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Media Intertextualities

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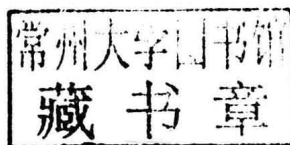
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Intertextualities

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Edited by

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Media Intertextualities

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Volume 37

Media Intertextualities

Edited by Mie Hiramoto

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Media intertextualities

Semiotic mediation across time and space

Mie Hiramoto and Joseph Sung-Yul Park

1. Introduction

The semiotic concept of intertextuality (originally due to Mikhail Bakhtin; 1986/2006) was popularized in the West by Julia Kristeva (1980), who refers to it as various connections in form and content which bond a text to other texts; the central insight here is that each text exists in relation to other texts. She speaks of texts in terms of two axes; one is a 'horizontal axis' linking the creator and audience of a text while the other is a 'vertical axis' which links the text to other texts (Kristeva 1980:69). These two axes are connected through shared codes across time and space, meaning that every text and every meaning depends on preexisting codes. This intertextual perspective is crucial for our understanding of how media representations of speakers and languages shape many of our preconceptions of others. Mediatization of people, ideas, and discourses — that is, the process through which the media organizes and orients the perception and interpretation of social roles and values (Johnson and Ensslin 2007) — is constantly at work in our construction and interpretation of social identity. Mediatization is inherently intertextual (see Agha and Wortham 2005); the very nature of this process involves extracting the speech behavior of particular speakers or groups from a highly specific context and refracting and reshaping it to be inserted in another stream of representations (Bauman and Briggs 1990, Briggs and Bauman 1992, Silverstein and Urban 1996). For this same reason it is also dialogic; the way in which mediatized images and ideologies are interpreted by recipients ultimately contributes to the construction of more enduring stereotypes and evaluations of the speakers and languages represented through those texts (Spitulnik 1996, Inoue 2003, Agha 2007).

The intertextuality of the mediatization process is what makes the mass media quintessentially modern, as recognized in work on the constitution of national identity (Anderson 1983) and public space (Gal and Woolard 2001), and this

observation is particularly apt in the current context of globalization. The world-wide reach of mass media constantly inserts images of culturally distant others and voices of the past into the 'here and now' of our discourse; hybridity associated with postmodern society and advances in media technologies facilitate greater mediatization across different genres and modalities. Thus the notion of intertextuality becomes a highly useful concept for the linguistic anthropological study of media discourse in the context of modernity, as it provides us with a tool for exploring the semiotic processes that underlie the way in which the media negotiate and reinscribe the complex relationships of identity that characterize late modern subjecthood.

First published as a Special Issue of *Pragmatics and Society*, issue 1:2 (2010), the collections of critical essays in this volume discusses our relation to the world by examining constructions of normative biases thorough our discursive practice in media discourse. This volume brings together scholars that approach media intertextuality from various perspectives and contexts, with an aim to understand the significance of semiotic mediation in modern media texts and contexts. Discourse analysis often offers explanations on how language use and social normativity influence and shape each other in media discourse by observing the structures and strategies of both written and spoken discourse. The papers in this volume form a strongly coherent body of work that addresses a broad range of issues regarding media intertextuality and language, and explores the impact of mediated communication and media discourse on social interaction. Ultimately, the articles collected here contribute to central issues that shape current pragmatic, sociolinguistic, and linguistic anthropological research, including: the specific semiotic processes involved in the circulation of characterological figures and semiotic registers across cultures, places, and languages (Agha 2007); strategies of footing (Goffman 1981), stylization (Rampton 1995, Irvine 2001), and stance-taking (Englebretson 2007, Jaffe 2009) as these are employed in media texts to negotiate the intertextual distances that separate the represented, the audience, and the institution of media; and how all of these processes contribute to the construction of relations of authenticity, authority, and legitimacy (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 2005), mapping them onto a network of identities, positions, and ideologies, and thereby constituting a fundamental interpretive framework through which we make sense of our social world.

2. Pragmatics, Society, and Media intertextuality

Mediatized texts are created with specific audiences in mind, and in doing so, texts must make connections to prior discourses. When such texts center around given

personae, discourse practices are strategically assigned to such characters in order to constrain them to their given roles. We may understand this in terms of linguistic regimentation (Kroskrity 2000) within mediatized texts. Park (2009a: 548), identifying regimentation as one of the media's central effects, writes:

The choice and allocation of languages and varieties for the purpose of broadcasting, for instance, is an important means through which those varieties come to be treated as bounded entities and placed within authorized hierarchies of legitimacy (Spitulnik 1998). ... What we see here is a regimentation of language varieties along multiple axes such as standard/nonstandard, national/regional, polite/vulgar, refined/crude, and so on. These regimentations in turn open up a space for the articulation of the media institution's authority (Park 2009a: 548).

