both Kwak'wala and Inuktitut, the languages Boas studied most intensively, exhibit complex patterns of phonology, grammar, and word formation associated with the "polysynthetic" language type (Comrie 1981*b*; Sapir 1921). They also include grammatical categories (such as obviative, hearsay evidentials, and deictics that convey whether the referent of a noun phrase is visible to a speaker) that were largely unfamiliar to the philological tradition of linguistic analysis that had dominated until the turn of the twentieth century.

Grammatical categories encode distinctions such as tense, aspect, person, number, and definiteness. Languages differ in terms of both which grammatical categories they include and how those included are organized by relations of opposition and difference. Boas argued that these differences were consequential not so much for what they allowed a speaker to say as for what they required a speaker to say. For instance, in order to produce a grammatically well-formed sentence in Kwak'wala, a speaker is required to indicate how they know what they are asserting (whether they saw it, heard it, heard about it, dreamt it, etc.; see Aikhenvald 2004). This leads directly into the issue of relativity, since in forming a sentence in Kwak'wala, a speaker is literally forced by the requirements of grammatical well-formedness to attend to certain aspects of reality not demanded of a speaker of English. These proposals have been pursued in recent work on "thinking for speaking," where it has been suggested that "language directs us to attend—while speaking—to the dimensions of experience that are enshrined in grammatical categories" (Slobin 1996:71). Thus, for example, if our language requires us to encode singular versus plural, we are more likely to pay attention to "plurality" in scenes that we will later need to describe.

Boas contrasts word-formation processes in English with those in other languages, alluding to the polysynthetic patterns of Kwak'wala and Inuktitut:

The groups of ideas expressed by specific phonetic groups show very material differences in different languages, and do not conform by any means to the same principles of classification. To take again the example of English, we find that the idea of WATER is expressed in a great variety of forms: one term serves to express water as a LIQUID; another one, water in the form of a large expanse (LAKE); others, water as running in a large body or in a small body (RIVER and BROOK); still other terms express water in the form of RAIN, DEW, WAVE, and FOAM. It is perfectly conceivable that this variety of ideas, each of which is expressed by a single independent term in English, might be expressed in other languages by derivations from the same term. (Boas 1911: 25)

In a polysynthetic language such as Kwak'wala, it is possible for a single lexical root (e.g., that meaning "water") to com-

bine with a great number of inflectional morphemes to produce a range of semantically diverse words. Boas seems to have been suggesting that, by virtue of their common use of a single identifiable root, the ideas expressed are grouped together in a special way. Common roots invite analogical thinking about objects in the world that from the perspective of the lexicon of another language may appear quite disparate (see Lucy 1992*b*).

Another passage focuses on grammatical categories. Boas notes that languages differ, first, in terms of what grammatical categories they include and, second, in how these grammatical categories are configured:

When we consider for a moment what this implies, it will be recognized that in each language only a part of the complete concept that we have in mind is expressed, and that each language has a peculiar tendency to select this or that aspect of the mental image which is conveyed by the expression of the thought. To use again the example which I mentioned before, *The man is sick*. We express by this sentence, in English, the idea, *a definite single man at present sick*. In Kwakiutl this sentence would have to be rendered by an expression which would mean, in the vaguest possible form that could be given to it, *definite man near him invisible sick near him invisible*. Visibility and nearness to the first or second person might, of course, have been selected in our example in place of invisibility and nearness to the third person. (Boas 1911:43; see also the related discussion in Boas 1938:132–133)

Boas is highlighting differences in the configuration and distribution of grammatical categories. Whereas in the English example tense and definiteness are obligatory, the sentence from Kwak'wala requires the speaker to include information pertaining to the location of the person talked about and his visibility or nonvisibility to the participants in the speech event.

The examples could be expanded more or less indefinitely, drawing on decades of empirical work on the diversity of grammatical systems around the world, work that has intensified in recent years (see Dixon 2009; Haspelmath et al. 2005; Shopen 1985, 2007). In *The Languages of Native North America*, for instance, Mithun (2001) catalogues a range of grammatical categories, including those pertaining to "obviation" (the so-called fourth person of, e.g., Ojibwa), "inverse number," "distributives," "associatives," "locational and directional deixis," "evidentiality," and so on. The sheer degree and richness of the diversity here is overwhelming, and if one wants further evidence, the many available surveys of the world's languages provide a wealth of it (see, inter alia, Adelaar and Muysken 2007; Comrie 1981*a*; Dixon 2002; Dixon and Aikhenvald 1999; Foley 1986; Krishnamurti 2003; Posner 1996; Shibatani 1990; Suárez 1983).

*Cognitive consequences of linguistic diversity.* While the facts of linguistic diversity are well established, its cognitive rele-

vance and consequences remain open and hotly disputed.<sup>7</sup> It was Benjamin Lee Whorf who developed this aspect of Boas's argument most explicitly. Whorf's arguments and studies have spawned a massive and somewhat unruly secondary literature (for reviews, see, *inter alia*, Hill and Mannheim 1992; Hunt and Agnoli 1991; Kay and Kempton 1984; Koerner 1992; B. Lee 1985; P. Lee 1991, 1996, 2000; Lucy 1985, 1992*b*, 1996, 1997; Lucy and Shweder 1979). Whether or not one is convinced by Whorf, he must be credited for pushing the relativity argument forward by insisting on evidence of the cognitive or behavioral consequences of grammatical differences.<sup>8</sup> Where Boas (1911:43) was merely suggestive—"each language has a peculiar tendency to select this or that aspect of the mental image which is conveyed by the expression of the thought"—Whorf went farther, seeking to ground his arguments about relativity in an ethnography of Hopi daily life. While few scholars are today convinced by Whorf's efforts in this direction, many have followed his lead in attempting to provide evidence for the consequences of grammatical differences on the nonlinguistic behavior of speakers. This has naturally encouraged experimental approaches that adopt a broadly psychological perspective (e.g., Berlin and Kay 1969; Brown and Levinson 1993; Gentner 1982; Gentner, Imai, and Boroditsky 2002; Imai and Gentner 1993; Levinson 1992, 1996*a*, 1996*b*, 1997*a*, 1997*b*, 2000, 2001, 2003*a*, 2003*b*).

Some persistent issues of method seem to inevitably arise in relation to this line of research. Consider one of the most compelling research projects in this vein—associated with Stephen C. Levinson and colleagues at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics—focusing on the cognitive consequences of differences between languages in the linguistic encoding of spatial location (Levinson 2003*a*; Majid et al. 2004; Pederson et al. 1998). One key distinction is between languages that differ in terms of whether their speakers prefer to use absolute versus relative spatial-reckoning systems (see also Haviland 1993, 1996, 1998, 2000; Levinson 1996*c*). So a speaker of English might say "Shift to the left," while a speaker of Guugu Yimidhirr would say the equivalent of "Shift to the north." Consequences of this linguistic difference for thinking were tested in an experimental comparison between speakers of Dutch (which, like English, uses a relative spatial reckoning system) and speakers of Guugu Yimidhirr (which uses an absolute system). In one experiment, a participant sat at a table on which three toy animals were laid out in a row, all

facing in the same direction. The participant was asked to remember the position of these objects and was then rotated 180° so that he was facing in the opposite direction. He was handed the same three toy animals and was instructed to lay them out exactly as he had found them on the other table. A majority of the Guugu Yimidhirr speakers adopted an absolute strategy and replaced the animals so that the one that was in the northernmost position on the first table was again in the northernmost position on the second table, and so on. Furthermore, these Guugu Yimidhirr participants placed the animals so that they were facing in the same (cardinal) direction as before. They did not relate the positions of the animals to their own location or spatial orientation. A majority of the Dutch speakers, by way of contrast, arranged the animals so that they were in the same position relative their own location, now adjusted; that is, the one that was to the speaker's left in the first array was also placed to the speaker's left in the second array (see fig. 1).

This study, and many like it, offers strong evidence that language-specific patterns of grammar and lexicalization may significantly restructure cognition. Such work is part of a broader complement of approaches to the linguistic relativity problem. The arguments initially formulated by Boas, Sapir, and Whorf were framed in terms of the significance of language diversity for thought, perception, and habitual behavior. In an effort to operationalize these ideas and ground them empirically, researchers have adopted an experimental methodology and in so doing have significantly limited the scope of inquiry.<sup>9</sup> Experimental methods work with proxies of various kinds. For instance, in the example discussed above, memory is a proxy for "thought" and possibly also for "habitual behavior." Still, the experimental methods of a (broadly speaking) cross-cultural psychology have led in many cases to a private and individual view of mind, whereas the arguments of Boas, Sapir, and Whorf were associated with a social view of mind anchored in the collective representations of a group.<sup>10</sup> The view of mind implicit in the writings of Boas and Whorf was an essentially cultural and anthropological one that did not privilege the individual. "Thought" in the phrase "language and thought" was not simply the sum of individual memory, reasoning, and inference. Grammatical differences and variation in patterns of lexicalization—Whorf's "fashions of speaking"—were linked to distinctive cultural patterns, that is, to the very characteristics that made

7. For a different debate raised by the empirical facts of linguistic diversity—that is, what kind of cognitive mechanism underlies it and makes it possible—see Evans and Levinson (2009), Levinson and Evans (2010), and commentary on these.

8. Two of Whorf's other contributions deserve mention here. First, Whorf conceptualized the matter not in terms of isolated grammatical items/subsystems, as Boas had tended to, but in terms of broad collections of quite disparate features that together constituted "fashions of speaking." Second, Whorf introduced the notion of cryptotypes or cryptotypic categories—that is, categories that may not have any single, formal realization in all contexts (see Lee 1996, Lucy 1992*b*, and Silverstein 1979 for discussion).

9. See Lee's (1996) critique of the neo-Whorfian movement as represented, in particular, by Lucy (1992*a*, 1992*b*). With special attention to the work of Whorf, Lee contends that linguistic relativity began as a "principle" to be argued for but is now (wrongly, she argues) being treated as a "hypothesis" to be tested (see also Lee 2000).

10. But see Boster (1985, 1986); Boster and Johnson (1989); Boster, Johnson, and Weller (1987); Romney (1999); Romney, Batchelder, and Weller (1987); and Romney, Weller, and Batchelder (1986) for extensive attention to the problem of consensus in cognitive anthropology.

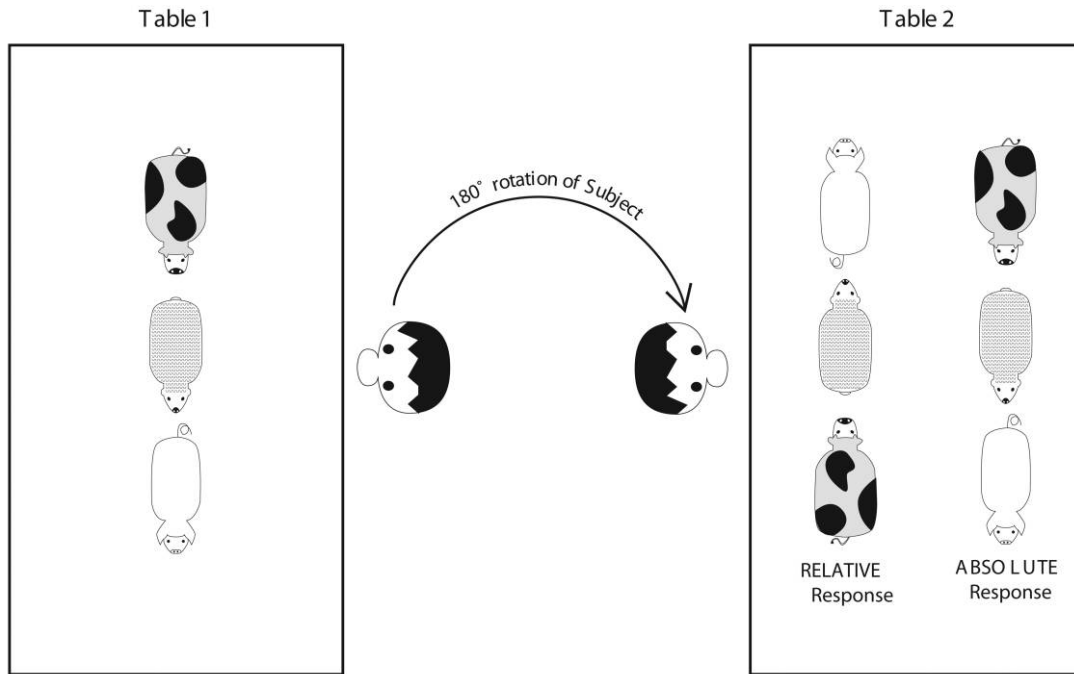


Figure 1. Recall task: animals in a row; figure 4.11 from Levinson (2003b:156).

the Kwak'wala the Kwak'wala and the Hopi the Hopi (see Leavitt 2011).<sup>11</sup>

Behavioral experiments produce measures of performance on a particular task but leave us with the question of how such performance measures relate to the ordinary activities and thinking of the people in question. The methods isolate the phenomenon of interest from the contexts and activities within which it normally operates. They assume that to abstract thought from those contexts does not fundamentally alter its character. However, research on the distributed nature of cognition calls this into question (see research described in Clark 2007; Goodwin 2000, 2003, 2006; Hutchins 1995, 2006; Lave 1988; Lave and Wenger 1991, *inter alia*, showing the ways in which thinking happens through artifacts/tools and configurations of persons).

### Silverstein's Reformulation: Relativity and Indexicality

Silverstein's reformulation of the linguistic relativity issue emerged in the 1970s and was consolidated in a wide range of studies produced both by him and by his students and

11. Levinson (2003b) goes in this direction, especially in chapter 4, titled "Absolute Minds: Glimpses into Two Cultures." But because the view we are offered is so focused on the particular issue of spatial coding, we do not have a broader sense of everyday life in these communities. This is not the goal of Levinson's book; as Hanks (2006) points out in his review, the lack of sustained ethnographic attention is reflective of the fact the book is not really directed to anthropology.

colleagues (e.g., Silverstein 1976, 1979, 1981, 1985, 1987, 2003, 2004). Our thumbnail summary in this section exemplifies the central points by drawing on two quite different studies, of Vietnamese person reference and of Mayan deixis.

Silverstein (1976) argues that anthropologists have mistakenly taken language in its referential-predicational (i.e., propositional) function as the model for culture in general, when in fact the referential-predicational function of language is what makes it unique with respect to all other media of cultural communication and signification (see also Silverstein 1987). According to Silverstein, the key to understanding the multifaceted relations between language use and social life lies in an understanding of the indexical mode of signification. This is the mode by which a sign can stand for something because it is connected somehow (e.g., in time or place) with that thing. There are two basic modalities. On the one hand, language use may presuppose certain aspects of context. This is true in the relatively trivial sense that any speech signal presupposes some source (e.g., a speaker) and in the nontrivial sense that specific aspects of context must exist cognitively and/or physically if speech is going to be properly interpretable. On the other hand, language use may indexically create aspects of context (the rights and duties of an addressee, an audience, a key, etc.). Given this dual or dialogic relationship of contiguity, we can say that language is, in an important respect, self-contextualizing.

