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CHAPTER 19
Language and Religion

Webb Keane

1 INTRODUCTION: "RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE" AS AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL TOPIC

Despite long-standing interest in subjects such as ritual speech, oratory, magic, myth, incantation, divination, possession, cults, prophecy, and more recently, textuality, reading, and performative, "religious language" per se has not been a commonly recognized anthropological topic (one exception is Sancinito 1976). But taken as the intersection of the studies of religion and language, it can bring insight into key questions that have usually been treated from more restricted perspectives. Religious contexts can be especially revealing for the study of linguistic form and action since they can involve people's most extreme and self-conscious manipulations of language, in response to their most powerful intuitions about agency.

For the purposes of this chapter, I propose that an anthropological study of "religious language" concerns linguistic practices that are taken by practitioners themselves to be marked or unusual in such a way as to suggest that they involve how the actors of agency which are considered by those practitioners to be essentially distinct from more "ordinary" experience, or situated across some sort of ontological divide from something understood as a more everyday "here and now." This definition aims to take indigenous perceptions as a guide, without foreclosing the possibility of comparison and generalization. I argue that religious language practices exploit a wide range of the formal and pragmatic features of everyday language in ways that help make available to experience and thought the very ontological divides to which they offer themselves at a response. These practices can assist the construction of forms of agency that are expanded, displaced, distributed, or otherwise different from — but clearly related to — what are otherwise available.

This approach does not presuppose belief, since it starts from the existence of signifying practices rather than pre-existing concepts. Many religious traditions have little interest in either individual belief or public statements of doctrine (Axad...
The meaning of language games does not depend on the subjective, socially constructed, and thus potentially variable interpretation of their players. Nor do they differ significantly in meaning from those of other games. Language games are essentially symmetrical, and their structure is determined by the rules of the game themselves. However, the specific rules and procedures of language games can vary significantly from one language to another, and from one culture to another. The study of language games can thus provide insights into the nature of language, communication, and social interaction.

2 RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AS ACTIONS FROM GAME TO

PERFORMATIVE

An important idea developed in social semiotics is that language is a system of signs that are inherently performative. This means that the act of saying something has an effect on the world. For example, the act of saying "I love you" has a different effect from the act of saying "I hate you." These acts of speaking are not merely propositional; they are also performative. The speaker is not merely stating a fact; they are also doing something. This idea has been developed further by John Searle and other philosophers, who argue that many acts of language are fundamentally performative in nature. For instance, the act of promising, the act of commanding, and the act of giving orders are all performative in nature. These acts of language are not merely propositional; they are also performative. The speaker is not merely stating a fact; they are also doing something. This idea has been developed further by John Searle and other philosophers, who argue that many acts of language are fundamentally performative in nature. For instance, the act of promising, the act of commanding, and the act of giving orders are all performative in nature. These acts of language are not merely propositional; they are also performative. The speaker is not merely stating a fact; they are also doing something.
3 REGULARISATION OF A SYSTEM GENE

The development of the etiology of speaking (Cassidy and Hyams 1964), a subfield that looks at the neurological and behavioral aspects of language, is a key step in understanding the role of language in thought and behavior. Language is a complex system that is not only central to human social interaction, but also plays a crucial role in the development of cognitive abilities. The study of language and cognition has been a central focus of research for many years, and has led to a better understanding of the neural mechanisms underlying language processing.

A critical aspect of language development is the regularisation of a system gene, which involves the refinement and optimisation of language structures over time. This process is thought to be driven by evolutionary pressures and cultural factors, and is an important contributor to the development of human language abilities.

The regularisation of a system gene involves the following steps:

1. **Formalisation**: The initial stages of language development involve the formalisation of language structures, where basic units of meaning (e.g., words) are established and organised into grammatical rules. This process is thought to be influenced by genetic and environmental factors, and is a key step in the development of language abilities.
2. **Regularisation**: Over time, these formalised language structures undergo refinement and optimisation, leading to the development of more complex language systems. This process involves the reorganisation of existing language structures, and the emergence of new language patterns.
3. **Cultural influence**: The regularisation of a system gene is also influenced by cultural factors, such as the specific social and linguistic environment in which a language is used. This can lead to the development of distinct language systems, each with its own unique features.

The regularisation of a system gene is an ongoing process that continues throughout life, and is thought to be a key contributor to the development of human language abilities. Understanding the mechanisms underlying this process is essential for the development of effective language interventions, and for improving our understanding of language and cognition.
3.1 Forms and function in ritual speech genres

Ritual speech commonly displays a degree of repetition and elaboration far out of proportion to any obvious propositional requirements. For example, one typical Sundanese prayer sentence involving two speakers and taking about 113 lines of verse might be reduced to this: "we are following the rules, so please accept this offering and hear our words" (Tezne 1977b: 122-4). Couples such as

followed path there
for flowers to follow

lori lori
palli warung pasuren

going the Lahayu way
ta pali Lahayu

olah palah
upala wargen ecen

crossing trail there
for people to cross

ta pala wargen ecen

crossing the Warukian way

panapa wargen racen

(Kesne 1977b: 103) amount to "we are performing a ritual properly." These are instances of the framing function (Barthes 1972) that can, in principle, be achieved by any linguistic property, such as eietoxic vocabulary or unusual intonation, that marks off a stretch of discourse from its surround.