Regimentation of language varieties is often practiced in media discourse to allow mediatized personae to fit into expected social ideologies. In mediatized texts, certain attributes of social personae are animated and re-animated through textual encounters (see Agha, this issue). Such textual encounters, in the case of mass media discourse, attempt to reach as many members of the community as possible, where this community may be quite heterogeneous despite the existence of shared membership markers. Given the potential breadth of the audience, such creation of social persona, or 'synthetic personalization' (Fairclough 1989), must employ only the most salient or the most common aspects of the target community. For example, in media discourse, a specific language is often selected for the achievement of synthetic personalization in order to make a mass communication audience feel that they are 'thousands of identical *yous*, with attitudes, values, and preoccupations ascribed to them' (Talbot 1995: 148, emphasis original). In other words, synthetic personalization in mediated texts is a creation of tailored characters and situations which superficially highlight only the ideals of an audience or culture. This process is discussed in depth by Irvine and Gal (2000) through their explanation of the process of *erasure*, "in which ideology, in simplifying the field of linguistic practices, renders some persons or activities or sociolinguistic phenomena invisible" (Gal and Irvine 1995: 974). Gal (2005: 27) likewise mentions that generally, "erasures are forms of forgetting, denying, ignoring, or forcibly eliminating those distinctions or social facts that fail to fit the picture of the world presented by an ideology." In a similar way, this notion of erasure is closely associated with what Fairclough (2006/1999) refers to as *normalized, homogenized, and reduced* discursive practice.

Since the original publication of *Pragmatics and Society*, issue 1:2 (2010), papers that are very pertinent to this volume appeared as a special issue of *Journal of Sociolinguistics* on the sociolinguistics of performance (Bell and Gibson 2011). The papers in this publication take approaches such as stylization (Bakhtin 1981,

Rampton 1995, Coupland 2007), audience and referee design (Bell 1984, 2001), indexicality (Silverstein 2003; Eckert 2008), enregisterment (Agha 2003), and discursive culture (Bauman and Briggs 1990). Topics covered in the edited volume focus on staging language — language of performance — in popular music, a comedy performance, and movies. They all make particular relevance to the essays included in this volume. Specific shared ideas between the recently published issue of *Journal of Sociolinguistics* and this volume are concepts of ‘enregisterment’ and ‘characterological figures’ (Agha 2003) in mediated discourses and how media depend on intertextualities upon indexing attributes of characterological figures to mass audience. All in all, we understand and welcome expanding interests in media intertextualities in the field.

All of the papers presented in this volume are theoretically grounded in a close analysis of such semiotic processes, as they bring these insights to bear on their examination of various forms of media discourse. The contributions discuss semiotic mediation through a variety of mediatized texts (i.e. newspaper articles, movies, reality TV shows, anime, comedy performance, and government campaigns), highlighting certain diacritics of social personae that are animated and re-animated through textual encounters. The data encompass diverse cultural, national, and linguistic contexts, including positions of English speakers in South Korea, performance of California English by African English speakers, standard and non-standard language in Japan, Hawai‘i Creole and standard English in Hawai‘i, and discourse on Singapore Colloquial English, also known as Singlish, in Singaporean public domains.

3. Overview of this issue

This volume explores five different institutional and cultural contexts in which media intertextualities are rendered into texts for wider public circulation. Joseph Park’s paper considers the various ways in which interdiscursivity comes into play in the success stories of English language learning in the conservative press in South Korea. English as a symbolic resource frequently mediates relations of class, privilege, and authority, and the Korean media play an influential role in the negotiation of the place and meaning of English in South Korea (Park 2009b). His contribution identifies interdiscursivity (Agha and Wortham 2005) as an important semiotic mechanism for positioning English in modern South Korean society by illustrating the process through texts of the conservative newspapers which elucidate the privileges of a small group of Korean elites by characterizing them as successful English learners — speakers of “good English.” There are certain types of English accents that are considered as models by South Korean English learners.