"Creative" uses of language are those in which a referential index serves to "make explicit and overt the parameters of

Table 1. Simplified synopsis of Mayan deictics (adapted from Hanks 1990:18–19)

ID base	Terminal deictics						Gloss
	aʔ	oʔ	b'eʔ	iʔ	eʔ	Ø	
OSTEV:							
héʔ e(l)	héʔ el aʔ						Here it is (Tact Pres)
héʔ e(l)		héʔ el oʔ					There it is (Vis Dir)
héʔ e(l)			héʔ eb'eʔ				There it is (Aud Dir)
DLOC:							
teʔ e(l)	téʔ el aʔ						Right there, here (Immed)
teʔ e(l)		téʔ el oʔ					There (Non-Immed)
tiʔ				tiʔ iʔ			There (Anaph)
way					way eʔ		(In) here (Incl)
to(l)		tol oʔ					(Out) there (Excl)
DNOM:							
le(l)	lel aʔ						This one (Immed)
le(l)		lel oʔ					That one (Non-Immed)
le				le tiʔ			The one
le						le	The (def art)

structure of the ongoing event” (Silverstein 1976:34). Indexical pronouns, for instance, have a creative function in setting the roles of speaker and the hearer versus addressee. For Silverstein, the more creative indexes include those that signal social distance, hierarchy, or, conversely, solidarity (e.g., *tu-vous*-type distinctions in Indo-European languages; Brown and Gilman 1960), which, he claims “by their very use, make the social parameters of speaker and hearer explicit” (Silverstein 1976:34). Further, all indexes “range on a sliding scale of creativity or performativity value from the extreme presupposition displayed by deictics to the extreme creativity displayed by subtle social indexes” (35). Silverstein proposes a second axis of classification distinguishing referential indexes (such as first- and second-person pronouns and demonstrative deictics) from nonreferential ones (such as “brother-in-law” lexicons, social sex markers, and deference indexes of speaker-hearer relations).<sup>12</sup>

For present purposes, one central argument from Silverstein (1976) may be summarized as follows: different languages include quite different collections and configurations of indexical signs that are activated in speaking. These indexical signs help to constitute the context within which any bit of speech signal can occur. Thus, in speech, different languages constitute differently configured contexts, and thus, because the lived world centrally involves persons interacting with one another and thus speaking to one another, ultimately different sociocultural worlds arise. So, for instance, the relevance of a kinship system that divides the world into classificatory brothers-in-law on the one hand and everybody else on the other is made manifest in every act of speaking a

language like Guugu Yimidhirr (see Haviland 1979; cf. Enfield 2007*b* on Lao).

#### Mayan Deixis

Hanks (1992:48) writes that a natural language defines interactive context “by encoding pragmatic categories and forms of interaction in the grammar itself” (see also Hanks 1993, 2005*a*). He develops this argument through a detailed study of deixis in Yucatec Mayan. Deictic forms in Yucatec Mayan are often composed of two morphemes, a base, which Hanks calls an initial deictic (ID), and a suffixal or enclitic element labeled a terminal deictic (TD). Table 1 shows a selection of these bimorphemic deictic forms. IDs are displayed along the vertical axis and TDs along the horizontal one.

Deictic constructions occur in two main surface shapes: continuous (examples [1], [2]) and discontinuous ([3], [4]; Hanks 1990:17):

- |     |                                   |  |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|
| (1) | héʔel aʔ                          |  |
|     | OSTEV TD                          |  |
|     | Here it is (presenting).          |  |
| (2) | ɕ'áah téʔel oʔ                    |  |
|     | Vb-imper DLOC TD                  |  |
|     | Put it there.                     |  |
| (3) | héʔel a maáskab' aʔ               |  |
|     | OSTEV Pro2 N TD                   |  |
|     | Here's your machete (presenting). |  |
| (4) | ɕ'áah téʔ ich k'oób'en oʔ         |  |
|     | Vb-imper DLOC Prep N TD           |  |
|     | Put it there in (the) kitchen.    |  |

IDs include a grammatical-category feature (adverb, locative, etc.) and a “domain” feature, which specifies the dimension of deictic frame signaled about. TDs, on the other hand, include no grammatical-category feature and cross-cut the domain conveyed by the ID, specifying “relative proximity of referent to ground.” TDs differentiate “modes of access”

12. As Silverstein points out, many forms combine referential and nonreferential indexicality—so, for instance, the French *tu* combines a referential function of address (“referring,” as it were, to the addressee) while at the same time conveying, nonreferentially, greater “familiarity” than *vous*.



within a domain, for example, relative immediacy within space or relative fullness of perception (tactual, visual, peripheral).

Hanks (1990:400–462) provides a detailed case study of the use of Yucatec Mayan spatial deictics:

Inclusive	<i>way eʔ</i>	Here (around me)
Exclusive	<i>tol oʔ</i>	There (out, excluding me)
Sociocentric immediate	<i>téʔel aʔ</i>	Right there
Sociocentric nonimmediate	<i>téʔel oʔ</i>	There

With one or two exceptions, inclusive *way eʔ* and exclusive *tol oʔ* form a contrast pair turning on whether the region referred to does or does not include the speaker. This means that Yucatec Mayans do not show a guest where to sit by saying the equivalent of “Sit here” (unless the speaker is occupying that very location at the time of speaking). Nor do Yucatecans, anticipating a future location, suggest “Let’s go here” (e.g., indicating a way through the brush; see Hanks 1990:409). Thus, although *way eʔ* occupies, in the Mayan system, a position roughly analogous to that of English “here,” Hanks shows that it differs significantly in terms of possible referential extension. And while *way eʔ* prototypically contrasts with *tol oʔ* in discourse, Hanks shows that a number of other semantic oppositions are also possible.

Differences between the Yucatec Mayan and English systems are even more obvious when we consider sociocentric forms. Hanks provides the following example, in which he is called to the table for lunch:

- (5) *Téʔ atàal aʔ Wiíl → kóʔ os hana*  
Come right here Will. Let’s eat. (BB.5.22)

Hanks (1990:425) writes, “He proceeded to offer me a seat next to him at the table. . . . it was not his own seat he was offering me, since if it were, his deictic reference would have been phrased in egocentric terms.” He also tells us that *kóʔ os téʔel aʔ*, “Let’s go here,” is a “perfectly routine utterance used to lead an addressee along a path.” Summarizing, Hanks (1990:425) notes, “unlike the Inclusive ‘here,’ where a speaker is, the Immediate ‘here’ is place to which (s)he can go.” The Immediate *téʔel aʔ* is also the form used to segment the body, for instance, in indicating where one is feeling a described pain.

- (6) *Bey tú úic ih téʔe be aʔ*  
So then it happened right here like this.

The relevance of this to our argument should by now be clear. These deictic forms grammaticalize the “space” within which any interaction takes place. Thus, in using any one of these forms, the speaker is construing and constructing the very context within which that interaction is taking place and thus is bringing to bear on the current situation the historically constituted language system that is Yucatec Mayan. Differences in the deictic systems of Yucatec Mayan and, for in-

stance, English can thus be seen to result in differently structured contexts. Deixis, then, involves the intersection of the historically constituted linguistic code (i.e., culture) and the subjective experience of the individual. In a larger argument spanning several works, Hanks (see especially Hanks 2005a, 2005b) develops the idea that one’s very sense of one’s body, one’s place in the world, and one’s experience of the world is shaped by the particular grammar of deixis one has culturally inherited.

#### Vietnamese Address and Self-Reference

Another example of the indexical formulation of linguistic relativity is provided by research on Vietnamese person reference and address (see Luong 1984, 1987, 1988, 1990). In Vietnamese reference and address, speakers routinely avoid the use of pronouns in favor of kinship terms and names, so that instead of saying “I saw you at the market,” one might say the equivalent of “Niece saw Uncle at the market” (depending, of course, on the relation between speaker and addressee). Drawing on Luong’s study, Agha (2007:356–357) argues that such self-referential and vocative uses of kin terms are “denotationally anomalous in that they employ third person nouns in referring to speaker and addressee (for which first and second person pronouns are available).”<sup>13</sup> When such forms are then used for non-kin, as they routinely are, a further trope comes into play—one that suggests hierarchical kin relations as a model for all social relations.

An additional complication is introduced by the possibility of various shifts of footing (Goffman 1981), in which a speaker adopts the perspective of another person. In some cases, such perspective-taking strategies are normatively required. Luong (1990:57) writes, for instance, that “in his interaction with a younger sibling E, even a five year old northern child C is expected to refer to his sibling D (D is C’s younger and E’s elder sibling) as *anh* or *chị* (‘elder brother’ or ‘elder sister’). E is not supposed to make third-party references from his elder siblings’ perspectives.” So C (oldest) refers to D (middle) as *anh* “older brother” when talking to E (youngest)—thereby adopting E’s perspective. E (youngest), however, must not refer to D (middle) as *em* “younger sibling” when talking to C (oldest). The very act of taking another’s perspective introduces a “second-order indexicality” insofar as it presupposes a hierarchical relation between speaker and addressee (Silverstein 2003). The alternatives for address and self-reference are thus as follows:

Address	Self-reference
Name	Name
Kinship trope (pronoun)	Kinship trope Pronoun— <i>tôi</i> , “I”; <i>minh</i> , “I”
Ø	Ø

13. In Agha’s (2007:352) scheme, such uses achieve the mappings between speech-act participants and referents via the simultaneous operation of a “denotational” sketch and an “interactional” sketch.

Here are some examples from a radio interview of two musicians who are older brother (*Phạm Ngọc Châu*) and younger sister (*Phạm Khánh Linh*). The interviewer, a radio personality, addresses Phạm Khánh Linh with her name (example [11]) and Phạm Ngọc Châu with *anh* (literally, “older brother”).

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 Self-reference
 

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- (7) NAME: *Khánh Linh tên đầy đủ là Phạm Khánh Linh*  
 Khánh Linh name full is Phạm Khánh Linh  
 “My full name is Phạm Khánh Linh”  
 (Literally, “Khánh Linh’s full name is Phạm Khánh Linh”)
- (8) PNOUN *Còn đồ uống thì mình thích nhất là uống nước bưởi ép*  
 And for drinks, COMP 1S like best is drinking waters grapefruit force  
 “And as for drinks, it’s grapefruit juice that I like the best.”
- (9) PNOUN: *tôi tên là Phạm Ngọc Châu*  
 1S name is Phạm Ngọc Châu  
 “My name is Phạm Ngọc Châu.”
- (10) Ø: *Ø rất thích hoa*  
 Really like flowers.  
 “I really like flowers.”
- 

 Address
 

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- (11) NAME: *Khánh Linh vừa bảo là hơi tròn vậy thì KL chọn trang phục thế nào?*  
 NAME just said is little chubby, so CONJ NAME chose clothing Q?  
 “You just said that you are a little chubby, so how do choose what to wear?”  
 (Literally, “Khánh Linh said that [you] are a little chubby, so how does Khánh Linh choose what to wear?”)
- (12) KTERM: *dưa cà mắm muối đúng không anh?*  
 Melon eggplant shrimp salt right not older-brother?  
 “Like, pickled, salty eggplant and so on right?”  
 (Literally, “Like, pickled, salty eggplant and so on right older brother?”)
- 

Again, the implications of this for our argument should be clear. In addressing others and in self-reference, a speaker is obliged to attend to the relative age or rank of the participants (construed on a model of kinship). Speaking the language involves constant attention to this aspect of the interactive context—that is, the facts of how speaker and addressee stand with respect to each other—and, moreover, requires that some construal of those facts be included in the utterance. Indeed, where it is not obvious from physical appearance, personal introductions frequently include inquiries about the other’s age. This information is essential to the proper selection of terms for address and self-reference in all subsequent interaction.

There is no possibility for opting out of the system. Al-

though a speaker can employ a personal name in both address and self-reference and a pronoun in self-reference (as well as Ø in some contexts), use of these forms is considered appropriate only within highly constrained circumstances. Use of a personal name, for instance, in self-reference or in address where the addressee is significantly older or in some other sense deserving of respect may be found “impudent” or “fresh”—*hỗn*. Indeed as Luong shows, even with juniors, use of a pronoun instead of a kin term is taken to indicate disapprobation (see also Agha 2007:357 on this point).

The case studies of Mayan deixis and Vietnamese address well illustrate the point Silverstein introduced in “Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description” (Silverstein 1976; see also Jakobson 1971 [1957]): there are significant differences across languages in terms of the indexical signs that, by their very use, make explicit and overt the contextual parameters of the speech event. It follows that in speaking, people are producing contexts that are at least partially shaped by the language they happen to use. This, then, entails a second version of the linguistic relativity argument, in which the particular lexicogrammatical features of a given language shape the cultural contexts produced in speaking it.

## Social Interaction: The Progressive Realization of Understanding in Action

Our third locus for linguistic relativity is social interaction, not just in a general sense that would encompass much of what we have been discussing so far but in the specific sense of the sequences of interlocking actions that people carry out by using language in social settings (Drew 2004; Goodwin 2002, 2006; Goodwin and Heritage 1990; Heritage 1984; Schegloff 1968, 1996a, 2006, 2007). Social action is about doing things, where this “doing” involves other people. Language is the central tool. We use it to get other people to do things for us, to help others or inform them of things, to share experience with them, to affiliate with them, or indeed to disaffiliate (Enfield 2006, 2009b; Enfield and Levinson 2006a, 2006b; Tomasello 2008). The perspective that is required for studying this domain of human activity is an “enchronic” one (Enfield 2009a:10, 2011b), that is, a focus on the move-by-move, normative level of “interactional time” as a complement to other, more familiar temporal-causal perspectives in anthropology and related disciplines (phylogenetic, ontogenetic, diachronic, synchronic, etc.).

Research on language in interaction using the methods of conversation analysis has shown that it is both possible and necessary to examine language use at the micro level in order to understand just how these forms of social action are accomplished and how intersubjectivity is achieved. In the social sciences, intersubjectivity—joint or shared understanding between people—is typically explained in terms of convergent knowledge of the world. On this view, the world exhibits objective characteristics, and to the extent that different actors apply equivalent and valid procedures for generating knowl-

edge of the world, they will converge in their knowledge and understanding of their circumstances (Heritage 1984:26). A related solution to the problem of intersubjectivity invokes the notion of a common culture as the resource through which “the individual’s grasp of reality is mediated” (Schegloff 1992:1296).