A frame is "idealistic," that is, it points out something in the immediate context—indicating, for instance, "this, now" is a ritual (Hanks 1990; Dore 1985; Silverstein 1976). It is thus "metaphragmatic" (Silverstein 1993), saying something about the linguistic act being undertaken. But indexes hone more directly to the presence of something and cannot themselves offer any information about it. Some acts, such as "I hereby do thee wed," use explicit metaphragmatic verbs ("to wed") to state what they are doing. Commonly, however, more guidance from semantic form is needed, such as iconism or resemblance (Jakobson 1990). For instance, because the strongly dualistic couplet forms just quoted manifest a Sundanese aesthetic of completeness and balance, they are iconic of the desired ritual outcome—"sacred wholeness"—without actually denoting it. And, over the course of the ritual, the speakers' utterances render increasingly appropriate metaphragmatic forms. This is one example of how changes in linguistic form may realize the progression of the ritual action by resembling it, an instance of a "metaphragmatic icon" (Silverstein 1981).

The observation is significant because it goes beyond imputing the effects of ritual simply to convention, to show they can derive from formal properties as they unfold in real time. For example, rituals may display increasing depersonalization over the course of the event (Block 1989 [1974]; Kuipers 1990). Indexes of the present time, place, or participants such as personal pronouns may be progressively eliminated, with poetic formulae, prosodic regularity, and other regimens of discourse becoming more stringent, such that the participants come increasingly to speak not as individuals, complexly, politically interested, and temporally finite beings, but as more abstract, disinterested, and timeless elided or speechless. The outcome is due not wholly to convention or conscious intention but to subliminal effects of linguistic and pragmatic forms.

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Indexers and metaphragmatic icons can make use of a wide range of linguistic properties in mutually reinforcing ways. For instance, the appearance of phonological or morphological forms markedly different from those found in colloquial speech may be taken by participants to be an irruption of divine speech. Entire stretches of discourse may take on greater poetic structure, or shift their tense markings, reinforcing the intuitive sense that, as in the case of Zuni prayer, the words are being repeated exactly "according to the first beginning" (Brinton 1932: 493).

Regardless of the varying conscious intentions of ritual performers, the properties of ritual speech tend to mark it as different from more "ordinary" ways of using language. But the examples of metaphragmatic iconism imply that there are more specific functions involved in these marked forms than the mere framing as "ritual." This may or may explain the occurrence of some features in ritual speech across the ethnographic record. John Du Bois (1986) identified some of these as follows:

- use of a ritual register
- archaistic elements
- elements borrowed from other languages
- euphemism and metaphor
- semantic opacity
- semantic-grammatical parallelism
- marked voice quality
- stylized and restricted intonation contours
- unusual fluency of speech
- gestalt knowledge
- personal vốnIon declarers
- avoidance of first and second person pronouns
- speech style attributed to ancestors
- use of mediating speakers

Some of these are mutually determined. Front speaking style and gestalt knowledge, for instance, can both result from learning entirely senseless, and sometimes semantically opaque, wholes. Overall, however, these features must be understood as bearing what Wittgenstein called family resemblances, in so far as they do not constitute necessary and sufficient conditions for membership in a set, but form linked clusters such that no single member of the family need possess every feature. But viewing this cluster in terms of pragmatic functions and semiotic characteristics may offer a way of seeing out scope from ritual speech to religious language practices more generally.

4 Religious Language as Altering Conversational Assumptions

As the concept of the metaphragmatic icon suggests, rituals may derive some of their efficacy by linking formal properties to expected outcomes. One comparative question that arises, then, is whether there is something that motivates this common feature of ritual speech across the ethnographic spectrum. I have suggested that religious language commonly helps make present what would otherwise, in the course of ordinary existence, be absent or imperceptible, or makes that absence presuppositional by virtue of the special means used to overcome it. In pragmatic terms,
4.3 Reported speech

Expressions of language used in reported speech vary depending on the context. One common form is the use of quotation marks to indicate direct speech. For example:

"I think it's going to rain," said the weatherman.

4.4 The dialects of text and context

Forms of language used in different contexts may vary. For example, informal language is often used in casual conversation while more formal language is used in official documents. Another example could be the use of jargon in specialized fields like medicine or computer programming.

4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of language in context is crucial for understanding how language is used in different situations. By considering the context in which language is used, we can better understand its meaning and implications.

References


Appendix

The appendix provides additional data and analysis related to the main findings of the study.
referred, present the person doing the quoting as interpreting the original work and thus establishing a degree of agency, responsibility, and perspective. As such, the quotation confers a certain authority on the speaker and can be seen as a form of meta-reflection. In this way, the quotation becomes an active participant in the communication process, interacting with the original text to create a new meaning.

The quote's context is also crucial. It can be used to増强 the speaker's credibility or to challenge the original author's position. In some cases, the quote is used to support a particular argument or to highlight a specific point, thereby influencing the reader's interpretation of the original work.