For example, American English is valued more than various world Englishes (e.g. Indian English or Filipino English) or non-native English. Similar to the examples described in Blommaert (2009:256), an American English accent or native or native-like English exemplifies “good English” in South Korea. Park’s data clearly demonstrate the ways in which various discourses, voices, and images are connected in the naturalization of the successful learner’s “good English,” ranging from spatio-temporally distant communicative events, authoritative voices of native speakers, and the social positions of power which the successful learner occupies. By offering a constructive approach to explain the interrelated processes of interdiscursivity in his data, Park’s contribution outlines a general framework that could be applied to any context in which interdiscursivity involving the values of language can be found.

The next article, a study by Alexander Wahl, moves the analytic focus to popular visual media and investigates the process of stylization in *ad lib* performances of two iconic Hollywood film personae, Bill Preston and Theodore (Ted) Logan, known from *Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure*. These film characters have come to exemplify California male slacker youth, stereotypically laid-back and easy going. In a popular reality television series, *Big Brother Africa*: 3, aired in 2008, two young African male contestants, 21-year-old Ricardo (Ricco) Venancio from Angola and 22-year-old Munyaradzi (Munya) Chidzonga from Zimbabwe, perform an imitation of the California style found in the Bill and Ted characters by drawing on many of the film’s linguistic and semiotic features. The contestants achieve a representation that is coherent and stereotypical of the mediatization. Wahl claims that the contestants’ stylization indexes their own globalized ideas about Californian and, more broadly, American youth. As Coupland (2001: 350) notes, “stylized utterances are often emphatic and hyperbolic realizations of their targeted styles and genres,” and Wahl describes how one can project a desired identity by stylizing acts, speeches and looks through mediated texts. An undeniable element of the Bakhtinian notions of parody and double-voiced discourse is also involved here. Parody involves the speakers’ appropriation of someone else’s speech to serve their own purposes, thus creating a “double-voice” which can index different intentions of a speaker. Bakhtin (1986/2006: 106) states that “[o]ther’s utterances can be repeated with varying degrees of reinterpretation. They can be referred to as though the interlocutor were already aware of them; they can be silently presupposed; or one’s responsive reaction to them can be reflected only in the expression of one’s own speech.” The speakers’ voice in parodic discourse is directly opposed to the other’s voice; the two voices may be interpreted in two opposing ways. Like Hill’s work on Mock Spanish (e.g. Hill, 1993, 1998, 2005), Wahl’s brings current research on style, performance, language ideology to bear on our understanding of the complex chain of personae in mediated discourse.

Similar to Wahl's contribution, Mie Hiramoto's paper analyzes data based on popular television, in this case anime. She observes the Japanese language in the famous series *Cowboy Bebop* and argues that both normative and non-normative characters are constructed to conform to hegemonic ideals of gender, occupation, age, and race. Normative characters are represented as possessing mostly ideal traits, both visually and linguistically, as reflected in the artwork and speech depicting both "heroes" and "babes." At the same time, characters that do not conform to desirable sexual, visual, national, or age norms are rendered less than attractive and are assigned linguistic features that deviate from colloquial Standard Japanese. Kinsui's (2003; 2007) idea of *yakuwarigo* 'role language' is central to the designing of language concerning different personae in mediated texts such as anime. This assignment of linguistic registers is based on the semiotic process of iconization and erasure, as it helps the audience identify stereotypical images related to imaginary characters' roles. The idea of hegemonic masculinity or normative sexuality is well-represented in mainstream media discourse including scripted speech in movies, comics, games and anime. Lippi-Green (1997), in her investigation of Walt Disney cartoon stories, pointed out that accents or dialects mapped onto characters are demonstrative of their major traits and attributes in the stories. For example, protagonists never fail to speak Standard English despite the fact that they may come from a jungle or a desert of a non-Western land, while villains tend to speak with foreign accents even if they share their place of origin with the protagonist. All in all, conventionalized images of popular characters support associations of normative males and females with language of power, e.g. standard or gender-appropriate varieties (Lippi-Green 1997). Linguistic conformity associated with the normative ideology of gender and sexuality is easily established in mediated texts like anime through role language if one wishes to highlight compliance with the hegemonic hetero-normative ideology, as it is seen in Hiramoto's data; her analysis demonstrates how idealized language is assigned to fictional characters in *Cowboy Bebop* in order to appeal to the semiotics of desire rampant in today's society.