Conversation analysts have developed a rather different account of intersubjectivity. One of their key insights (Sacks 1995; Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974) was that ordinary people exploit the systematic properties of conversation in reasoning about it “online.” For instance, participants in a conversation can inspect next turns at talk as evidence for whether and how their own talk has been understood (Moerman and Sacks 1988 [1970]). Displayed misunderstandings can then prompt the initiation of repair in “third position,” as in the following example (see Schegloff 1992).

(13) Third-position repair, from Schegloff (1992)

01	Anni:	Which one:s are closed, an’ which ones are open.
02	Zebr:	Most of ’em. This, this, [this, this ((pointing))
03	Anni:→	[I ’on’t mean on the
04	→	shelters, I mean on the roads.
05	Zebr:	Oh!
06		(8.0)
07	Zebr:	Closed, those’re the ones you wanna know about,
08	Anni:	Mm[hm
09	Zebr:	[Broadway. . .

In line 01, Annie asks a question. In the turn at line 02, Zebrach not only attempts to answer it but by virtue of producing a response, Zebrach displays an understanding of Annie’s line 01 inquiry. From this response, Annie is able to surmise that there has been a misunderstanding of her talk in line 01. It appears from the evidence in line 02 that Zebrach has made a wrong interpretation of “which ones.” Annie is able to repair the problem in lines 03–04, and the course of action underway is then reengaged on the basis of the new understanding which Annie’s correction provides for. As Schegloff (1991:158) notes, “The ordinary sequential organization of conversation thus provides for displays of mutual understanding and problems therein, one running basis for the cultivation and grounding of intersubjectivity.”

Consider the following case from the opening of a telephone call between two friends, focusing on the two lines in boldface (04 and 05):<sup>14</sup>

(14) Deb and Dick

		(ring)
		(r[
01	Deb:	[Hello:?hh
02	Dick:	Good morning.=

14. Examples from English, Creole, Finnish, and Lao conversation are presented using the transcription conventions first developed by Gail Jefferson (see Sidnell 2009a, 2009b for a relatively complete recent glossary as well as some discussion of the application of these conventions to languages other than English). It is important to note that in this system, punctuation marks intonation and not syntax.

03	Deb:	=Hi:, howareya.
04	Dick:	<b>Not too ba:d. Howare you?</b>
05	Deb:	<b>I’m fi::ne</b>
06	Dick:	Howdit g[o?
07	Deb:	[.h Oh: just grea:t;<everybody:st- still here.
08	Dick:	Oh really(h)=
09	Deb:	=Yeah
10	Dick:	Oh they stayed. Okay.
11	Deb:	Yea:h

Dick asks “How are you?” and Deb responds with “I’m fine.” This simple exchange seems almost vacuous, but in fact it tells us a lot. Deb’s response in line 05 to Dick’s “How are you?” in line 04 displays a range of basic understandings of that turn (Schegloff 1992): by starting to talk at this moment (and not earlier), Deb shows an understanding that Dick’s turn was possibly finished (see Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974). By producing an answer, Deb shows that she understands the previous turn to be a question. By answering with a description of her personal state, Deb shows that she understands the turn to be a wh- question (involving a question word like “who,” “where,” “how,” etc.) rather than a yes-no interrogative. By responding with “fine” rather than “terrible,” or “fantastic,” Deb shows an understanding of what this question is doing in this environment (a routine opening inquiry, not to be taken literally, etc.). On this view, the use of language and other forms of communicative behavior in social interaction centrally involves the production and recognition of social action. So when Deb says “I’m fine” in response to Dick’s “How are you?” she shows that she understood Dick’s turn to be one of those personal-state inquiries that does not call for a completely “honest” response but rather an indication of whether she has any particular bad or good news to tell Dick (see Jefferson 1980; Sacks 1975; Schegloff 1986).

We see, then, that the turn-by-turn organization of talk provides for a continuously updated context of intersubjective understanding, accomplished en passant in the course of other activities. These publicly displayed understandings are provisional and contingent and thus susceptible to being found wanting, problematic, partial, or simply incorrect. A first speaker who finds the understanding displayed by a second speaker’s turn inadequate has recourse to a mechanism for correcting it (an organized set of practices of repair; Schegloff 1992; Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977).

In these examples, a participant used the available resources of the English language (potentially along with other forms of behavior, such as hand gesture) to compose a turn that a recipient was able to recognize as accomplishing some particular action. Does the fact that the words were spoken in English and not in another language have any bearing on how that action is accomplished? Given the well-documented facts of significant if not radical language diversity, we should expect the answer to be yes. We should expect that language diversity has consequences for the constitution of action through talk-in-interaction.

One view might be that the structural characteristics of a

language are inconsequential in this regard: the same actions get done, in the same ways, regardless of the language used. Another might be that the available repertoires of social actions are entirely incommensurate across languages (cf. Zinken and Ogierman 2011; J. Zinken, unpublished manuscript). Between these extremes lies the position that we want to defend: some social actions are more readily carried out, or are carried out in specific ways, by speakers of a given language by virtue of the lexicogrammatical properties specific to that language. Moreover, while “the same” action in a functionally general sense (e.g., request, complaint, agreement) may be possible in different languages, in reality these actions may differ in specifiable and significant ways across the languages. Because an action must be done in a different way, it may have rather different implications for subsequent action within the same sequence.

This idea suggests a new program of research. Our goal here is to explore the direction such a program might take. If we begin with an illustrative, functionally defined target action type that we might expect speakers of any language to want to carry out in social interaction, we can then compare the specific lexicosyntactic resources that languages make available as tools or vehicles for carrying out this type of action. Do the differences between these linguistic vehicles for action correspond to differences in the specific nature of that action in the case of each language?

We explore this question by focusing on a type of action that we refer to technically as an “epistemically authoritative second-position assessment.” By “assessment,” we mean the use of an evaluative expression (such as “She’s a swell gal”) to express a person’s stance toward someone or something, often in the grammatical form of an assertion. (Note that in the examples below, we also widen the scope beyond “assessments” to assertions more generally; see note 23.) Such stance taking is an important device for building, maintaining, and adjusting the affiliative links that structure our social networks. When someone makes such an evaluation in “first position” in a conversation—that is, without being prompted to do so by another speaker’s prior assessment—this is often followed in conversation by a similar assessment by a second speaker (thus, in second position) as a way for the second speaker to align (or not) with the first in stance.<sup>15</sup>

So a second-position assessment is a person’s statement of subjective evaluation that immediately follows, and thus ap-

pears to be occasioned by, and agreeing with, another person’s evaluation of the same thing. This is a common pattern in conversation, and one might assume that it is unlikely to be particularly fraught. But as recent research on English has shown (Drew 1991; Heritage and Raymond 2005; Stivers 2005; see Stivers, Mondada, and Steensig 2011 and Hayano 2012 for similar work on other languages), even while people are fully agreeing on the sentiment being expressed (e.g., “That child is a handful”), they are careful to monitor and explicitly acknowledge who has primary rights or greater authority to make such an evaluation. In an illustrative case from Heritage and Raymond (2005; also Raymond and Heritage 2006), two elderly women talking on the phone both voice the opinion that James, the grandchild of one of the women, is a mischievous boy, but they tussle—in subtle ways—over who has the primary epistemic authority to make this evaluation. The notion of relative epistemic authority is captured by Heritage and Raymond with the simple notation “K-plus” (K+) for the state of “knowing better than the other,” as opposed to “K-minus.” In their example, the woman who is the grandmother of the boy James has the primary epistemic authority to make this assessment.<sup>16</sup> As Heritage and Raymond show, a sequence of first assessment followed by second assessment is harmonic when the second speaker is also the one who has less authority to know (“K-minus”). Correspondingly, they show that when the sequence is disharmonic—that is, when the speaker who produces the agreeing evaluation in second position is the one who knows, or should know, better—speakers will go out of their way to redress a first assessment’s implied claim to epistemic priority.<sup>17</sup> They do so through various practices of speaking: a less knowing speaker may manage the disharmony by downgrading their evaluation if it is in first position (e.g., with “I think”), while a more knowing speaker may upgrade their evaluation if it is in second position (e.g., through the use of dedicated preface forms such as “oh”; see Heritage and Raymond 2005).<sup>18</sup> Our interest

16. A complication is that one’s “official status” may be invoked as a basis for authority, even where this does not align with the reality (e.g., a nanny who spends much more time with a boy than his mother does may know the boy better but may defer to the mother on certain claims anyway; see Enfield 2011*b* for discussion).

17. “Better” in this context can have to do with rights to know, degree of access, how recently the information was acquired, and so on.

18. Heritage and Raymond (2005) discuss four practices in English for accomplishing K+ second assessments. Two of these upgrade by suggesting that the position was already held or settled. The other two practices involve usurping the “firstness” of a previous assessment. Although the authors describe these multiple practices for accomplishing K+ second assessments, they do not discuss their functional differentiation in terms of either distribution or what we have described as collateral effects. We may suppose that these different options have different affordances, and thus it might be that the differences we claim between different languages are in fact contained within any particular language. However, because languages differ significantly at all levels of structure, the range of choices in one language cannot be exactly the same as that in any other. Moreover, where we have found alternate practices in a given language (for instance, “I know” vs. “if” prefaces in Caribbean

15. One property of this second-position assessment is that it may appear to be prompted by the assessment just prior, implying that the second speaker might not have thought to make this evaluation on her own. The reasons for this cannot be detailed here and indeed have only recently been explored (see, e.g., Enfield 2011*b*). What we can say is that there is a pervasive preference for agreement in conversation (Sacks 1987). Therefore, when someone agrees with a prior assessment, they are often vulnerable to being heard as just going along with what the other said. This structurally introduced bias partially explains the use and availability of pragmatically marked agreement forms such as “of course” in English (see Stivers 2011).

here is in the specific format of marked practices of speaking that manage the disharmony of a second-position assessment being made by a speaker with higher authority to make the assessment. We will refer to this balancing act—agreeing with what someone has just said while signaling that one has greater authority to have said it—as a “K+ second assessment,” or “K+2A.” Think of it as a two-part task: (1) you want to agree with what was just asserted by the other person, but (2) you want to signal that you are in a better or more rightful position than that other person to assert it. As we see below, the grammatical resources for this practice are different across languages, and these differences affect the nature of the action, so that it cannot be done in exactly the same way across the languages. Because each language’s strategy draws on lexicogrammatical resources that are used for other functions as well, this introduces “collateral effects” on how the action is done, as we explore below.

Before we present the cases, let us clarify what we mean by collateral effects. The notion of collateral effects is of central importance to our argument, and we believe that it has special promise for new research in the relation between language, cognition, and action. Here is how a collateral effect arises. First, one has a certain end or goal: one wants to do something. Second, in order to achieve that end or goal, one must select a means. Third, the means that one selects will necessarily have a certain structure: not only will some elements of those means be directly responsible for bringing about the desired ends but these elements will co-occur, often in relations of dependency, with other features of the structure as well. Finally, these co-occurring structural features will introduce effects that were not necessarily selected for. These are collateral effects: side effects of something that was selected as a means to a required end.

Take a simple example. Suppose you are a student photojournalist and your instructor gives you the task to “meet with a real person and succinctly capture his or her personality.” You are given a choice to submit your work in the form of either a written paragraph of prose or an untitled photograph. Either of these is a means to solve the task, but their different affordances introduce different collateral effects. A collateral effect of using a photograph is that it would be virtually impossible to avoid revealing the person’s physical features and thereby things like their age, gender, and state of health. By contrast, the affordances of prose would readily allow the writer to leave those aspects of the person unrevealed.

As an example from the realm of symbolic systems, consider expressive differences between the modalities of spoken language and the hand gestures that accompany speech. Imagine that your expressive goal is to describe a motion event, say, “He left the room.” If your selected means are in spoken

language only, in the same way that you can describe someone in prose without revealing their physical features, you can verbally describe this scene without making any information available as to the direction or speed of the event being described (as in the English “He left the room”). But if one chooses to depict this event using hand gestures, one is necessarily showing the motion as having happened at a certain speed and in a certain direction (regardless of whether one wanted to show this or whether an onlooker interprets that speed and direction to be part of what you intend to say). Of course, we often select cospeech gesture precisely so that we can exploit these affordances of the modality. But consider sign language of the deaf, in which one will most heavily rely on manual means for linguistic expression and not as an alternative to the vocal channel. When the manual-spatial modality is used to express motion iconically in sign/gesture space, not just the fact of motion but, unlike in the vocal modality, other information about that motion is necessarily expressed as well. These collateral effects are a product, or by-product, of the selection of means to ends.

We now turn to our comparison of these kinds of effects in the pragmatic realm of social action.

### Caribbean English Creole: *If*-Prefaced Repeats

Our first example comes from the Caribbean English Creole spoken on the island of Bequia, St. Vincent (from research by Sidnell, e.g., 2009c). The action of K+ second assessment is routinely done in this language by prefacing a repeat of a prior speaker’s talk with “if.” First, let us describe the more common function of the practice of “*if*-prefacing” in the language.

In most varieties of English, one standard way of forming polar questions (i.e., “yes-or-no” questions) is to invert the ordering of subject and auxiliary verb in simple declarative constructions (Quirk et al. 1985): “You’re going for a nap” becomes “Are you going for a nap?” Such inverted syntax can be preserved in repeats that initiate repair, so that, for instance, repair is initiated with forms such as “Am I going?” or “Am I going for a what?” In the creoles of the Caribbean, there is no auxiliary-subject inversion in polar questions. Indeed, there is no syntactic category of auxiliary verb for such an inversion to operate on (see Winford 1993). Instead, in these varieties a turn’s status as a question is constituted through a range of features of design and context. None of these features (intonation and prosody, directed gaze) can be transferred (unproblematically) to a turn that other-initiates repair in order to show that the turn being targeted was understood to be a polar question (see Sidnell 2009c for further discussion). This is where *if*-prefacing comes in.

In their basic canonical use, then, *if*-prefaced repeats are used to initiate repair of a prior turn that is formatted as a polar question. Pat’s turn at line 03 of example (15) is an instance. Here Pat and Benson are sitting side-by-side in the yard that adjoins Benson’s small house. It is a week after

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Creole, or verb-subject [VS] vs. subject-verb [SV] word orders in Finnish), they are functionally distinct, providing speakers of these languages with markedly different resources for action.

Carnival, and Pat has stopped by for a visit with Benson's neighbor.