4.3 Participation roles

When interpreting a quote, it is important to consider the role of the participant and the manner in which the quote is presented. The context in which the quote is used can significantly affect its meaning and impact. For example, a quote from a respected scholar might carry more weight than a quote from a less well-known source.

In addition, the use of quotes in different contexts can also influence their interpretation. For instance, a quote from a scientific paper might be used to support a hypothesis, while the same quote in a novel might be used to create a dramatic effect.

Furthermore, the way in which a quote is presented can also affect its interpretation. A direct quote, where the author's exact words are used, can convey a more precise meaning than an indirect quote, where the author's words are paraphrased.

In conclusion, the use of quotes in communication is a powerful tool that can be used to strengthen arguments, support positions, and convey ideas in a compelling manner. However, it is important to consider the context in which the quote is used and the manner in which it is presented, as these factors can significantly affect its interpretation and impact.
5. Intentions and the Identity of the Actor

The denial of displacement of individual identity is that an event at several levels, their interaction and the presupposition of participation. The analysis of participatory roles and their effects on the problem of perceptions of identity and consciousness, are expanding the potential for role of individual identity. It is not enough to express these different levels that level forming from a more complex process, such as the operation of individuals at different levels. The distribution of the elements of identity across the individual is a critical issue in many aspects of the study of language. Identity is a complex construct that requires understanding at different levels and in different contexts.

The role of consciousness, given that the character of the individual is the result of immediate observation, and the role of consciousness in the consciousness of the individual is the result of individual action. The responsibility for speech is distributed across different levels. Where identity and consciousness are related, the process is more complex. The interaction of identity and consciousness is a complex process that requires understanding at different levels and in different contexts.

5.1 Specifications of Language and the Construction of Agency

Perhaps the single most important and widespread effect of the various social formations and practices is the production of social roles. Social roles are frequently seen as reflecting the social structure of society. However, the role of identity is not so straightforward. The complexity of identity is not only because of the nature of language, but also because of the complexity of the social structure. However, identity is not only because of the nature of language, but also because of the complexity of the social structure.

For identity, there are two main factors: context and agency. Context refers to the social, cultural, and historical factors that affect identity. Agency refers to the actions and decisions made by individuals. Both context and agency are important in understanding identity. This is because identity is not just a static construct, but rather a dynamic process that is shaped by both context and agency.

The study of identity is complex and requires a multidisciplinary approach. Social scientists from various fields, including sociology, anthropology, and linguistics, have contributed to our understanding of identity. This multidisciplinary approach allows us to understand the complex nature of identity and the factors that influence it.
independent of the logical, political, or emotional demands of and constraints on doctrine itself. Their passions will be understood within what could be called an economy of language practices and ideologies. Even textual forms as relatively autonomous, portable, and durable as written scriptures depend for their persistence and power on social dynamics surrounding contextualization and externalization. Religious language is subject to the constraints imposed both by linguistic principles and by the practical requirements of action or performance, and its interpretation is subject to negotiation. Formal features of language do not achieve their effects alone or automatically.

Religious practices therefore require an appreciation of mediation in at least two respects. First, beliefs are mediated by the linguistic forms and practices through which they are remembered, transmitted, and made available for acts and reflections. The semantic forms of those practices may constrain the production of beliefs and give direction to their transformations, as, for example, when fundamentalism draws conclusions from texts or reformers rebel against liturgies. Even a bold statement of faith depends on local conventions for expressing "beliefs" in the form of propositions, and for their hearers' acceptance of them as a recognizable and sensible activity. Second, those linguistic forms are not fully deterministic but are subject to reinterpretations within particular social and historical circumstances. As the historical adaptability of scriptures and liturgies suggests, form may persist while function or interpretation changes (e.g. Kane 1998).

From the first point it follows that close attention to language is required for any ethnographer who wants to gain insights into what people "believe," or even identify who the actors are in any particular situation — neither the invisible spirits presupposed by some acts nor the collective entities evoked by others may be immediately apparent to the external observer. It follows from the second point that linguists must bear in mind the importance of the social field for the interpretation of linguistic form in its ethno graphical realizations. This means that we not attempt to reduce pragmatic function to linguistic form, correlate practice with some prior social function, reduce either form or function to cognitive determinants, or otherwise foreclose the role of social dynamics. Any account of social action requires attention to its semantic mediation. And, conversely, any account of the effects of linguistic form in actual settings requires analysis of their social mediation.

NOTE

This chapter develops some of the arguments made in an earlier form, with more detail, in Kane 1997a. Some benefited from conversations with Lois Greenfield and the participants in the Michigan Linguistic Anthropology Faculty Workshop, and especially Judith Irvine and Robert Scharf for comments on the manuscript, and Alessandro Duranti for his keen editorial hand.

1 On the problem of defining "religion" see Ast 1993; Smith 1982. By "cosemological divide" I mean that practitioners understand the difference to be a qualitative one, between kinds of beings, rather than, say, simple spatial distance. The distinction is not, of course, always clear — the lines separating elders, ancestors, and deities may be quite blurred indeed. For the linguistic mediation of agency see Abern (2001); Duranti (this volume).

REFERENCES