Through his observations of local comedy audiences in Hawai'i, Toshi Furukawa examines the construction of "local identity" by adopting an interactionally oriented framework. Ideas such as "local identity" may be highly idealized and thus may not be representative of the actual social situation in Hawai'i. Nonetheless, Hawai'i Creole, a locally spoken dialect of English, functions to build solidarity or to confirm membership among the residents, establishing their shared knowledge of local cultural practices, styles, and manners of speech. In contrast to Hawai'i residents' national or ethnic identities, local identity is of particular importance, given Hawai'i's cultural and geographical separation from the rest of the U.S. Most residents of Hawai'i prefer to label themselves with the catch-all term

local, implying membership in more than one of Hawai'i's many ethnic and social communities (see Okamura 1994 for detailed discussion). The term "local" itself implies, given the broad range of ethnicities and cultures present in Hawai'i, that membership in the local Hawai'i community is based on criteria other than ethnicity and linguistic heritage. The Hawai'i-born historian John Rosa (2000: 101) states that local identity is "a matter of positioning oneself in relationship to power and place." It seems that such relationships to power and place are actively negotiated among the locals in Hawai'i Creole. Furukawa discusses these negotiations in the studied focus groups' discursive practices; he also demonstrates the significance of mediated membership categories such as age, place-names, and ethnicity in the interpretive process among and beyond the members of a local comedy audience. Furukawa shows how the interactions occurring in the data can be illustrative of how people talk about mediatized performances and how such interactions contribute both to the group members' interpretation of the performances as well as to reinforcing images and stereotypes they have about different people or social groups.

The issue's final article, by Michelle Lazar, draws on her research on the use of Colloquial Singapore English, widely known as Singlish, in Singapore's public campaigns and focuses on an intriguing dimension of media interdiscursivity. Like Hawai'i Creole, Singlish is the result of language contact; moreover, both of these newly emerged varieties are often stigmatized by educators for being "bad/broken English" (Park and Wee 2008; Wee 2006). The focus of Lazar's contribution is on the use of a popular television character, Phua Chu Kang, and his role as spokesperson in delivering public education messages to the general Singaporean audience in recent nation-wide campaigns aimed at changing particular social attitudes and behaviors. Phua Chu Kang was the likeable lead character of a locally produced sitcom of the same title in the late 1990s, which revolved around the life of a building contractor and his family. Infamous for speaking Singlish, the character had been publically criticized by the government for promoting "bad" English among the youth and the general public. However, it was this very character that was selected by the same government in subsequent years to address Singaporeans in various public education campaigns, notably a health campaign at the height of the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2003, and more recently, in 2009–10, in a public transportation courtesy campaign. Lazar's paper analyses the intertextualization of Phua Chu Kang's fictional persona into the everyday social life of Singaporeans. The author shows how, due to the pragmatic need to connect with the public audience on the level of mediatized personae, adoption of the previously condemned Singlish-speaking character becomes a viable strategy for the government.

This volume concludes with a commentary on each contribution by Asif Agha from the point of view of media intertextualities or “recycling mediatized personae.” Agha points out how each of the contributions offers a different vantage point on the ways in which media intertextuality comes into being, and on what it accomplishes for its architects; he suggests that the authors’ shared focus on competing language ideologies in the media demonstrates the extent to which the indexicality of language is currently subject to fluctuation.

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Images of “good English” in the Korean conservative press

Three processes of interdiscursivity

Joseph Sung-Yul Park

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In South Korea, English as a symbolic resource frequently mediates relations of class, privilege, and authority, and the Korean media play a significant role in the negotiation of the place and meaning of English in the country. This paper identifies interdiscursivity (Agha and Wortham 2005) as an important semiotic mechanism for this process, and illustrates this through texts of the conservative print media which rationalize the privileges of Korean elites by representing them as successful learners of English. This paper identifies three distinct yet interrelated processes of interdiscursivity that accomplish this work. First, the process of *spatiotemporal extension* links geographically and temporally distant communicative events with the here-and-now, setting up the relevance of the English language within local social context. Second, the process of *recursivity* (Irvine and Gal 2000) reapplies global oppositional relations locally so that the linguistic legitimacy of native speakers of English comes to serve as a basis for local elites' authority. Third, the process of *mediatization* (Johnson and Ensslin 2007) allows the media institution to selectively highlight the achievements of elite learners while erasing the problems of unequal opportunities for English language learning in Korea. Together, the three interdiscursive processes in the texts naturalize the linguistic legitimacy of elite learners of English, thereby justifying and reproducing the structure of the linguistic market in which the global language of English indexes local relations of power and privilege.

1. Introduction

Interdiscursivity, or the way in which “features of discourse establish forms of connectivity across events of using discourse” (Agha 2005: 1), has become a central idea for linguistic anthropological research lately. This usage of the term varies slightly from earlier uses, such as that introduced by Norman Fairclough (1992).