(15) #187\_Q2 qt 51:50

- 01 Benson: *yu biin hii fu kanival (.) Pat?*  
were you here for Carnival Pat?  
02 (.)  
03 Pat:→ *if mi bin wa?*  
if I was what?  
04 Benson: *Bekwe fu kanival?*  
Bequia Carnival?  
05 Pat: *yeah:*  
*yeah*

When Benson asks Pat in line 01 if she was in Bequia for Carnival, Pat responds by initiating repair with *if mi bin wa?* "If I was what?"—an *if*-prefaced repeat. The preframing *mi bin*, "I was," combined with the question word *wa*, "what," isolates *hii fu kanival*, "here for Carnival," as the trouble source to be repaired. By prefacing the turn with *if*, Pat also shows that she heard the turn addressed to her as a polar question. At line 04, when Benson repairs the reference, he preserves the status of his turn as a question by producing it with rising intonation. At line 05, Pat answers the question with a "yeah." The function of the *if*-preface in line 03, then, is to show that the one initiating repair heard that the turn containing the trouble source was produced as a polar question. Thus, in their basic, canonical use, *if*-prefaced repeats initiate repair of a prior question turn and in so doing begin an insertion sequence that breaks the contiguity of the first and second parts of an adjacency pair (Schegloff 2007).

*If*-prefaced repeats are also deployed in a quite different sequential context—specifically, in response to assessments. In this environment, *if*-prefaced repeats are second assessments that agree with a prior. Example (16) provides an illustration. Here, Shanka and Kitana are sitting in their family yard with three young children close by. At line 01, Kiki directs one of these children—Zaria (who is Shanka's cousin and Kiki's niece)—to move and, in close succession, to "pick up that thing," an object on the ground in front of her. Kiki completes the turn with a question about the whereabouts of Zaria's cousin Roxanne. Zaria responds only to the final part of the turn, apparently pointing to where Roxanne is. Kiki then directs her attention to the slightly older girl Naksin. As Kiki produces this turn, Zaria runs away. This occasions Shanka's evaluative assessment of Zaria at line 05—*Wailnes Zaria a kom wid*, "Wildness Zaria comes with." At line 06, Kitana responds with *if Zaria wail?*, "if Zaria is wild."

(16) #134\_Q1 qt 25:38

- 01 Kiki: *Zaria muv from de.= tek a ting. wapa Rakzan.*  
Zaria move from there. Take that thing. Where is Roxanne.  
02 (3.0) ((Zaria apparently points to where Roxanne is))  
03 Kiki: *Naksin lii shii: tek da- an ting- Jak ting.*  
Naksin leave her, take that and thing, Jack's thing  
04 (2.0) ((Zaria runs away))  
05 Sh: *Wailnes Zaria a kom wid.*

- Wildness Zaria comes with  
06 Kiki:→ *if Zaria wail?*  
if Zaria is wild  
07 (0.4)  
08 *Naksin kom.*  
Naksin come here

We can see, then, that this assessment sequence is occasioned by a complex set of visible behaviors and witnessable actions: the failure to comply with the directives, the flailing hand gestures, the running away. Note that, unlike example (15), here the *if*-prefaced repeat does not elicit any response from the recipients. Indeed, it seems to close the assessment sequence, as the talk turns to other matters.

Consider next example (17). This begins with Donna calling to her nephew (who is off camera). Although he appears to respond, he does not comply with the request to "come here." After Kiki beckons the same boy again, Benson turns to Donna and remarks, "He's rude you know." This initiates a string of assessments culminating in an *if*-prefaced repeat.

(17) #139\_Q1 qt 39:25

- 01 Donna: *Gusnel kom bai hee*  
Gushnell come over here.  
02 (Gushnell): *(for yu)*  
03 Kiki: *(Gusnel) kom he.*  
come here.  
04 Benson: *°hii ruud yuno°* ((Benson turns behind him  
he's rude you know to look at Donna))  
05 Donna: *ai noo hi ruud*  
I know he's rude  
06 (1.2)  
07 Benson: *riil ruud.* ((returns gaze in front of  
real rude him))  
08 (0.4)  
09 Ezekiel: *huu ruud.*  
Who's rude?  
10 Benson: *da boi [de.*  
That boy there.  
11 Donna:→ *[if hi ruud?*  
if he's rude?

The *if*-prefaced turn in line 11 once again closes this extended sequence of assessments. With it, Donna seems to have the last word, and the talk turns to other concerns. Note that in both this and the previous example, the original first-position assessment is a vehicle for complaining about a nonparticipant third party.

As pointed out above, in their basic interactional environment, *if*-prefaced partial repeats initiate repair on a polar question. In other words, *if*-prefaced partial repeats convey that their speaker has heard a previous turn containing the trouble source to be a polar question. In these last two examples ([16] and [17]), the practice is used to treat a prior assessment as if it were a polar question. It is important to recognize in this respect that in examples (16) and (17), the turn to which the *if*-prefaced assessment responds is not, in fact, a question. Moreover, in examples (16) and (17), the *if*-

prefaced turn does not initiate a repair/insertion sequence, as it does in example (15). Rather, with these *if*-prefaced second assessments, second assessors are doing agreement. One piece of evidence for this is that like other agreements (and preferred actions more generally), these turns are closing-implicative, meaning that they help to bring topics or sequences to a close (but see our discussion of VS-formatted responses in Finnish below). By contrast, dispreferred actions and disagreements in particular tend to be sequence elaborative and to engender more talk on the same topic. So note that in example (16), after the assessment sequence at line 05–06 the talk turns to other matters (Kiki beckons Naksin) and that in example (17), a long string of assessments concludes with an *if*-prefaced repeat, at which point the participants again turn to other matters.

But these *if*-prefaced turns go beyond just agreeing. By responding to the first assessment as if it were a polar question, the *if*-prefaced turn treats a first assessment as a question and thus as epistemically downgraded relative to a declaratively formatted assertion (see Heritage and Raymond, forthcoming, on the notion of an “epistemic gradient”). By considering the context in which the practice is used, we find evidence in support of this analysis. In example (16), for instance, the first assessment is produced by Shanka, who is Zaria’s cousin, and the second by Zaria’s aunt (Kiki), who is partially responsible for her. The assessment here is a complaint, and thus the *if*-prefaced format of the second assessment may be selected to deal with a situation in which Kiki feels she needs to reassert her greater rights to evaluate the child (see Raymond and Heritage 2006). In example (17), evidence of the participants’ orientation to the matter of differential epistemic rights is found both in the prior talk and in the social relations by which they are connected to one another and to the person being assessed. Here, Benson is assessing Donna’s nephew. The design of the initial exchange is sensitive to Donna’s greater epistemic rights. Specifically, Benson produces his first assessment as a question (line 04: °*hii ruud yuno*°, “He’s rude you know”), in this way inviting Donna to confirm it, which she does in a particularly explicit way (line 05: *ai noo hi ruud*, “I know he’s rude”), not only confirming but explicitly referring to her claimed knowledge state.<sup>19</sup> The sequence continues with Ezekiel initiating repair (*huu ruud*, “Who is rude?”). After Benson repairs the reference with a demonstrative referring expression, Donna responds to the initial assessment again, now with an *if*-prefaced turn. Here again, then, relative rights to assess are at issue: this is, after all, Donna’s nephew that Benson and Ezekiel (a family friend) are assessing. The participants’ orientation to the matter of differential rights to assess, here grounded in different social relations to the person, is made explicit through the design of the initial assessments. In using the *if*-prefaced second as-

essment at line 11, Donna is pushing these already recognized rights to their limit—claiming, in effect, the last word on the matter of whether the child is rude.

*If*-prefaced second assessments work the way they do because they treat a prior assessment as if it were a question. *If*-prefacing takes its sense and import in this environment from its canonical use in the other-initiation of repair of a prior polar question. Its use in K+ second assessments is arguably derivative of a more basic use in initiating repair, and this in turn appears to be a reflex of grammar in languages that do not use syntactic inversion to form polar questions. The example of *if*-prefacing thus shows how specific grammatical patterns can have consequences for action in talk-in-interaction, as a result of the features of a lexicogrammatical vehicle for action that are imported as collateral effects of doing that action. Specifically, in initiating repair of polar questions (and in reporting them; see Sidnell 2009c), second speakers may preface the turn by “if.” Once established as an “interrogative marker,” this item “if” may be adapted to other contexts, thus opening up language-specific possibilities of social action. As we have seen above, with an *if*-prefaced second assessment, a second speaker not only agrees with a first assessment but also claims greater epistemic rights to assess the matter. A further collateral effect has to do with how this practice shapes the context for subsequent talk. Specifically, *if*-prefaced second assessments are closing implicative to such an extent that their speakers can be heard as having the last word (or trying to have it; see Sidnell 2009c for a case in which the attempt fails). So in this case, we see at least three interactional functions fused in a single practice: (1) agree with prior assessment, (2) claim epistemic priority relative to the first-assessment speaker, (3) move to close topic. As we shall see next, while there are similar practices in other languages, these are not identical.

## Finnish: Word-Order Variation

Our second example of the consequences of language-specific grammatical patterns for social actions comes from research on Finnish by Hakulinen and Sorjonen (2009; Sorjonen and Hakulinen 2009). These authors discuss a range of alternative second-assessment formats, all of which are used to agree with a first assessment.

Two typological features of Finnish turn out to be relevant in the formulation of utterance formats as means of agreement to assessments. First, Finnish is a language that has, from a grammatical point of view, “free word order” (cf. Vilkkuna 1989). This means that for example verb initiality can be deployed for a number of discourse purposes, one of them being the responding to questions, assessments and negative assertions. Secondly, in Finnish, a fully grammatical clause can be formed without an overt subject: with an anaphoric zero, a response is tied to the utterance of the prior speaker. (Hakulinen and Sorjonen 2009:149)

19. This is an alternative format for accomplishing a K+ second assessment in this variety, one that would appear to engender quite different collateral effects (e.g., it is not closing implicative).

The result is that Finnish speakers have five distinct ways of repeating some portion of a first assessment in order to agree with it.<sup>20</sup> For the purposes of illustrating our argument, we focus on just two of these responses, described by Sorjonen and Hakulinen “VS” and “SV.” These alternatives are shown in the following example (adapted from Sorjonen and Hakulinen 2009):

---

(18)

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First assessment:	<i>Se mekko on hieno</i>	
	That dress is great	
Response:	<i>se on</i>	SV
	it is	
	<i>on se</i>	VS
	Is it	

---

According to Sorjonen and Hakulinen, the first of these responses conveys the independence of the second speaker’s stance—that the second speaker, while agreeing with the proposition, held the view being expressed independently of its being articulated by the first-assessment speaker.<sup>21</sup> The second response conveys that the second-assessment speaker agrees with the first but views the matter from a different perspective. That difference may or may not be explicated in the ensuing talk. The following example illustrates the second, VS format. Here, the participants are talking on the phone and discussing the weather. In the preceding talk, each has described the beautiful weather in their present location (L is at home, and A is at her cottage in a place where L also has a cottage). Where the transcript begins, A transitions from talk about the weather conditions of the day to “autumn” generally.

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(19) Sorjonen and Hakulinen 2009

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09 A:	[ <i>Nyt kelpais olla</i> ] <i>k[i. Mut kyllä sie]</i> l on
	[now worth.would be.CLI but sure there is
	[Now it would be something. But it is really
10 L:	[ <i>Ai</i> ( ) ]
11 A:	<i>išanaa heti kun ei sada.</i>
	lovely immediately when NEG rain
	lovely there as soon as it’s not raining.
12 L:	↑ <i>Nii, Joo,</i>
	Right, Yeah,
13 A:→	[.hh <i>Kyl se on: syksy on niin mahdottoman</i>
	[ PRT it is: autumn is so impossibly
	[.hh It really is: the autumn is so extremely
14 →	<i>kaunis.</i> [h
	beautiful.h
15 L:→	[ <i>On se,</i> =
	[is it.
16 A:→	= <i>.Joo</i>
	.Yea
17	
L:	[> <i>Kyllä mä vi- ei viikonloppuna menen</i> <.hhh <i>mä meen</i>

20. The authors describe these responses as forming a “paradigm,” labeling them as follows (where V is verb and S is subject): V, V+V, V+S, S+V, V + particle. And of course, there are additional ways of agreeing that do not involve repetition.

21. As the authors note, this is similar to the use of “oh” in English in second assessments (see Heritage 2002a).

	[> sure I we- NEG weekend go.l I go.l
	[>I’m surely wee- at the weekend I’m going<.hhh I’m
	also
18	<i>kans t- kääntää ↑maat ja .hh laittamaan kuntoon varmuuden</i>
	also turn lands and put shape.ILL safety’s
	going to dig the land over and .hh put everything in
	shape to be
19	<i>vuoks kaikki jos (.) jos sitte ei tuu enää °mennyks°</i>
	sake everything if if then Ø NEG comes anymore going
	on the safe side if (.) if one doesn’t get to go there °any-
	more°.

---

So, as Sorjonen and Hakulinen explain, while the participants here clearly agree on the beauty of autumn, they are nevertheless positioned rather differently with respect to the proposition “the autumn is beautiful.” A is at this moment enjoying the beauty of the Finnish hinterlands in autumn and by expressing this as a bald, timeless statement of fact (the autumn is so extremely beautiful) can perhaps be heard as anticipating future occasions on which these same conditions will be enjoyed. L, on the other hand, is, it turns out, preparing to sell her cottage. After she agrees with the assessment “the autumn is so extremely beautiful” using a VS-formatted response, she goes on to explain that she plans to visit her cottage, potentially for the last time, the next weekend to “put everything in shape.” This, as Sorjonen and Hakulinen note, is the beginning of a troubles-telling and thus conveys quite explicitly the difference in perspective that the VS-formatted second assessment adumbrated. Key to our argument here is the authors’ observation about this and other examples like it: namely, because the VS format implies a difference of perspective, it can be topically elaborative. That is to say, use of this format can establish the relevance of an unpacking of the different perspective of the second speaker and thus result in elaboration of the topic.

Consider now the following instance, in which the response is SV-formatted:

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(20) (Field note, spring 2007)

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01 A:	<i>Se on ihan hirveen hyvä opettaja.</i>
	it is quite terribly good teacher
	He is just an extremely good teacher.
02 B:→	<i>Se on.</i>
	it is
	He is

---

Sorjonen and Hakulinen (2009:288) explain:

By responding with the format *se on* B both asserts agreement with A, and implies the independence of her stance. In the prior talk, B was the one who was telling the others about the specific event, portraying the success of the colleague’s teaching. Now that A presents her assessment, B’s turn can be heard as agreeing but simultaneously confirming A’s stance.

The following example provides a more complex case but one for which we have a fuller sense of the context, including



the ensuing talk, which provides the evidential basis for our claims about the character of the action being performed.

(21) (Kotus, T1208: 61, eastern Finland, hairdresser's)

01	C:	<i>Joo.</i> Yeah.
02		(33.7) H CUTTING CLIENT'S HAIR
03	H→	<i>.mt Voi mahoto mite o itsepäine hius.</i> oh impossible how is obstinate hair .tch Oh my god what obstinate hair.
04	C:	<i>Mm-m.</i>
05		(0.6)
06	C→	<i>.nf Ne on.</i> they is.
07		(2.0)
08	H:	<i>Mite sie sitä aina kotona ite lait.</i> how you it-PAR always home.ESS yourself make.2 How do you set it at home by yourself.
09	C:	<i>No geellillähän sitä pittää °mh°, (0.7) muottoilla.</i> well gel.ADE.CLI it-PAR Ø must shape Well you have to use gel °mh°, (0.7) to shape it.

Here the first assessment in line 03, “*mite o itsepäine hius*,” has a singular referent and employs a lexical referring expression rather than a pro-term. The response in line 06 substitutes a plural pro-term for *hius*, “hair,” but is nevertheless formatted as SV. Note now that the independence of C's stance—that she felt this way before the current occasion, independently of what has just been said—is presumed by the ensuing question from H (“How do you set it at home by yourself?”). This very question presumes that the client has encountered on previous occasions the obstinacy that the stylist has remarked upon and the client confirmed.

So in the Finnish case, there are at least two distinct formats for agreeing with a prior assessment while at the same time asserting independent epistemic access (K+) from second position. The availability of word-order alternations (among a number of other grammatical features; see Hakulinen and Sorjonen 2009) makes possible a distinction between [K+] as expressing independent access and [K+] as expressing a different perspective. And this has the collateral consequence that the use of the VS format can be topically elaborative rather than closing implicative (in contrast to the Creole case we have just seen; cf. also Lao, below).

In both the Creole and the Finnish cases, the second, agreeing, K+ assessment involves repeating a portion of the prior talk. But the languages differ substantially in the way the repeated portion is elaborated by the available lexicogrammatical resources of the language. In the Creole, speakers use a form the basic semantics of which derive from its use in the other-initiation of repair (i.e., if-) to cast the prior assessment as a question, thereby retrospectively transforming the other speaker's first assessment by suggesting that it was said with uncertainty. In Finnish, relatively free word order makes possible an alternation between VS- and SV-formatted repeats. This provides for a distinction within the broader category of K+ responses, such that the VS format implies

a different perspective. By comparing the cases of Creole and Finnish, we see that they both provide speakers with a way to do K+ second assessments, but the linguistic resources that are picked up and used as tools for this specific action are associated in the two languages with other, nonequivalent functions. This nonequivalence gives rise to different collateral effects on the specific nature of the action in the two languages. We now turn to our third case, Lao.

### Lao: Perfective Particle *lèq1*

Lao is a Southwestern Tai language spoken in Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia (Enfield 2007a). An important grammatical feature of this language, as of many other languages of the mainland Southeast Asia area (Enfield 2005, 2011a), is the frequent (though not obligatory) use of final particles. Lao has a large inventory of illocutionary particles that typically occur in final position relative to a turn-constructive unit (i.e., turn-finally, attached to either a clause or a freestanding noun phrase; Enfield 2007a, chap. 4). These are words that occur at the ends of utterances (whether those utterances are full “sentences” or fragments), with the function of indicating certain grammatical meanings, such as temporal features of an event (tense, aspect), or shades of meaning relating to the attitudes and expectations of the speaker, often in relation to the addressee. There are three broad, functionally defined categories of Lao final particles: interrogative, imperative, and factive. Loosely speaking, the factive particles are appended to assertions, forming a set of contrasting semantic specifications concerning the epistemic status of a proposition, given aspects of the speech event. For example, one may take a simple proposition such as *man2 phèng2*, “It's expensive,” and add different particles for different effects: with the particle *dèj2*, a speaker makes a claim that the assertion is news to the addressee (*man2 phèng2 dèj2*, “It's expensive you know”); with the particle *sam4*, a speaker makes a claim that the proposition is unexpected or surprising, given the context (*man2 phèng2 sam4*, “But as it turns out, it's expensive”); or with the particle *lèq1*, a speaker makes a claim that the assertion is already or independently known to be the case (*man2 phèng2 lèq1*, “It is indeed expensive”).

One way in which speakers of Lao manage the action of making a K+ second assessment is to append the particle *lèq1* to the repeated evaluation or assertion. This particle, exemplified in the previous paragraph, is termed a “factive perfective.” It is elsewhere used to signify completion of an action or event, a meaning arising from its association with a perfective verbal marker *lèw4* (which is also a full verb meaning “to finish”; Enfield 2007a:180ff.). The connection between the two meanings “completedness of an event” and “prior establishment of the truth of an assertion” should be obvious: generally, if I can assert that a narrated event is completed, I convey in the speech event that I have independent knowledge of its truth. Syntactically speaking, as a final particle, *lèq1* may occur appended to clauses or noun

phrases (usually demonstratives), as in the following two examples, respectively:

- (22) *bòø qit2 lèq1*  
 NEG lacking FAC.PRF  
 Indeed ((it's)) not lacking.
- (23) *nan4 lèq1*  
 DEM.NONPROX FAC.PRF  
 ((It's)) that ((very)) one.

The communicative function of *lèq1* is to signal independent, prior, or markedly precise knowledge of the assertion. In the following case (from a video recording of an informal visit between in-laws in rural Vientiane, Laos), speaker M uses *lèq1* to signal this sense of special precision. The sequence begins in line 2 with speaker K's question as to whether speaker P has fully recuperated after an accident. Speaker P responds with a minimal confirmation (in line 3), and speaker M (P's wife) follows this up with an elaboration, first stating that P has been able to walk for 2 days and then clarifying with the more precise statement that it has in fact been 3 days. This clarification (in line 6) is marked with *lèq1*.

(24) 020727a:195

- 2 K *khaj1 dèè1 laaj3 teep5 laø mbòø=*  
 improve somewhat much very PRF PCL  
 ((Your condition has)) improved quite a lot, right?
- 3 P *=mm5=*  
 Yeah.
- 4 M *=haa3-kòø ñaang1 daj4 sòng3 mùu4*  
 just walk can two day  
 ((He is)) just able to walk, ((since)) two days ((ago)).  
 (1.0)
- 6 *saam3 mùu4 niø lèq1*  
 three day this FAC.PRF  
 Three days today ((in fact)).

Similarly, in the next case (from a video recording of two neighbors talking in a rural Vientiane village), speaker S is talking to speaker K, who has just arrived in the village by car. Just before the segment supplied here, speaker S has been asking about another man named Loy (K's son), and S has asked whether Loy had also just come with K to the village. In the first lines of the example (lines 15–16), K explains that when Loy had the chance to get in the car to travel to the village, he had not done so. In line 18, S asks if this is because Loy was tied up with work. When K replies that he was not and that Loy had simply not wanted to come, this information is marked with the final particle *lèq1* (line 20). It conveys an air of finality to what is being said, in line with the perfective semantics of *lèq1*. Accordingly, the appended question in line 24 cannot be heard as anything other than rhetorical, and indeed the sequence closes here completely, with 20 s of silence ensuing.

(25) 030806a:160

- 15 K *phòø-dii3 vaa1 khùn5 lot1 juu1 han5 bak2-looj3 phen1*  
 right.when say ascend vehicle LOC there M-L. 3SGP

- 16 *bòø maa2 baat5-niø*  
 NEG come PCL  
 Right when ((we)) said ((let's)) get in the car there, Loy, he didn't come, now.
- 17 (0.8)
- 18 S *khaa2 viak4*  
 stuck work  
 ((He was)) tied up with work ((you mean?)).
- 19 (0.7)
- 20 K *kaø bòø khaa2 lèq1*  
 TOPIC.LINK NEG stuck FAC.PRF  
 ((He was)) not tied up!
- 21 (0.2)
- 22 *tang4 bòø maa2 sù-sùu1 niø lèq1*  
 intend NEG come that's.all TPC FAC.PRF  
 ((He)) just didn't come, that's all!
- 23 (1.5)
- 24 K *siø khaa2 ñang3*  
 IRR stuck WHAT  
 What would ((he)) be tied up with?
- 25 (20s)

As these examples show, a central function of *lèq1* is to convey a sense of “finished,” a function that is clearly traceable to the source of this word in the verb *lèw4*, meaning “to finish.” When this meaning is imported from the realm of the narrated event (i.e., what the utterance is about) into the realm of the speech event (i.e., the speech-act participants and their relationship), it comes to mean “there's nothing more to be said here now.” It is this component of the final particle *lèq1* that makes it appropriate as a vehicle for managing the K+second assessments that we have focused on above. We now turn to examples in which *lèq1* is used for carrying out this type of action, that is, where *lèq1* is appended to second-position assessments (or assertions, to be more accurate with reference to the Lao examples below) where the speaker is agreeing, on the one hand, but pushing back against a seeming claim to authority embodied in a first-position assessment, on the other.

In the following example, two elderly villagers, Mr. Ka and Mr. P, are having an informal conversation at the village home of Mr. P. They are both lifelong residents of the rice-farming plains and nearby forests and waters around the area of Vientiane. The occasion is a visit by Ka (and his wife) to P (and his wife). The two men do not know each other well, and as they discuss the local forests and the various herbal medicines that can be found there, a sense of competitiveness arises concerning their relative knowledge and expertise. At the beginning of this extract, as P holds a piece of a certain herbal medicine, he states that some people mistake it for another kind called *haak phang khii*,<sup>22</sup> but in fact he knows that it is from a plant called *kok sii ðin*. In the section of interest to us here, Ka then begins with an assertion that the herb known

22. In the recording, it is not entirely clear that the speaker says *haak phang khii*, as opposed to some other medicine; hence the brackets around the words in the transcript here. This does not detract from the point being made here.

as *haak phang khii* is plentiful (or “not lacking,” as the idiom goes) and is on his way to stating where it is plentiful (line 12), but P begins talking and names the place in line 14: “Vang Phêng Weir.” This is confirmed, or at least accepted, in line 15 by Ka. Here we are interested in line 16, spoken by P, which ties back to Ka’s utterance in line 11. Speaker Ka had used the expression *bòø qùt2*, “not lacking,” in making an assertion about the herb known as *haak phang khii*, and this expression is picked up in line 16, though this time—critically—with the addition of the factive perfective particle *lèq1*. By adding the particle, P carries out the double-barreled action we have seen in the above examples: on the one hand, he is fully agreeing with what his interlocutor has said, while on the other hand, he is making it explicit that he has a greater authority to have said it. His “agreeing” utterance in line 16 therefore has a “confirming” character (though of course he had not been asked for confirmation).

(26) 020727a:427

- 9 P *laang2 khon2 khaw3 vaa1 (haak4 phang2 khii5) vaa1 san4*  
some person 3PL say plant sp. say thus  
Some people, they say (it’s *haak phang khii*), ((they)) say.
- 10 *bòø mèn1*  
NEG be.so  
((That’s)) not so.
- 11 *qanø-nii4 kok2 sii2 din3 [qanø-nio qao*  
CLF -THIS plant sp. CLF-this PCL  
This is *kok sii din*, this.
- 12 Ka *[haak4 phang2 khii5 kao bòø qùt2*  
plant sp. TOPIC.LINK NEG lacking
- juu1 [thèw3-*  
LOC area  
Hak phang khii is plentiful, at the area of-
- 13 P [*qee5*  
yeah  
Yeah,
- 14 *kaø cang1 vaa1 faaj3 vang2 phèng2 faaj3 ñang3 qooj4*  
TOPIC.LINK so say weir VP weir what INTJ  
Like ((I)) said, Vang Phêng Weir, whatever weir, oy.
- 15 Ka *m5*  
mm  
Mm.
- 16 P *bòø qùt2 lèq1, faaj3 qanø nano nao*  
NEG lacking FAC.PRF weir CLF that TPC  
((It’s)) not lacking, that weir.

A second example of the same pattern is from a conversation between K and S, two men living in neighboring houses in the same village. Again, there is a certain competitiveness in the air, with K and S disagreeing as to whether certain rural roads around their village are currently navigable. The condition of rural roads is a pervasive topic of discussion and monitoring, as they are always changing because of weather and traffic conditions. In lines 31–33, K is offering evidence from his own recent experience to support his claim that a certain route is difficult to navigate because it is too sandy. S provides what looks like a solution to this in line 34, by stating that it would be easy to take a route that passes through a village called “Kilometer 40.” K’s next turn (in line 35)

repeats the key information—“enter (at) Kilometer 40”—yet adds the final particle *lèq1*, as if this were a kind of confirmation or more specific statement of what the prior speaker had just said (even though it is identical with it). The effect is to bring about the target action: agreeing, yet claiming greater authority to make the assertion.<sup>23</sup> And through the specific tool chosen for this action, a collateral effect is that the sequence is closed down by virtue of the basic semantics of the particle.

(27) 030806a:242

- 31 K *pajø phèè1 khaw5 kuu3 paj3 hanø lèq1*  
go distribute rice 1SG go TPC.DIST FAC.PRF  
((When I went)) to distribute rice, I went ((to that place)).
- 32 *cang1 vaa1 man2 pèn3 thaang2 khiø-saaj2*  
thus say 3SG be path sand  
Therefore, ((that’s why I)) said it was a sand road.
- 33 [*vaang1 hanø*  
time tpc.dist  
That time.
- 34 S [*maa2 phii4 maa2 phii4 lak2 sii4-sip2 phii4 sabaaj3*  
come DEM.PROX come DEM.PROX km 40 DEM.PROX easy  
Come here come here (Km 40 here), easy.
- 35 K *khaw5 lak2 sii1-sip2 niø lèq1*  
enter km 40 TPC FAC.PRF  
It is indeed at Km 40 that [you] enter.

In these examples, we have shown how Lao speakers conventionally construct a K+ second assessment by exploiting a lexicogrammatical resource that is characteristic of one of the language’s basic organizational properties, final particles (Enfield 2007a, chap. 4). The particular format chosen—the factive perfective particle *lèq1*—is well fitted to this function because of its source in a perfective aspectual meaning, along the lines of “finished.” This lends it an air of “shutting down” a sequence of interaction.

## Conclusion

Our comparative case study shows how three very different languages from three corners of the world provide their speakers with different resources for constructing a common type of social action in interaction: agreeing with what someone just said. These actions—saying things and agreeing with what others say—are crucially implicated in the way members of our language-using species affiliate with one another and thus display solidarity. These linguistically mediated actions are central to our sense of having a common outlook with someone or some group and hence are central to forming and maintaining alliances and relationships (Enfield 2009b, 2011b; Sidnell 2010). We have shown that each of the languages discussed provides sufficient tools for carrying out the specific social action we have characterized as a K+ second assess-

23. Clearly, this is, in surface terms, an agreement not to an assessment but rather to an assertion. This does not, however, detract from the essential function of this format: agreeing while claiming epistemic authority.

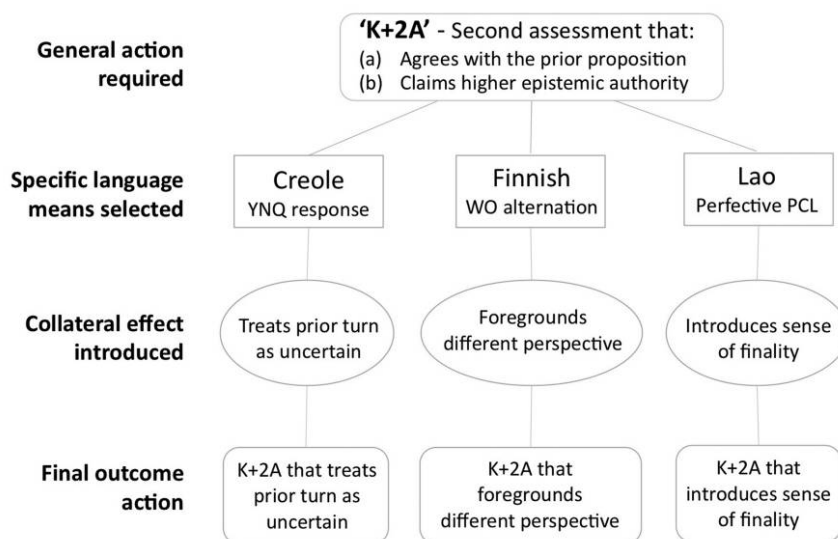


Figure 2. Collateral effects of selecting language-specific formats for carrying out a general type of social action, “K-plus agreeing second assessment” (K+2A). To carry out a certain action, a speaker has no option but to select some language-specific means for doing it; these different means introduce different effects in each language, resulting in different final outcomes. YNQ = yes-no question; WO = word order; PCL = particle.

ment—that is, agreeing with what someone just said while conveying that one has greater authority to say it—yet because of the particular tools conventionally chosen for that action, each language brings the action about in a distinct way. This is the third sense of linguistic relativity that we are proposing: differences in language-specific structures available to different speech communities give rise to differences in the ways that specific social actions are enchronically effected, thereby changing how these actions play out in sequences of social interaction. We have argued that these consequential differences are the outcome of collateral effects arising from properties of the linguistic structures that serve as tools for carrying out the target social action and that are unavoidably introduced when the structure is selected.

To study these linguistically relative collateral effects, there are two possible points of focus. First, we can focus on nuances of meaning in different language strategies. For example, we can compare the Creole case, in which the agreement format treats a prior as if it had been a question, with the Lao case, in which the particle *lèq1* draws on the semantics of factivity and perfectivity and by this comes to express finality of the agreement turn in interactional and pragmatic terms. Such effects can be subtle. But because they are necessarily cumulative and combinatorial and because every social action is necessarily tooled by the particular semiotic resources of the language in question, we contend that these subtle effects will result in substantial differences in the ways that general patterns of interaction are inflected (see also Levinson 2005; Schegloff 2006; Sidnell 2007a, 2007b, 2009a). This is especially clear in the second possible point of focus for

studying linguistically relative collateral effects, namely, the consequences of a particular action format or practice for subsequent talk. This is seen particularly clearly in the comparison of Lao and Creole second assessments with Finnish VS-formatted second assessments. While the former are implicative of sequence closure—indeed, they seem to suggest insistence on having the last word—the VS-formatted second assessments of Finnish imply different perspectives and as a result may be topic elaborating.

To summarize the findings of our case study, it may help to visualize the phenomenon of collateral effects in action (fig. 2). The figure illustrates how a general action type is conventionally approached in distinct ways in the three languages, in terms of the lexicosyntactic resources that each language provides as vehicles for that action type. Because of the different properties of the language-specific vehicles, each language enables speakers to hit the same broad target but never quite in the same way: different collateral effects are introduced.

In conclusion, the question of linguistic relativity continues to be debated in current anthropology, attracting as much interest as ever. Amid continued debate and further studies concerning the consequences of language diversity for cognition and cultural context, we have tried to formulate a new, third direction for this work. Our third locus for linguistic relativity can be found in the enchronic context of social action as carried out through talk in everyday interaction. Because such social action is done with the tools that our languages provide and because these tools are structurally overdetermined through their rich meanings and multiple

functions, the conventionalized selection of such tools will have language-specific collateral effects on the final nature of the action. On this view, the language you speak makes a difference in the social actions you can perform. The language-specific vehicle or means for an action—even where that action is a general goal or end that we expect people will want to pursue in any cultural context—will shape the action as a function of the structures it introduces. Our case study suggests ways in which a general target action type can be toolled in different ways by different languages (and, indeed, where such tooling cannot be avoided) because of structural differences in the language-specific vehicles for conventionally carrying out that action. By selecting a certain lexicosyntactic vehicle as a means for achieving social-action ends, speakers unavoidably introduce associated features, thereby introducing the collateral effects that we suggest are imported by limitations of lexicosyntactic resources for the construction of social action through primarily linguistic turns at talk. This means that differences in language structure are not associated only with differences in patterns of thought or cultural context. Differences in language structure lead to linguistically relative collateral effects, which lead in turn to differences in our very possibilities for social agency.

### Acknowledgments

This article began as a 2009 draft by Sidnell suggesting a third form of linguistic relativity in the domain of social action, sent to Enfield for comments in June 2009. Subsequent discussions led to significant collaboration on development of the central idea and coauthorship of the final version. We gratefully acknowledge comments and suggestions for improvement of earlier drafts from five anonymous reviewers, Mark Dingemans, Paul Drew, Susan Ehrlich, Kobin Kendrick, Paul Kockelman, Steve Levinson, Tanya Romaniuk, and members of the Socio-Cultural Linguistic Working Paper Series at the University of Toronto, especially Frank Cody, Nais Dave, Alejandro Paz, Lorna Pitre, Ivan Kalmar, and Michael Lambek.

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## Comments

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Jack Sidnell and N. J. Enfield have proposed “a new program of research” for examining linguistic relativity that looks at the ways in which language-specific lexical-grammatical resources are used to accomplish particular types of social actions in conversation. They have chosen “epistemically authoritative second-position assessments” as a test case. These

are assessments about someone or something through which a speaker agrees with what was previously asserted by another speaker and at the same time claims a higher “epistemic authority.” Starting from the observation that languages do the job of performing these assessments with different linguistic resources, the authors show that the use of each type of resource brings about a different outcome. There are at least two important assumptions in the project, both of which are based on prior research by conversation analysts. One is that conversationalists have a preference for agreement (hence, the default second assessment is usually in agreement with the first), and the other is that speakers want to make sure that their superior rights to know about someone or something are recognized and therefore mark their utterance appropriately (how such “superior rights” are established deserves attention). In addition, there is a methodological-theoretical working assumption, namely, that one can marry the study of grammatical forms with conversation analysis. This working assumption has generated a substantial body of articles and PhD dissertations, especially by students in applied linguistics at UCLA and in linguistics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Sidnell and Enfield continue in this tradition, this time tackling the old question of the impact of linguistic structures on thinking and doing. They bring some new data to the discussion of linguistic relativity and present a hypothesis that can be further tested and debated. For this they should be commended. Until recently, most of the work on linguistic relativity has been either anecdotal or experimental (Lucy 1992*a*, 1992*b*). The examination of naturally occurring conversational interactions provides a much-needed empirical testing ground for an important and yet elusive issue. At the same time, in their choice of method, analytical categories, and examples, the authors have also implicitly and perhaps unintentionally supported a view of social-action-as-language that ends up reducing the scope of linguistic relativity and the potential impact of their work. The problem, of course, lies not in the claim (made explicitly at the beginning of the article) that words or utterances are (meaningful) actions, something that is now generally accepted (even though sometimes forgotten) by linguists, philosophers, and social scientists, but in the second part of the article, where we are told that specific grammatical choices have “nonlinguistic” effects and yet we find out that those effects are quite “linguistic”; for example, they are about whether a topic is dropped or further expanded (through talk) or about different perspectives (another language-mediated concept).

This means that the authors have simultaneously widened and narrowed the scope of the discussion of linguistic relativity. They have widened it by including an approach, conversation analysis, that offers ways of conceptualizing language use that were not thinkable among the first generations of linguistic anthropologists, and they have narrowed it by leaving out nonlinguistic actions or not engaging in an explicit discussion of what they mean by “nonlinguistic.” Such a dis-

discussion is necessary, in my view, because Whorf's articles show that he was comfortable speculating about ways in which language patterns are connected to ways of doing things beyond language behavior, for example, ways of doing science, ways of handling containers with flammable substances, ways of preparing for some future event.

Given the fact that both Sidnell and Enfield have shown themselves elsewhere to be interested in and sensitive to the nonverbal aspects of social interaction, I was disappointed that their "new program" of research did not include the idea that "collateral effects" might include nonlinguistic actions or (more likely) a combination of linguistic and nonlinguistic actions, such as entering a house (from a particular side or entrance), sitting down (in a particular spot), or looking at others or avoiding eye-gaze—aspects of the interaction that I know both authors are attuned to in their visual recordings of interactions and that I also found important in determining what happens next and how to interpret what is being said or not said during otherwise quite routinized and predictable interactions (e.g., Duranti 1992).

Finally, I want to mention another aspect of the relativity issue that, in my view, needs attention in any new research program, namely, the issue of freedom of action or, to use a term more common in the social sciences, the issue of agency (Duranti 2004, 2011). Sidnell and Enfield's discussion seems to imply a certain inevitability of the collateral effects of linguistic choices, but that does not have to be the case. In at least one of the articles they cite (Heritage and Raymond, forthcoming), it is shown that even though yes/no questions restrain the scope of possible answers, speakers can resist the "field of constraints" established by the question and thus assert their rights to go along with the request implicit or explicit in the prior yes/no question.

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### Universal Dilemmas and Collateralized Practices

In this fascinating paper, Sidnell and Enfield take up a fairly well understood Anglo-American interactional dilemma and examine its management in other languages and cultures. The dilemma arises from the fact that speakers of English and other languages treat "going first" as indexing greater epistemic authority and associate "going second" with lesser rights and claims. The dilemma arising from this emerges when a less epistemically entitled speaker evaluates some circumstance ahead of a more entitled one, thus setting the "terms of agreement" for the more knowledgeable party and obliging

the latter to respond from a second, and incongruously secondary, position (Heritage and Raymond 2005). In the English case, resources for redressing this incongruity involve a variety of practices that lower the epistemic claims of the first speaker and/or raise those of the second. In the following case, Jenny, a family friend, evaluates Vera's son Bill:

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Jenny: Yeh .h well of course you see Bill is so good wih th'm ez  
well is[n't h[  
Vera: [.kl [That's ri:ght yes.

---

In keeping with her inferior epistemic status with regard to Bill, Jenny downgrades her evaluation with a tag question, while Vera's response asserts her superior epistemic rights with an explicit confirmation positioned prior to a more acquiescent agreement token ("yes"; Raymond 2003). Here, the "official" business of Vera's turn is agreement, but the resources through which the agreement is managed provide a social lamination, coloring its meaning in terms of the epistemic relations between the parties.

The English language has many expressions for this coloring of agreement: endorse, approve, concur, affirm, confirm, and acquiesce, among others. However this epistemic dilemma is probably not restricted to speakers of English. Indeed, as Sidnell and Enfield implicitly suggest, it may be a quite general, possibly even a universal, one. In every culture, persons who are "less expert" on the families, livestock, tools, environments, histories, and experiences of others may find themselves "going first" with an evaluation of those things, thereby motivating their recipients to reassert their rights to their own epistemic territory (Goffman 1971; Kamio 1997) and to the social identities associated with those rights (Goffman 1959; Heritage 2011; Raymond and Heritage 2006; Sacks 1984). But if these kinds of epistemic incongruities are widely—if not universally—experienced, they are nonetheless indexed in an immense variety of ways. In some languages, such as Japanese (Hayano 2011; Kamio 1997), specific particles are dedicated to indexing K+/K− epistemic relations, while in others, such as English and, as Sidnell and Enfield illustrate, Finnish, Lao, and the Caribbean English Creole of Bequia, a variety of more indirect means are deployed to the same end.

The pragmatic logics of these indirect means are remarkably various, even in the specimens to hand. While an Anglo-American can assert epistemic priority by usurping the "firstness" of a previous assessment through the production of a second with a tag question or in negative interrogative format (Heritage 2002*b*; Heritage and Raymond 2005), thereby obliging the first speaker to respond in a newly created second position, a resident of Bequia can achieve priority by responding to an assertion as if it were a question, thereby also implicating a definitive finalization of the matter. Quite a different avenue to this same outcome is achieved through the Lao factive perfective *lèq1*.

As Durkheim (1995 [1912]) taught, territories of knowl-

edge and belief are intimately associated with the boundaries of human groups. These boundaries and the actions that make, sustain, reinforce, or defend them are sites where relational indexing involves a confluence of epistemics and affiliation (Stivers, Mondada, and Steensig 2011). Some of the linguistically collateral effects that Sidnell and Enfield canvass may emerge from the associations of specific practices with affiliation and disaffiliation. For example, English speakers who wish to reply to questions while conveying that they were redundant may preface the response with *oh* (Heritage 1998), but similarly placed Mandarin speakers may suffix a turn with final *-a* (Wu 2004). But final *-a* is associated with oppositional stances across a range of uses, and its use to index a redundant question may, therefore, be more agonistic than its English counterpart.

The Japanese (*yo/ne*) particle system effectively grammaticalizes the marking of relative epistemic authority, thus institutionalizing its relevance for speakers of that language. Perhaps it is no accident, therefore, that it was the Japanese scholar Akio Kamio who did so much to formulate the concept of a territory of knowledge and to assert its relevance for pragmatics. Perhaps patrolling epistemic territory is more codable in Japanese or more cognitively salient for its speakers. Perhaps pushing back on redundant questions is more aggressive in Mandarin. Yet in Japanese, as in all languages, there are multiple ways of marking epistemic territory, and unless and until we have mapped out these ways and their “collaterals” for each language, it will prove difficult to reach Sidnell and Enfield’s enticing goal. Nonetheless, by focusing their analysis on a sequentially delimited and socially similar dilemma across sociocultural contexts, they have surely shown us how the search can be prosecuted with some chance of success.

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This paper offers a welcome extension of the approaches hitherto taken to the implications of using a given language. The key argument occurs toward the end of the text. “Because [much] social action is done with the tools that our languages provide and because these tools are structurally overdetermined through their rich meanings and multiple functions, the conventionalized selection of such tools will have language-specific collateral effects on the final nature of the action.” This argument applies equally to other forms of linguistic relativity and certainly to its classical form: to the extent that we use language for conceptualization, we can do so only in a particular language, and its distinctive forms will shape—the shape analogy is as good as any—our thinking. This kind of shaping is uncontroversial, for instance, for pho-

netics, giving what is called accent; the parallel is made clear in John Lucy’s idea of semantic accent (e.g., Lucy 2003): the semantic structure of a language “shaping” the meanings for which it is used. This paper shows that not only sounds and ideas but also social actions carry an accent.

What remains hard to sort out is what is a goal and what is a collateral effect. For the authors, this does not seem to be problematic, as they illustrate in a little parable: “First, one has a certain end or goal: one wants to do something. Second, in order to achieve that end or goal, one must select a means.” This is perilously close to modern Western models of the goal-oriented *Homo oeconomicus*, as well as to models of pure thought existing before any symbolization (Leavitt 2011:50–51). Do goals exist in some abstract form before all formulation? Are they just things “one has”? Surely, our goals are always already at least partly modeled by the means we have used and expect to use: in Leonard Cohen’s words (from the song “First We Take Manhattan”), we are “guided by the beauty of our weapons.” In some cases, as in that of poetry (Jakobson 1960), a central goal of the action is precisely the maximization of the means. How much of social action is more like the production of a poem, or what Lévi-Strauss (1962) called *bricolage*, than like a simple chain of given goal and chosen tool?

The “expected” universality of some social goals (“target action type[s] that we might expect speakers of any language to want to carry out in social interaction”) is the basis for the authors’ comparative framework; but what are these expectations based on? The example chosen, of agreeing with a statement while asserting one’s greater authority to have made the statement, would, for instance, simply not have been part of the traditional linguaculture (Friedrich 1989) of northern Athabaskan-speaking band societies. There, the appropriate response to an assertion made by someone with less authority to make it than you have is silence. The kinds of interactions found in the examples given here would have represented an unacceptable violation of personal autonomy (Guy Lanoue, personal communication).

This is not to deny the usefulness of pointing out a specifically social dimension of linguistic relativity: on the contrary. I would like to finish with an example. Many Indo-Aryan languages feature the pervasive use of what are called compound verbs: a concatenation of two verbs, the first conveying the referential sense while the second, labeled the vector, light verb, or explicator verb, carries the grammatical information and some kind of semantic or social nuance. Among the most common such usages is that of the verbs “give” and “take” to indicate the “benefactive” directionality of the action toward someone else or toward oneself: “the action of a transitive verb is potentially either for the benefit of the agent or for the ‘benefit’ of someone or something else—directed back toward or away from the agent, in other words, but this remains *latent* in [New Indo-Aryan] until specified by vectors *take* and *give*, even when . . . such information appears redundant” (Masica 1993:329). In Hindi,

these are among the most commonly occurring vectors, and their use seems to have been increasing, to the point that “*de* ‘give’ is coming to be the default means of marking an action done for the benefaction of others; and *le* ‘take’ is coming to mark benefaction for oneself” (Poornima and Painter 2010: 94).

What “give” and “take” vectors add to an utterance is easy to grasp in practice but hard to place linguistically: they mark flows of intentional action and allow (encourage?) a constant explicit taking of responsibility for such flows as a normal part of discourse. How might such a linguistic resource inflect the reputed intense interpersonal relationality of the societies it marks (e.g., Roland 1988)? Sidnell and Enfield’s third kind of linguistic relativity gives us a theoretical frame for questions of this kind.

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### The Role of Systems in LR3

Sidnell and Enfield’s delineation of a third locus for linguistic relativity (LR3) constitutes a promising new front in our efforts to understand the social significance of language. Their articulation of LR3 adumbrates a range of concrete empirical questions that combines the study of linguistic form with that of language use and of social action, thereby bridging the gulf between linguistics and more socially oriented disciplines.

Sidnell and Enfield’s articulation of LR3 clearly forms part of the broader LR tradition, but their account of LR3 appears to diverge from that tradition by downplaying a key aspect of work focusing on the first and second loci of linguistic relativity (LR1 and LR2, respectively), namely, that LR effects are due not only to the semantico-referential and/or indexical properties of particular linguistic elements but also to the participation of these elements in *systems* of elements. Sidnell and Enfield’s neglect of systems as such raises the question of whether the kinds of communicative resources involved in LR3 phenomena do not exhibit these systemic effects or whether such effects remain significant, even if they do not loom large in the Sidnell and Enfield’s discussion.

In the LR1 and LR2 traditions, the LR effects attributed to, say, spatial-relational elements are explained not only in terms of the meanings of specific elements but also in terms of the properties of whole sets of semiotically related spatial-reference terms. One of these properties is the “practical closure” that they exhibit with respect to particular communicative tasks, namely, that they constitute, as a set, the principal ready-at-hand means for achieving that task. Briefly consider a language like Guugu Yimidhirr, which employs a set of

elements to express spatial reference with respect to an absolute frame of reference. Such a system exhibits practical closure because although there may be means to express relative rather than absolute spatial reference, speakers do not habitually avail themselves of those means. The second important property is the systemic property of the set of elements in question. For example, in the case of Guugu Yimidhirr, the specific lexicogrammatical elements used to express absolute spatial reference stand in a variety of semiotic relationships with respect to each other, in classical structuralist form: they are interlinked by sets of relations that constitute the set of elements as a system that reflects a particular global understanding of how space is organized (i.e., in terms of an absolute frame of reference). Practical closure and these systemic properties together guide users of such a system to conceive of spatial relations in terms of absolute frames of reference.

Although we may not necessarily expect the communicative resources that Sidnell and Enfield find to be involved in LR3 phenomena to exhibit the same kind of systemic properties as those involved in LR1 and LR2 phenomena (e.g., conversation analysis does not usually emphasize “paradigmatic” relationships among various interactional strategies), practical closure and systemic properties presumably remain important in LR3. Taking the specific case of K+ second assessments (K+2A), it is not clear that we can fully understand the social-interactive effects of the linguistic resources employed in expressing K+2A without an account of (1) the full set of resources that speakers of a given language typically employ to achieve K+2A and (2) the properties of that set of resources as a system. Consider the use of *if*-prefaced repeats (IPRs) in Guyanese Creole (GC) for K+2A, which is shown not only to serve K+2A functions but also to exhibit topic-closing functions. Without knowing the full set of K+2A resources, it is unclear whether IPR is the only ready-at-hand resource for K+2A and hence whether GC speakers are constrained to simultaneously make a topic-closing move each time they express K+2A. If the set of resources employed in GC K+2A also includes resources that permit the expression of K+2A without topic closing, the analysis of IPRs as having an unintended topic-closing effect is called into doubt. Crucially, this issue cannot be resolved by examining IPRs alone but requires examination of the complete set of communicative resources that exhibit practical closure with respect to the K+2A communicative function. On this view, LR3 effects emerge not from specific communicative strategies, such as IPR, but from the systemic properties of the set of functionally related elements of which they form a part. It is important to note that Sidnell’s and Enfield’s discussion of Lao and, especially, Finnish K+2A strategies appears to go much farther toward an analysis of the full set of K+2A strategies, but it is nevertheless interesting that the full extent of K+2A resources is not clarified in any of these cases. It appears likely, however, that a comprehensive account of LR3 phenomena requires taking seriously the systemic properties



of the set of elements that exhibit practical closure with respect to the interactional move under consideration.

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Benjamin Whorf, a subtle master of the technical linguistics of the 1930s, rethought the issues of “linguistic relativity” in this light. He concerned himself with what we now term the ontologization of linguistic forms, the “ontic commitments” of speakers revealed in and by how they use certain “fashions of speaking”—as we say, grammatically conforming collocations. The question is whether—and how—speakers come to project the categories evidenced by arrangements of form in language into beliefs about the “reality” they experience and conceptualize through linguistic denotation of them and other semiotic behaviors.

Whorf went much farther than Boas, Sapir, and Bloomfield in this respect, even though he was limited by the focus of the linguistics of his day on words and their internal structure (or morphology). First, he extended the Boasian concept of the “grammatical category”—a systematic formal coding of some conceptual distinction (implying categorization of denotata)—to include not only those coded by ever-present, transparent, and localizable pieces of the verbal signal. Whorf pointed to subtle, implicit denotational categories immanent in possible, but perhaps only occasionally occurring, configurations of the categories of the first kind. His gradient in two dimensions contrasted “overt, selective” categories and “covert, modulus” categories. The reflexive consciousness of well-intentioned laypersons focuses on the most overt and selective categories in their ontologizations, in particular the elements of the various major lexical classes that he termed “lexations,” yielding such trivialities as the allegedly numerous Inuit “words,” that is, simple noun roots, denoting phenomena experienced as snow. (Boas himself had listed four.) Pointing out laypersons’ exceedingly limited reflexive consciousness of covert, modulus categories, Whorf, like Boas, posited a principled chasm between what speakers of a language actually psychologically process—and inclusively code—about denotable “reality” and how they rely on their language’s relatively overt and selective categories in their rationalizing ontological claims about “what is ‘out there.’”

Second, in this light Whorf went on to posit a complex dialectical process in which language plays a role in but does not directly determine the enculturated intentionality of its users, the “habitual thought world” that constitutes their default ontology—essentially “cultural concepts”—as they go about their practically oriented social action. His argued this by an extended example, comparing two such linguistic dialectics: (1) the “standard average European” (SAE) cultural

concept of “time” in our social universe of calendar and clock reckoning, denoted by grammatical measure phrases, as against the systematic semantics of SAE “tense” as a grammatical category, with which SAE natives confuse “time”; and (2) the Hopi cultural concept of “emergent realizability” (*tunatyá*) in the social universe of illocutionary forces of “making manifest,” as against the systematic semantics of Hopi aspect  $\times$  modality  $\times$  evidentiality as an intersected space of grammatical categories (Hopi lacks a grammatical category of tense as such; see Whorf 1956 [1940]:213). For further detail, see Silverstein (1979, 2000). The key idea here is the only partial reflexive visibility of denotational category structures to speakers and the consequent dialectical emergence of truly culturally “relative” ontologizations of the “realities” that language users denote.

Several of Whorf’s issues about language as an instrument of denotation are also relevant when considering language as a modality of “doing things with words,” that is, constituting social action via its indexical (context-indicating) and iconic (figurational) capacities, kinds of goal-oriented semiosis that cross-cut but intersect its denotational functionality<sub>1</sub>. Although people may use language purposively to refer to entities and to modally predicate states of affairs about them, there is indeed a dialectic process that comes into view in how people, using language seemingly to “talk about” matters—its generally recognizable denotational function<sub>1</sub>—come functionally<sub>2</sub> to coordination as sentient, agentive, identity-bearing interlocutors through the effects of indexical signals multifariously and pervasively patterned over the duration of discourse. With vanishing rarity—except in courts and other such institutions of state or church power—does one encounter a single turn at talk in which someone utters his or her interactional purpose in speaking that very utterance (a so-called explicit performative), and even then its effectiveness as social action is hardly guaranteed (as even J. L. Austin recognized).

Sidnell and Enfield’s transcripts in three different cultural milieus all involve discursive acts of alignment to the denotational content communicated in a prior turn by an interacting other, although what we, as students of social interaction, can infer about what is going on in the way of actual social action in each case is not treated in sufficient ethnographic detail to hazard more than a guess. Sidnell and Enfield contribute an interesting hypothesis in the realm of pragmatics, parallel to Whorf’s demonstration (1956 [1940]:213) in the realm of denotation that the Hopi category of “eye-witness evidentiality” is an affordance for a speaker to denote “pastness” by implying prior experience of whatever is reported, a Gricean “implicature.” They suggest that the respective forms in St. Vincent Creole, Finnish, and Lao by which a speaker responds to an other’s earlier proposition, seeming plus-or-minus to repeat it, indexes the current speaker’s greater epistemic warrant or license to make such a claim. Now it remains to investigate the hypothesis ethnographically.

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In wonderfully lucid prose, Sidnell and Enfield give us a brilliant review of linguistic relativity and a welcome proposal for a social approach to it. “Collateral effects” is a felicitous term for the analogic processes and covert categories involved in relativity. In admiration of the proposal’s systematicity and scope and in sympathy with its social perspective, I have three concerns: How new is it, how internally coherent, and how well supported by evidence?

How different is Sidnell and Enfield’s proposed form of relativity from Silversteinian indexicality; how different are the (if I may) dependent variables “meaningful social behavior” and “social action”? Agreeing while asserting authority sounds like the kind of social action accomplishable with classic T/V alternation. Sidnell and Enfield hold that the difference lies in their “specific sense of the sequences of interlocking actions that people carry out,” while indexicality, in contrast, encompasses only a “general sense.” But does the different evidentiary scale constitute a difference in kind of phenomenon? Although indexicality studies rarely offer the microinteractional analysis of conversation analysis (CA), the consequences of T/V selection can be shown unfolding similarly in interaction (Jacquemot 1994). We might even say it is the forms’ collateral effect to appear to index general statuses.

Regarding the coherence of the argument, Sidnell and Enfield’s principal claim morphs from strong proposals that “different languages can have different effects on the kinds of social actions that can be achieved” and “different languages can provide different opportunities for social action” to the more modest proposal that although “the same” action may be possible in different languages, the ways they differ have implications for subsequent action. Sometimes the claim seems tautological: the fact that different languages provide different ways of doing an action has implications for how that action is accomplished.

Which is demonstrated? To my eye, the extracts analyzed here actually suggest that all three languages have a device for “agreeing while asserting greater authority” that is similarly closing-implicative; that is, the same social action and subsequent action are accomplished in all three, despite different linguistic means. Sidnell and Enfield emphasize that Finnish has an alternative that allows topic elaboration instead of closure, but example (17) shows that Creole also has an alternative (“I know + repetition”) with a similar effect. Puzzlingly, this is not incorporated into the analysis. It is not clear how this comparison shows that there is a difference across languages in the kind of social action that can be accomplished or even a consequential difference for subsequent action.

Other puzzling bits of the argument can no doubt be fleshed out as it is developed more fully: collateral effects derive from “other, nonequivalent functions,” but the word-

order patterns of Finnish are discussed only in their function of agreeing with assessments, so it is difficult to see how their differential effects are collateral: to/from what? If in its “baptismal” function (initiating repair) the Creole *if*-form is not closing implicative, whence this collateral force, especially when we know that there are three-part question events that return the last word to the questioner (Mehan 1979)? And why does a trace of a question form have such collateral force in Creole, when in the Lao example (25), a full question is dismissed as unhearable as anything other than rhetorical, that is, as not having even the collateral, much less frontal, force of its form?

Grammatical resources for social actions not only differ across languages but also vary within languages (including these), with more than one form for accomplishing a given social action, as the authors acknowledge in footnotes. “Strategies” for social actions, then, might be better located in speakers than in languages. But if these are speakers’ strategic choices (and do hearers not have choices, too?), then does linguistic relativism once again recede as a will-o’-the-wisp?

Collateral effects depend on a failure of the semantic bleaching that is generally seen in grammaticalization. Without assuming that origin is destiny or circularly treating subsequent actions as both topic and resource, how do we know that for native speakers the putative nuances of the baptismal function of a form are brought along to its extended functions? This leads to the general question of supporting evidence. Since this is a programmatic piece, it is appropriate that only a few illustrations are given. Rare as it is nowadays, I would welcome at least the kind of summary characterization of the corpus that Schegloff (1968) gave of his “roughly 500” phone conversations, since in that classic CA work, one deviant case led to a reanalysis. Although phrased in terms of affordances, Sidnell and Enfield’s thought-provoking proposals about specific linguistic forms are still relatively causal propositions that are prey to confirmation bias and demand testing against a body of data (not my field’s strongest suit). I am certain that these seasoned, innovative researchers can provide such evidence, and I look forward to its exploration in future work.

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**Situated Action Is the Primary Locus of Linguistic Relativity**

Students of linguistics and psychology invariably find the idea that speakers of different languages “think differently” initially fascinating. However, neo-Whorfian research (e.g., Boroditsky

2001; Levinson 2003*b*; Lucy 1992*a*) has interpreted this intuition in a very literal manner (with the book being cognitive psychology), and in my experience, students' fascination often turns into bemusement or incredulity in the face of the peculiar things psychologists ask their experimental participants to do. I think that the approach outlined by Sidnell and Enfield, with its promise of a comparative science of human social action, has the potential to point future students interested in the idea of linguistic relativity in a direction that will allow them to realistically explore the consequences of language diversity.

There are many points of interest in this paper, and I want to focus on the following. I want to ask, What will be the main research question of the program of work sketched by Sidnell and Enfield? As researchers devote their energies to studying the linguistic relativity of social action, this line of work will likely become associated with one guiding question. For example, most neo-Whorfian articles present their big question as follows: Does language influence (affect, restructure) thought? What will the new question be for researchers of grammar-related diversity in social action?

Sidnell and Enfield formulate their question in different ways. They ask, "Does the fact that the words were spoken in English and not in another language have any bearing on how that action [completing a *howareyou* sequence] is accomplished?" They also suggest, "[T]he language you speak makes a difference for the social actions you can perform." These two ways of presenting the matter can be closely related, but they also have their distinct affordances. As an exercise in exploring the linguistic relativity of social action, let us consider the trajectories of thinking (and doing research) that can be projected from these two formulations.

The first question—Does grammar have a bearing on how an action is accomplished?—can suggest that social actions exist independently of the specific verbal and nonverbal acting that brings them about and that local practices of speaking might "affect" their realization. On this view, saying that social action is a "locus" of linguistic relativity can be taken to mean that social action is one of the "dependent variables" on which language exerts its "influence." Along these lines, the research program that Sidnell and Enfield outline could join the neo-Whorfian grooves of thinking, so that the question will become Does language influence social action? I have argued elsewhere that this way of asking the question (Does language influence thought?) gets our thinking about language, culture, and mind on the wrong track. It codifies the abstraction and decontextualization of "language," "thought," and "action" from situated real-time speaking, thinking, and acting, and it is accompanied by an entire glean of red herrings, such as the classic supposed problem of the incommensurability of concepts.

The second question—Does grammar have a bearing on what social actions speakers can perform?—can suggest that talk in a particular grammatical format enters into the real-time constitution of social actions. On this view, saying that

social action is a "locus" of linguistic relativity can be taken to mean that it is in situated (social) activity that talk in a particular grammatical format provides one of the material resources for the moment-by-moment accomplishment of cognition and action (Clark 2006; Goodwin 2000).

It is my impression that Sidnell and Enfield have sympathies for both of these ways in which research on the linguistic relativity of social action might play out. Maybe it is possible to keep both of these ways of thinking together. The line of work discussed by Sidnell and Enfield can open up a radically different way of thinking about the relationship of linguistic to cultural and cognitive diversity, if we manage to resist the temptation of thinking of social action as merely a new dependent variable and treat it instead as the primary site for the situated development of cultural practice and cognitive skills. On this view, situated social action is not so much a third as the primary locus of linguistic relativity.

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## Reply

### Collateral Effects, Agency, and Systems of Language Use

We sincerely thank the commentators for carefully engaging with our work. We are encouraged by their support of this line of research, and we are especially grateful for their critical input toward clarifying our arguments.

We begin with "collateral effects." While in the article we focus on linguistic structures, both Duranti and Woolard wonder about the breadth of scope of the idea. We expect to see these effects in a broad range of domains and not only the linguistic or "verbal." Collateral effects are caused by dependencies among the multiple features of any structure that one may select for some function. Choosing a structure on the basis of some subset of its features does not mean you are exempt from "choosing" other features at the same time. When you choose what car to buy, your choice may be guided by specifications such as carrying capacity and fuel consumption, but whether or not you care what color it is, you cannot buy a car that is not some color. Suppose that while you truly do not care about the color, the only car available is canary yellow. A collateral effect of this purchase is that the color, something you did not select but rather "settled for," will attract comments in a way that dark blue would not have. Coming closer to language, Duranti asks whether we see collateral effects in "nonverbal" behavior such as gestures. Yes, we do. For instance, if you want to use your hand to depict the path of motion of something you saw, you cannot avoid showing the motion as occurring in a certain direction (expressible as a cardinal direction such as north-northwest), even when this is irrelevant to your expressive purpose (see

Enfield 2009a:17–18). Could such collateral effects of the manual-visuospatial medium have consequences for social action? As Duranti suggests, this is a matter for future research.

On Woolard's query regarding the distinction between our "third locus" of linguistic relativity and "Silversteinian indexicality," we refer the reader to the main article text, and especially footnote 4, where we address this directly. Woolard suggests that "agreeing while asserting authority sounds like the kind of social action accomplishable with classic T/V alternation." Let us clarify why these are different. By "action" here we mean "speech acts" such as requesting, inviting, offering, complaining, excusing, agreeing, and disagreeing. These can be done rudely or politely, with familiarity or distance, with either T or V pronoun forms. A T/V alternation cannot accomplish an action in and of itself, although of course some specific utterance containing a T or a V can accomplish the action of agreement (or K-plus agreement). Unlike the indexical meanings associated with T and V forms, the practices we discuss operate independently of the enduring social relations of the parties and are in principle usable by anyone, precisely because the K-plus versus K-minus distinction is always calibrated relative to some particular thing talked about.

In defining collateral effects, we presuppose that people have goals and that they select from among means to achieve those goals. This strikes us as uncontroversial, although Leavitt questions it. His worry cannot be that people do not have goals. Think of the millions of big, middle-sized, and tiny goals that fill up your life. You need milk and there is none in the fridge. Your goal: get some milk. To achieve it, you could drive to the store, or you could call your friend who is coming over and say, "Can you pick up some milk on the way?" If Leavitt means that the matter is not always so simple, then we agree. For one thing, goals can change as we go along. For another, a single piece of behavior can fulfill multiple goals. For yet another, culture does not just give us ways of meeting our goals; it also specifies the kinds of goals we should, and sometimes must, try to meet. Choosing specific solutions can introduce new, subordinate goals, and this is another example of collateral effects. Leavitt also seems to suggest that the determining of goals, and their selected solutions, can be distributed across individuals and through time in interaction. We agree that the matter of goals is nuanced in these ways, but this does not change our point. People seldom act without reasons or without purpose, and the means they select to meet their goals may introduce secondary, collateral effects.

If linguistic relativity effects are real, then different human groups have different realms of possibility. Since our domain of interest is action, this raises the issue of human "agency," as Duranti says. Our view is that collateral effects can be an agency-reducing force, taking "agency" roughly to mean the degree to which we can determine what we do and how we do it (Duranti 1990; N. J. Enfield, unpublished manuscript; Kockelman 2007). Once you have chosen a strategy for certain

reasons, then your free will is in a sense now used up, and you accept the collateral effects. PC or Mac? Rent or buy? Chinese or Italian? Whatever the reason for your decision, a higher-level choice will determine many other choices for you. Woolard also points to agency in suggesting that strategies for social actions "might be better located in speakers than in languages." But we are not forced to choose between people and practices. Yes, there are people's motives in specific circumstances, but then people have limited conventions to draw on and hence not unlimited agency.

A question raised by both Heritage and Leavitt is whether we expect the K+2A action to be a human universal. Our reason for thinking that it probably is universal is that we expect all human social groups to possess the basic ingredients for this action: an economy of information, normative organization of rights and duties, and individuals' motives to maintain textured sets of social relations through practices of (dis)affiliation. (For the ethnographic grounding of these assumptions, see Sidnell 2005, chap. 2.) Cultures differ widely, but there is a basic common infrastructure for social life that is characteristic of our species (Enfield and Levinson 2006a). We can expect that in all cultures, individuals will be motivated to form and maintain enduring personal relationships of different types and that there will be information-related practices such as agreeing with an evaluation someone else just made ("They're good kids," "She can't be trusted," "This is delicious"). Further, we can expect that in all cultures people are motivated to "police" rights and duties (Henrich and Boyd 2001), in line with local norms, including those associated with epistemic territory (Stivers, Mondada, and Steensig 2011). The nature and subtlety of such policing will vary, but it will always occur, wherever norms are contravened (perhaps most visibly in practices of socialization).

Managing epistemic rights and duties is surely done differently in different cultures, and as Silverstein suggests, the ethnographic context is important. But we do not share his pessimism about the possibility of understanding the actions exemplified in our data. While Silverstein feels unsure about "what is going on in the way of actual social action" in the examples, there is no reason to think that the participants in these interactions are any surer than he is. There is always a rich ethnographic background, but what is its role in online interpretation of social action? People's understandings of what is happening in the fast-moving enchronic context of social life are never consummate and are seldom more than adequate. Even in the coded meanings of words, people's understandings can differ without issue (Barr and Keysar 2005; Enfield 2012b). Interaction is made possible by a bounded form of rationality based on fast and frugal heuristics (Gigerenzer, Hertwig, and Pachur 2011). There is no time for elaborate ratiocination, especially as one needs to avoid the implications associated with delayed response in interaction (Stivers et al. 2009). So while ethnography is indispensable to a full vision of social life, it cannot be that an encyclopedic

knowledge of cultural context is invoked in an exhaustive online interpretation of every bit of conduct in interaction.

A second issue concerning ethnography is the need to distinguish between ideologies regarding territories of knowledge, which are sure to vary greatly across cultures, and actual, nonreflective practice regarding territories of knowledge. In discussing the proposed universality of the action type we are examining, Leavitt offers a possible counterexample. He has been told that in traditional “northern Athabaskan-speaking band societies, . . . the appropriate response to an assertion made by someone with less authority to make it than you have is silence.” If silence is indeed the proper way to react to a K-minus first assertion in those societies, then it should be recognizable as such. It would be readily describable in the terms we suggested: while we showed, for example, that a Creole solution to the K+2A problem is to treat the prior turn as if it had been a question, this “silence” solution would presumably treat the prior as if it had not been uttered at all. We do not know whether this is what is happening in the Athabaskan case, and indeed Leavitt implies that such sequences would not be found anyway, telling us that, as someone tells him, they “would have represented an unacceptable violation of personal autonomy.” For now, we can only exercise the standard cautions in assessing this claim. Is it a statement about what members of these societies say about their linguistic practices, or is it about what they actually do? At best, a known cultural ideology might lead to predictions about what happens in interaction. To find out, we would need access to a corpus of recorded interaction in these societies, and we would begin by examining the corpus for expressions of evaluation, especially the most mundane (e.g., “John’s new goats are pretty unruly”), and seeing how these evaluations are expressed and taken up in relation to different epistemic gradients (e.g., where “John” is related to the addressee, not the speaker).

Zinken is unhappy with our separation of action from language, but such a separation is necessary for the simple reason that social action is possible without language. Along lines argued by Lucy (1992*b* and elsewhere) for linguistic relativity in relation to thought, it can be methodologically useful to keep language and action apart so as to avoid tautology or not to simply describe the same thing in two ways. Lee (1996 and elsewhere) argued against Lucy’s methodological separation of language and thought (see also Hill and Mannheim 1992:382–385), proposing instead that everything is “langua-thought.” Maybe this is what Zinken is going for as well: everything is “langua-action.” But while language and action are always connected in practice, so are fuel and vehicles, guitars and music, or tools and carpentry. It does not mean that you cannot distinguish the two conceptually in order to study the phenomena. Social action is an important locus for linguistic relativity, but it need not be the primary locus of linguistic relativity (although perhaps there are arguments for its primacy from specific perspectives, e.g., ontogenesis). The phenomena we observe in social interaction would not take

place, and could not be understood, without all of these: social action, language, culture, cognition, and more. Our concern in writing the paper was to address a neglect of social action, not to replace this with an equally problematic neglect of some other equally necessary component of the story.

Finally, a recurring theme of the commentaries concerns the systems in which sets of semiotic practices are embedded. Duranti, Heritage, Michael, and Woolard all point out that any language will supply not one but many possible forms to choose from in formulating a social action and that individuals’ agency should therefore be greater than we have implied. While we agree that any language will provide a range of options, central to our point is that the choices in one language system are limited (see note 18). The scope of our article was to describe the most prominent or common or idiomatic ways of doing K-plus agreement in three language communities. For the Creole, for example, there are other ways (e.g., *oh*-prefacing), but these are less common and less central to the vernacular (see note 19). Michael says that a full understanding of what we are claiming “requires examination of the complete set of communicative resources that exhibit practical closure with respect to the K+2A communicative function.” We agree, and indeed, the situation is worse: we would need to see *all* things that can happen after *any* first-position assessment.

This raises the issue of what a “grammar for interaction” would look like, incorporating not only grammatical structures with their interactional uses but also interactional patterns of preference and structural conformity and actions defined not in terms of morphosyntactic structures but in terms of their distribution in conversational sequence (e.g., following a K-minus initial assessment). Michael notes that conversation analysis “does not usually emphasize ‘paradigmatic’ relationships among various interactional strategies.” It is true that this terminology has not been used, but in fact, the logic of selecting from among members of paradigm sets is well established in that literature. An example is the account of person reference in terms of default versus marked forms (Enfield 2012*a*; Schegloff 1996*b*; Stivers, Enfield, and Levinson 2007:9). Another is the analysis of the continuer *uh huh*, which is in structural and functional opposition to two other things that could happen in the same slot: initiating repair and taking a speaking turn (Schegloff 1982; Sidnell 2009*a*).

Critically, the set of choices in any language is a subset of the choices available in all the world’s languages together. Whorf urged us to study languages so as to broaden our worldviews. While nobody is “free to describe nature with absolute impartiality,” he argued, the person who would come closest “would be a linguist familiar with very many widely different linguistic systems” (Whorf 1956 [1940]:214). This is why we study human diversity: to know more about the ways we can think and about the kinds of social systems we can live in, and as we have argued here, to know more about the human potential for action.

—N. J. Enfield and Jack Sidnell

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